

# Newsletter August 2006



## Fylde Bird Club

LANCASHIRE

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### Welcome by Kinta Beaver

Welcome to the August FBC Newsletter. The May, June and July meetings of Fylde Bird Club highlighted the excellent photographic skills of our members with fabulous photographs of the birds of Cape Verde (Chris Batty), the birds of Peru (Paul Ellis) and the birds and mammals of Kruