

Newsletter November 2005



Fylde Bird Club

LANCASHIRE

Visit our Website at www.fyldebirdclub.org

Welcome by Kinta Beaver

Welcome to the FBC November 2005 newsletter. I hope you all enjoyed the previous newsletter and found something of interest. Since the last newsletter there have been three meetings at our new venue, the River Wyre Hotel at Poulton Le Fylde, and all have been well attended. The programme of events for 2006 will be available shortly, subject to confirmation of speakers availability.

In this issue you will find a number of articles on national and local issues as well as an informative article on an international concern; avian flu. The birding highlights must surely be the discovery of a Chough and Lesser Scaup. You can read more about these Fylde 'megas' in Stuart Piner's 'Recent Bird Sightings' and in the ar-

cles by Chris Batty on pages 8 and 9.

It is with sadness that we mourn the loss of a local birdwatcher; Derek McCullough. Maurice Jones recounts fond memories of Derek on page 4.

If you have any comments on the newsletter or have a burning desire to put pen to paper please make a contribu-

tion. Don't worry if you are not able to create a work of literary genius and haven't written an essay since you were at school; I am happy to assist with editing and formatting. Short snippets of local news are most welcome. Please send any articles c/o Paul Ellis to the contact details given on page 12.



Chough by Chris Batty

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Business Round up by Paul Ellis

A number of interesting topics were discussed at the FBC Business Meeting held on 26th October and these are summarised below. In future, business meetings will be briefer and will include only those items where a decision is needed from the membership. An 'any other business' section will still allow members to raise any issues they wish to discuss but the bulk of the meeting time will be available for members photographs and socialising. Full Committee meeting minutes will be available from the Secretary (contact details on page 12) for those who require a more detailed account of Club business.

Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve

A new warden for Marton Mere, Lisa Hersey, is now in post as well as two assistant wardens. Lisa has agreed to attend a Bird Club meeting and introduce herself to the members. The Committee are very optimistic that this appointment heralds the start of a brighter future for the Mere. We wish Lisa every success in her new job.

Costal and Estuarine Disturbance

The Secretary had written to Microlight operators reminding them of the Flying Rules in place regarding flying from Tarn Farm. It had become apparent that there were no special rules in force, to restrict the activities of general aviators over Morecambe Bay! Flying at extremely low altitude and landing on the sands is permitted so long as air-

craft are well clear of people on the ground. The only exception are microlights operating from Tarn Farm, who are obliged to obey very strict restrictions, to comply with their planning permission.

The Secretary had also written to the North West's MEPs and local MP's, to ensure that they were aware of the designations of internal importance applied to the Fylde Coast. The letter also explained the serious issue of disturbance to these areas and

"In future, business meetings will be briefer."

requested assistance in tackling the problem. The letter had been copied to English Nature, RSPB, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Lancaster City Council and Wyre Borough Council. Positive responses had been received from many of those contacted. Sir Robert Atkins and Ben Wallace offered to hold a site meeting with representatives of the Club and the RSPB and this meeting took place on 23rd September. It was suggested that a petition should be submitted to the European Parliament complaining about failure to abide by the requirements of the Birds Directive regarding prevention of disturbance in a SAC and SPA. The Secretary and Tim Melling (RSPB) had agreed to pursue

this with assistance from Sir Robert Atkins.

Nest Boxes and Farmland Bird Feeding Projects

The Secretary reported he had collected 26 tree sparrow boxes produced by Hodgson School; that they were generally well made but the holes were too small ! The Chairman would finish off these boxes as and when time permitted. Len Blacow had delivered approximately 40 nest box kits produced by the Cardinal Allen School and the Chairman had begun to assemble these when time allowed.

The Committee had agreed to purchase 12 eighty litre dustbins to store seed. The Chairman and Secretary would then travel to Lymm to collect a consignment of seed at a cost of £45 per tonne compared with £240 per tonne currently paid by the Club. Bob Danson could accept about 4 bins and the others would be distributed amongst other members. Mike Mc Gough indicated that, based on previous experience, the bins could be infiltrated by rats if attention was not paid to careful storage.

Bird Club Website

Chris Batty had introduced a hit counter to the Home and Recent Sightings pages. This will yield useful data about the usage of the website. Between early July and the end of October the website received 29,550 hits !! This works out at over 250 hits per day.



Avian Flu

by Jeremy Greenwood

Avian flu and the possible transmission of this virus to humans has been a topical issue of late. An excellent article, presenting a balanced and thoughtful view, recently appeared in BTO News (*BTO News, September-October 2005, Number 260*) written by Jeremy Greenwood, Director of the BTO. The article is reproduced below in full with the kind permission of the BTO.

"The headline in the Swiss tabloid newspaper screamed '250 million killer ducks head for Switzerland'; but the story that followed was a measured account of an expert meeting that had concluded that the risk of avian influenza being introduced to the country by migrant birds was low. A week later, the top story on the BBC news was that Russian scientists and a senior British vet had stated that migrant birds would certainly bring the disease here. On the same day a meeting of experts convened by Defra's Chief Veterinary Officer concluded that 'although a risk of introduction by migrating birds exists, our assessment based on current information is that the risk is low.'

The real facts

So, in the usual BTO spirit, what are the *facts*? Influenza is a disease with many strains, some mild, some highly pathogenic; it mutates frequently – hence the constant outbreak of new variants. Birds are commonly in-

fectured and the disease can spread quickly in domestic poultry because of the crowded conditions in which they are kept. In recent years, a highly pathogenic strain (H5N1) has become widespread in poultry in east Asia, with occurrences as far west as southwest Siberia. This strain has been found in wild birds in the same area, though they are probably at lower risk than domestic birds because they do not live in unhygienic conditions. The available evi-

"there is no evidence so far that people have caught the disease from wild birds."

dence is that infected individuals die quickly, so that outbreaks among wild birds are self-limiting, and this may reduce their role in spreading the disease widely. The spread of the disease in Asia may have been assisted by the fact that domestic poultry and wild birds often mix on the same pools. However, poor hygiene and the movement of infected birds (including cage birds) and of poultry products is considered to have been the main cause.

The disease can be devastating for poultry farming. There is also

a risk to human health, with a number of fatalities in Asia. All of those, it is claimed, have had close contact with poultry and there is no evidence so far that people have caught the disease from wild birds. Human to human transmission of H5N1 is also unknown – but mutation could change that.

Risk from migration?

Why is the risk of migrating birds carrying the disease to western Europe considered low? First, because infected birds seem to die quickly and dead birds can't migrate. Second, because rather few birds migrate from SW Siberia to western Europe (contrary to the diagrams in some newspapers!). Of course, it is conceivable that the disease could 'hop' across Europe, passed between a series of short distance migrants, or that Asian birds could infect European ones on their joint wintering grounds, so we must not be complacent.

How can the spread of the disease be controlled? The best method is to quarantine infected sites; indeed, generally to reduce movement of birds, equipment and people (who may carry the virus on their shoes) between flocks. Many advocate a complete ban on the import of live birds and of untreated bird products to countries free of the infection. The Dutch have banned the keeping of poultry out of doors, as a precaution against infection from wild birds. But less

than 10% of their poultry is normally kept out of doors. In Britain, where a greater proportion of poultry is kept outside, such a ban would be immensely difficult.

A cull of migrant birds (Yes! It has been suggested!) is considered by the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization and other bodies to be unlikely to help. Indeed, it would probably be counterproductive, perhaps causing birds to disperse widely and diverting resources from more effective measures.

BTO involvement

BTO staff have been involved in discussions of this matter with colleagues from elsewhere in Europe and we are members of a working group set up by Defra. We have been able to provide much information on migration because of the efforts of ringers and Wetland Bird Survey counters over so many years. (Paradoxically we probably know more about the movements of wild birds than about the movements of poultry). So, counters and ringers: please keep counting and ringing, especially waders and ducks. We are considering what other research is

needed, such as the ways in which wild birds use outdoor poultry (and pig) farms. Should you come across mass mortality of birds, do not touch the birds but report the matter to the Veterinary Laboratory Agency, who will investigate.

There is certainly no need for anyone to stop their normal bird-watching activities because of this disease, which has so far not been found west of the Urals. All that ringers and those who feed garden birds need to do is apply the recommended standards of hygiene. And keep up the good work!"

The British Trust for Ornithology has existed since 1933 as an independent, scientific research trust, investigating the populations, movements and ecology of wild birds in the British Isles. Fylde Bird Club is a member of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Any members who would like to know more about the BTO should visit their website at www.bto.org

In memory of Derek James McCullough by Maurice Jones

On return from a family holiday in Prague I received the sad news that a friend who began birding with me in the 1950's had passed away after a decade of poor health.

Derek lived near Victoria Hospital and didn't drive a car so an obvious site to pursue his interest in nature was Marton Mere. He made a major find quite early in the form of a female *Little Bittern* on the 8th August 1956. It stayed until the 12th along the edge of a bay at the west end and was seen by a dozen or so observers. In 1967 he found the Mere's first *Temminck's Stint* on a small mud area created by seepage from Lawson's Road tip. Work then took Derek away from Lancashire for several years though he visited the North Kent marshes in this period.

He returned to live with his elderly mother in the 1980's and began to

visit the Mere on a near daily basis. His studies of the birds and plant life in the 1980's became very detailed. Duck counts were very thorough and included the whereabouts of all the duck species under different weather conditions. He also did contract work for the De Vere golf course area and also for the Lancashire Wildlife Trust in this period.

Mindful of the lack of wader habitat on the Mere he set about with wheelbarrow and spade to create a scrape on the area behind the island. He would often stand in the evening in the lee of a few trees at the North West corner of the Mere and this area became known (and is still referred to) as 'The Office'.

In 1986 he recorded a wintering *Ring Ouzel* from the 8th to the 14th December and three years later a female *Red-necked Phalarope* on the 25th May 1989.

In 1991 he made his 'find of a lifetime' when on the 24th January he saw a Bittern in flight which showed strong contrast on the upper wings and he confidently proclaimed it an *American Bittern*. On a snow covered Mere on the 2nd February it was tracked down to an icy ditch beyond the dam and identification was confirmed. The first for 10 years in the UK and the floodgates of twitchers opened; it is thought that 5,000 birders came to see it until the last sighting on the 20th May.

In 2003 the Blackpool Environmental Action Team (BEAT) awarded Derek their top award for his services to conservation with particular reference to Marton Mere.

It was Derek's wish that his ashes be scattered at his favourite place, the Mere.

Recent Bird Sightings by Stuart Piner

AUGUST

In recent years August has proved to be one of the most exciting months in the Fylde birding calendar, and August 2005 continued this trend in style. July's star bird, an adult White-rumped Sandpiper on Wyre Estuary remained till 2nd but the rest of the first week was filled with more standard August fare. A Little Tern joined impressive numbers of Common and Sandwich Terns roosting at Knott End on 1st, with two there on 2nd; others being logged past Rossall Point and Starr Gate during the month. A juvenile Yellow Wagtail was at Fairhaven, with others sighted at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, Fairhaven Dunes, Pilling and Bank End during August. Little Egrets were frequently seen at their favoured haunts and several Marsh Harrier sightings came courtesy of a roaming juvenile in the Over Wyre area and an adult female at Cockerham, with others over Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 1st, Anchorholme on 20th, Warton Marsh on 27th, Freckleton Naze Point on 30th and Singleton on 31st. Mediterranean Gulls were once again widespread with at least 14 birds including two bearing French rings. Arctic Skuas were logged past Fairhaven, Knott End, Rossall Point and Starr Gate. Elsewhere, the adult Yellow-legged Gull remained on the Lune Estuary at Glasson.

Five juvenile Ruddy Shelducks were found by Maurice Jones on the Ribble Estuary at Warton BAe Systems on 3rd; a national influx of the species occurred during August, leaving little doubt that these birds hadn't just

hopped out of a local wildfowl collection. The following morning they were promptly relocated on the Wyre Estuary at Skippool Creek then Barnaby's Sands, before moving north to the Kent Estuary, Cumbria on 6th and then southeast to Freiston Shore, Lincolnshire on 15th. The 3rd proved to be an excellent day, with Black Guillemot past Rossall Point, male Scaup at Little Singleton, Great Skua past Starr

"The 12th provided a major surprise, when Chris Batty and Bob Danson watched a Chough fly west along the sea wall at Pilling Lane and then over Knott End."

Gate and an adult Curlew Sandpiper on Conder Estuary (where it remained till 5th). A Short-eared Owl was unusual in August at Conder Estuary on 6th, and presumably July's juvenile Wood Sandpiper returned to Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 7th (and was present there again on 16th).

The 12th provided a major surprise, when Chris Batty and Bob Danson watched a Chough fly west along the sea wall at Pilling Lane and then over Knott End. The brevity of the sighting meant this 'Fylde Mega' was unavailable to the masses; crippling photos soon graced the website and certainly rubbed salt into very sore wounds! Even worse, it was belatedly discovered that the bird was relocated by a non-birder on Royal Lytham and St. Annes Golf Course, Ansdell the following day, but needless to

say, there was no sign later in the week.

The 13th brought a subadult Roseate Tern to Rossall Point early morning, but frustratingly it could not be relocated subsequently. A Raven was on Glasson Marsh on 14th and nearby a male Scaup was at Cockersand on 15th. The first Spotted Crake on the Fylde since 1996 was found by Maurice Jones at Marton Mere on 16th and put in another brief appearances at dusk the following evening. A Ruddy Shelduck also flew over the same site on 16th. The first Osprey of the autumn was over Freckleton on 17th, and a male Common Scoter was a good inland record at Marton Mere on 18th. Five Quail were flushed by a harvester at Eagland Hill on 21st with one heard singing there on 23rd.

A moderate southwesterly blow saw Rossall Point score a Black Tern and Storm Petrel on 28th and 2 juvenile Curlew Sandpipers were at Cockersand, with another 2 Curlew Sandpipers at Skippool Creek on 29th and 2 at Glasson Marsh on 30th. A good total of at least 12 juvenile Curlew Sandpipers were at Skippool Creek on 31st when a Tree Pipit flew over Pilling Lane.

"The first Spotted Crake on the Fylde since 1996 was found by Maurice Jones at Marton Mere on 16th."

Recent Bird Sightings by Stuart Piner

SEPTEMBER

The Fylde failed to produce any national rarities during September, but the return of a certain Corvid got local listers just a bit hot under the collar! After several reports by non-birders, Barry Dyson finally locked eyes on the Chough at Knott End Golf Course on 6th. After then it became loyal to the south end of the course throughout the rest of the month and delighted local and visiting birders alike. The early part of September was characterised by good numbers of Curlew Sandpipers including flocks of at least 17 at Cocker-sand and 12 at Skippool Creek with lower numbers at Lytham, Knott End, Fairhaven, Freckleton and Pilling Marsh. Little Egrets are now almost expected on any visit to one of our estuaries, but five on the Wyre Estuary at Little Singleton on 3rd was still notable. Marsh Harriers continued to wander Over Wyre, with sightings at Bank End, Fluke Hall Lane, Moss Edge, Pilling Marsh (2) and Eagland Hill (2), with another at Warton Marsh. The adult Yellow-legged Gull remained on Lune Estuary at Glasson.

The 4th provided an excellent selection of migrants, including Hobby over Carleton, Garganey at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, Black Tern past Rossall and Yellow Wagtail over Knott End. The following day produced a Pied Flycatcher in Fleetwood Cemetery and Osprey over Stake Pool. Arctic Skuas were logged past both Starr Gate and Rossall Point on 7th and more notably, a Velvet Scoter flew past the former site the following day. A juvenile Little Stint joined Dunlin

at Cockersand the same day with two there on 19th. A confident juvenile Wood Sandpiper was at Newton Marsh on 9th, where it remained until the 11th, and a Raven was noted over nearby Freckleton Naze Point, proving once again that this is *the* site to connect with this species within the Fylde (if only just!). A female Mandarin was at Stanley Park, where it remained until the month end.

"With several years since the last Fylde record, Marsh Tits are now a real mega in The Fylde.."

With several years since the last Fylde record, Marsh Tits are now a real mega in The Fylde, so two behind Warton BAe Systems on 10th and 25th gave hope that this species is not a completely lost cause. Ring-necked Parakeets have an unexplained affiliation with Knott End and Preesall, this pattern being strengthened on 12th when one briefly visited a garden in Knott End. Possibly the same bird was logged over Fairhaven on 22nd. A juvenile Little Tern flew north past Starr Gate the same day (another was seen on 26th) and on 15th a Leach's Petrel was found wrecked near The Sandcastle, but was later safely released at Starr Gate. The sea provided further excitement on the 17th, when a Velvet Scoter passed Rossall Point. A Long-tailed Duck graced Starr Gate on 19th.

The first bittern of the autumn was at Marton Mere on the 21st, reminding us that those cold evenings of Bittern-roost watching aren't that far away!

A Short-eared Owl was at Pilling Lane on 22nd and a Yellow Wagtail flew over Blackpool. A male Red-crested Pochard showed well at Marton Mere on 25th. Apart from the long-staying Chough, the last five days of the month were quiet, with only a Great Skua that passed Clevelleys on 28th being of any note. During the month 13 Mediterranean Gulls were logged at various sites, well down on the 22 seen during September 2004.

OCTOBER

October saw two new species added to the Fylde list, but only one was available to the masses (eventually)! More on this later...

Strong westerlies on the 1st caused several Leach's Petrels to fly close past our coastal watch points; up to 18 individuals were recorded, with a peak count of 11 past Rossall Point, where an Arctic Skua was also seen. Marsh Harriers continued to linger into October, with records coming from Eagland Hill, Pilling Marsh and Burrow's Marsh. Curlew Sandpipers also continued to move through at Pilling Marsh and Knott End. The summer-star, the Knott End Chough continued to entertain until the 3rd. A Shag was off Starr Gate on 3rd and a migrant Long-eared Owl on Burglar's Alley, whilst another returned to Marton Mere, presumably to winter. A Little Auk past Starr Gate on 4th was a remarkably early record.

Recent bird sightings
by Stuart Piner

OCTOBER contd.

A small pond at Preston Grasshoppers Rugby Club received some oriental decoration in the form of a squadron of Mandarin from 4th. Up to six of these delightful creatures were present throughout the month, with another at Stanley Park.

On 6th came a report of a male Scaup at Myerscough Quarry. Nobody blinked an eyelid (this species has been recorded here on several occasions) until Chris Batty potted down to the pits on 16th, and discovered that the bird was in fact a fine Lesser Scaup, a new Fylde bird. Chris postulated in his recent 'Fylde next' article that Lesser Scaup could beat Ring-necked Duck onto the list, but how easily this individual could have slipped through the net! Luckily the bird stayed put into November.

"Chris Batty potted down to the pits on 16th, and discovered that the bird was in fact a fine Lesser Scaup, a new Fylde bird."

On the 7th, a Bittern was at Mar-ton Mere (up to two were present into November) and a Short-eared Owl over Pilling Marsh.

The following day the Fylde's tenth Yellow-browed Warbler was found in Mount Park, Fleetwood, coinciding with a mass invasion of this Siberian gem onto the east coast of Britain. More were to follow, with individuals at Fluke Hall on 17th, Mount Park again on 23rd and Fleetwood cemetery on 29th. With record numbers nationally, and multiple records just to the north of our region, one must presume that these were all different birds, making this far and away the most successful autumn ever for this species in the Fylde.

Ian Gardener hit the jackpot on 9th when he watched an adult male Black-headed Bunting fly east past Rossall Point with Greenfinches; although this species has always been a candidate to occur on the Fylde, an October fly-past was perhaps not what everyone was hoping for.

Also on 9th, a juvenile Hobby flew over Fairhaven Lake, as did seven Crossbills; Crossbills became a semi-regular feature of morning visual migrants watches at Fairhaven, with 12 more being recorded before the month end. A Snow Bunting flew over Fairhaven on 14th and a Pale-bellied Brent Goose was at Arm Hill. Even better was a Lapland Bunting over Rossall Point on 15th.

Another rarity that evaded all but the lucky finders was a Great Grey Shrike that graced Fluke Hall briefly on 16th. The 16th also produced an eclipse male Red-crested Pochard at Stanley Park,

Snow Bunting over Rossall Point, with a Scaup offshore there. Another Scaup was at Arm Hill.

A Short-eared Owl flew past Rossall Point on 17th and a late Garganey was located amongst the swarms of Teal on Pilling Marsh on 18th; it was still there on 20th. A Barnacle Goose was amongst Pink-footed Geese at Pilling Lane on the same day. A Pale-bellied Brent Goose was at Eagland Hill on 19th and nearby a Dark-bellied Brent Goose was on Pilling Marsh the following day (till 24th). Another Barnacle

*Black-headed Bunting
"an October fly-past was
perhaps not what everyone
was hoping for."*

Goose flew over Bispham Marsh with Pink-footed Geese on 22nd.

Grounded Lapland Buntings are highly sought-after, so one at Cocksand on 23rd and 30th was most welcome. Things went quiet until the 28th, when a Long-tailed Duck flew past Starr Gate. A Black-throated Diver was logged past Rossall Point on 30th and last but certainly not least a Ring Ouzel was at Fairhaven Lake on 31st.

All records are from Fylde Bird Club's website at www.fyldebirdclub.org/sightings.htm.

Please report your sightings to news@fyldebirdclub.org

The Chough by Chris Batty

I had devoted much of 12th August 2005 to ongoing improvements to our recently purchased house in Knott End and preparing for a family barbeque. However, from an upstairs window, I had been keeping an eye on the gulls and terns roosting on Pilling Sands. A mixed tern roost earlier in the month had peaked at over 200 Common and nearly 400 Sandwich and I was hoping for a Roseate Tern.

Late in the afternoon I walked out and scanned through the roosting terns but with nothing out of the ordinary on show I headed for home. However, with forty minutes to spare before our guests arrived I opted to visit Pilling Lane, a good place to watch gulls.

On arrival I found Bob Danson already parked on the seawall by Cocker's Dyke scanning through the Black-headed Gulls. Just before 17:30, as Bob and I were chatting about local birds and their habitats, I noticed, out of the corner of my eye, a corvid heading west towards us, following the seawall. In a naked eye view the 'bouncing' flight action suggested Chough but it was more through routine than belief that I raised my binoculars to be met with... a CHOUGH! Involuntarily, and mid conversation, I quite calmly uttered "errr... Chough" as, arm outstretched, I pointed at the Chough that was now level with, and just a few feet beyond, the end of Bob's bonnet and calling loudly "cheeaw, cheeaw".

We were both in a state of absolute shock as the Chough continued low, west along the seawall. Bob sprinted after it, video cam

era in hand, whilst I jumped into my car, simultaneously phoning the news to Rare Bird Alert and racing towards Knott End where, presuming it maintained it's course, I would be able to head it off.

I screeched to a halt in Knott End at Willow Close and sprinted up the seawall, looked back east to see that, as I had hoped, the Chough was heading straight for me. I continued phoning local birders whilst monitoring the course of the bird, camera in hand, waiting for it to pass me. Just as I began to fire off my first shots it dropped onto the rocky seawall and promptly disappeared amongst the boulders. When the bird took off I was on the phone to Ian Gardner and as it flew towards me I instinctively dropped my mobile phone to the ground in favour of my camera, taking off as many shots as I could as the Chough flew low over my head before dropping down onto an area of cut grass. I picked up my mobile to find Ian still on the line, totally gripped

off having heard the "cheeaw" call several times down the phone!

It was inevitable that walkers would disturb the bird and it soon continued west towards the Esplanade and, when I reached the Bourne Arms at 17:45, I could hear the Chough calling and I was able to watch it out of sight to the southwest.

It presumably continued its journey south as the following morning it was seen at Royal Lytham and St. Annes Golf Course, Ansdell before relocating to Knott End Golf Course on 17th August and, to the delight of many, remaining there until 3rd October.

Earlier in 2005 perhaps the same Chough had been seen at Jenny Brown's Point, Silverdale, Lancashire on 10th January and in Cumbria at Walney Island on both 22nd January and 22nd April and at St. Bees Head from 20th-30th March.



Chough by Chris Batty

Lesser Scaup by Chris Batty

On 6th October news of a male Greater Scaup at Myerscough Quarry headlined www.fyldebirdclub.org sightings. When possible I have always made the effort to go and see reported inland scaup on the Fylde, in the hope that one-day one would prove to be a Lesser Scaup. However, despite further reports of the continued presence of the Greater Scaup at Myerscough Quarry on the 9th, 10th and 12th October, a national vanguard arrival of Yellow-browed Warblers caused my birding to be concentrated on coastal Fylde; being amply rewarded with a Yellow-browed Warbler in Mount Park on the 8th.

News of an American Kestrel in Norfolk early morning on 16th caused me to head east but by the time I had reached Preston the bird had been found to be a ringed escape.

A quick diversion saw me on the canal bridge overlooking Myerscough Quarry from where a quick scan soon revealed the adult male scaup, and it looked interesting!

I made my way closer to the main pit and scoped the bird - it was a Lesser Scaup! I immediately phoned Stuart Piner and broke the news to him. I knew Stuart was an emotional chap but I wasn't expecting tears! Clearly my finding the first true rarity on his lifelong local patch was all too much for him and he promptly hung up.

Back to the bird and it looked better than ever; small body size, tiny black bill nail, strong black vermiculations on the mantle and flanks, a peaked nape with a noticeable bump behind and above

the eye all gave the bird the look of a 'perfect' Lesser Scaup. Part of me was telling myself to wait until I had seen the extent of white in the wing-bar before I made the claim official and broke the news, but I was so convinced I just couldn't hold myself back. I phoned the news to Rare Bird Alert and started taking photographs.

It was only then that the sun broke through the clouds and the bird began diving. Then the appearance of the bird changed dramatically; the head shape looked full and rounded with no hint of a bump, and was a bright bottle green in colour. The mantle that had looked so heavily marked now appeared a very pale grey and the flanks burnt-out white in the strong light.

I should have waited to see the wingbar; the news was out and

people were on their way to Myerscough Quarry. What had I done!

However, I then noticed that the scaup was now diving close to the bank and I saw my opportunity to clinch the identification either way. The next time I saw the bird dive I sprinted to the water's edge and, as I had hoped, the scaup took flight a short way across the pit allowing me to snatch a photograph of the wing-bar before it landed. I scrutinised the photograph on my digital camera and the diagnostic wing pattern of Lesser Scaup was clearly visible. Thankfully I had just been having finder's nerves!

The Lesser Scaup remained at Myerscough Quarry until at least 1st November.



Lesser Scaup by Chris Batty

A Birding Trip to Bulgaria by Maurice Jones

Travel details: Balkan Holidays
flight to Bourgas. 19th to 30th
September 2005
Hotel Trakia Plaza, Sunny Beach
M Jones, JF Walsh, C & B Dodding

We stayed half board and found the food adequate, with a good choice of menu. The hotel was new, very clean and the rooms had plenty of space. We hired a car but found the Bulgarian drivers in a permanent hurry and witnessed some crazy driving. Coupled with that, a bus ran into the back of our car on the 23rd in Bourgas. We would recommend birders to negotiate a price for a Taxi for a whole day or several days. With four travelling this worked out at only £10-£15 per person a day.

Cape Emine juts out into the Black Sea to the north of Sunny Beach. We elected to go there on the 20th and stopped at the turn off to the Cape on the main E87 road. A bird tour group was stood there and included Ron Hothersall from St Annes ! We got off to a good start with 90 White Pelicans, then 7 Black Storks, 19 Lesser Spotted Eagles and 2 Honey Buzzards. About 20 Hawfinches were near this junction. The track to the point is more suited to four-wheel drive but can be made with care. It was very windy on the grassy and shrub covered headland so we only saw Red Backed Shrike, a Woodchat Shrike, a Red Breasted Flycatcher and, on return, a Roller and Hobby.

Next day (21st) we drove south to Atanasovsko Lake; salt pans and raptor viewpoint. Highlights were 50 White Pelican, 157 Slender Billed Gulls, 80 Avocets, 3 Marsh Sandpiper and a Gull Billed

Tern. We returned to base via Pomorie Lake and salt pans seeing 100 Black Necked Grebes, 50 Little Egrets, 20 Little Gulls, 1 Temmincks Stint and a Red Necked Phalarope.

On the 22nd we stopped just south of the village of Aheloi. Here we saw our only 2 Bee Eaters, a Cuckoo, Squacco and juvenile Night Heron. It soon became obvious that raptor passage was underway and at quite low altitude. Prominent were 347 Lesser Spotted Eagles, including 100 in five minutes. Buzzards were few but we saw 3 Honey Buzzards, 3 Booted Eagles, 2 Short Toed Eagles, a male Red Footed Falcon and, best of all, an adult Greater Spotted Eagle. In the afternoon we saw a Red Necked Grebe on the sea off the town of Old Nessebar and 2 or 3 Syrian Woodpeckers on a dune area between Sunny Beach and New Nessebar.



Red-backed Shrike by Maurice Jones

Our best birds were 8 Lesser Spotted Eagle, 1 Honey Buzzard, 1 Black Stork, 10 White Pelican, 2 Hobbies, Kingfisher, 1 Middle Spotted and 1 Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

Our first taxi trip (24th) got us safely to Poda reserve. From the Visitor Centre roof we could see 31 Pygmy Cormorants, 8 Dalmatian Pelicans, 3 Ferruginous Ducks, 2 Gull Billed and 2 Caspian Terns, a juvenile Whiskered Tern and Osprey. We again checked Pomorie Lake on our way home where new birds were Turnstone, Knot, Greenshank and 3 Wood Sandpipers.

We woke to drizzle on the 25th. What to do? We scanned farmland from the car but saw only Crested Lark and Skylark. By mid-day it was drying up so we went to a small wooded valley in the hills, inland from Sunny Beach. Here we did quite well with several Red Breasted Flycatchers, 2 Sombre Tits, a Red



Crested Lark by Maurice Jones

We began to see up to 6 Hobbies regularly from the Hotel balcony. Our planned trip to Poda involved passing through Bourgas and when a bus ran into the back of our car our plans needed drastic change. By afternoon we elected to go part way to Cape Emine.

Rumped Swallow, Cirl Bunting (song heard only), and a Goshawk with prey. The highlight was the sudden appearance of 150 White Pelican low overhead and then 34 Black Storks in one thermal.

On the 26th whilst still in the resort sorting out our 'bump' it became obvious that Buzzards and Lesser Spotted Eagles were 'on the move'. Then 86 Black Storks flew above the oblivious holiday makers.

We soon headed for Cape Emine road and witnessed flock after flock of Black Stork totalling 1,397; probably a 1,000 buzzards, 15 Lesser Spotted Eagles, 30 Sparrowhawk species, 2 Honey Buzzard, 21 White Stork, 2 White Pelican, 2 Booted and 4 Short Toed Eagles. Another highlight was flushing nearly 40 Quail on the point. Also present were 16 Tawny Pipits and a Roller and we finished with a female perched Goshawk.

The 27th we divided between Pomorie north salt pans and Atanosovsko raptor viewpoint. On the salt pans were 2 Red Necked Phalarope and 200 Little Stint. The Lake had 150 Mediterranean Gulls but mostly this was a 'raptor' day with 456 Lesser Spotted Eagle, 186 Buzzard, 10 Booted Eagles, 9 Short Toed Eagles, a few large falcon (probably Saker), 22 Black and 11 White Stork and 95 White Pelicans.

On our way back a White Stork was feeding at the roadside within a yard of fast moving traffic! A search of a small river in Sunny Beach produced Kingfisher and close views of a juvenile Little Bittern.

An area around Vlas on the 28th was not very productive in cloudy weather and strong winds. Later we had 3 Black Throated Diver south of New Nessebar, a female Pallid Harrier and a perched juvenile Hobby.



White Stork by Maurice Jones

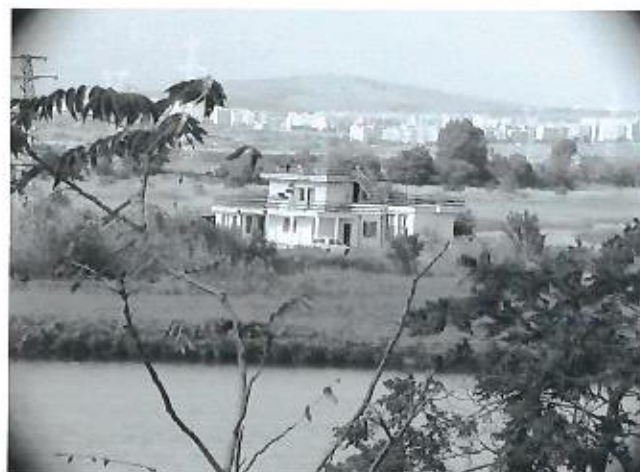
Our second full day by Taxi (29th) was a return to Poda but we stopped off at Bourgas Lake. This must have held nearly a thousand White Pelican and 26 Dalmation Pelican with 10 more at nearby Mandra. 40 Pygmy Cormorants, 3 Great White Egret and a juvenile White Winged Black Tern were at Poda. Further south Alepu Marsh had 12 Great White Egret.

The riverine woodland at Ropotama had 2 Red Breasted Flycatcher, 2 Marsh Tit, Hawfinch, Nuthatch and Middle Spotted Woodpecker. On the 30th we obtained better views of 3 Syrian Woodpecker on the same dune area near Sunny Beach.

Our species list was 139.



White Pelican by Maurice Jones



Poda Reserve by Maurice Jones

Green Partnership Award for Fylde Bird Club by Kinta Beaver

Diary Dates

Community groups in Lancashire are getting a helping hand to improve their local environment. A partnership between Lancashire County Council, United Utilities and the County's local councils is providing funding and expertise to groups who want to make a difference to the areas in which they live and work. Green Partnership is supporting projects that have a lasting environmental benefit, involve the community and benefit the community, local wildlife and landscape.

Committee member Len Blacow suggested that Fylde Bird Club should apply for an award from the Green Partnership scheme and Secretary Paul Ellis completed the on line application form. The Club applied for a grant to assist with its Farmland Bird feeding and nestbox scheme and was awarded £300.

The money will be used towards the purchase of seed, storage bins and to fund nest box construction.



Forthcoming FBC meetings *River Wyre Hotel, Poulton Le Fylde. 7.45pm*

22nd November. Update on digiscoping. *Paul Hackett*
 20th December. Xmas Social, Quiz & Buffet
 24th January. AGM & Photographic competition
 28th February. Shetland Wildlife. *Steve Knell*
The full programme for 2006 will be available soon

Weekend Tide Times.
Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) monthly count dates in bold:
 Volunteers and helpers for WeBS counts are always needed. Contact Paul Ellis (01253 891281) or Jean Roberts (01524 770295) to arrange. Members of FBC are very welcome to attend to enjoy the birding and assist if they wish to do so.

WeBS Core Count Priority Dates
 To aid co-ordination, counts should be made on the priority dates listed, ideally during the morning or, at coastal sites, when tidal conditions are suitable. If you are unable to count at this time, please select the nearest suitable alternative date in that month.

Where tidal conditions at coastal sites are unfavourable on these dates, Local Organisers are encouraged to agree alternative dates. Ideally, these should be separated by at least three weeks from counts in the preceding and following months. Counts on different count units within complex sites should be co-ordinated to avoid the possibility of double counting.

Date		Time	Height m
Nov	Sat 26	0639	
	Sun 27	0737	
Dec	Sat 3	1136	
	Sun 4	1222	9.4
	Sat 10	0546	
	Sun 11	0698	
	Sat 17	1138	
	Sun 18	1216	
	Sat 24	1640	
	Sun 25	1743	
	Sat 31	1030	
Jan	Sun 1	1134	9.4
	Sat 7	1648	8.6
	Sun 8	1753	8.3
	Sat 14	1108	8.8
	Sun 15	1143	8.9
	Sat 21	1504	8.3
	Sun 22	1547	7.9
	Sat 28	0957	8.8
	Sun 29	1047	9.3
Feb	Sat 4	1519	9.2
	Sun 5	1610	8.5
	Sat 11	1017	8.5
	Sun 12	1053	8.8
	Sat 18	1356	8.8
	Sun 19	1426	8.5
	Sat 25	0844	8.1
	Sun 26	0942	8.8

Good Birding

Visit the Fylde Bird Club website at www.fyldebirdclub.org for all the latest news. Updated daily on bird sightings in the Fylde area. Or come to our monthly meetings held on the 4th Tuesday of every month at 7.45 pm at The River Wyre Hotel, Breck Road, Poulton le Fylde; check out the website for the full programme.

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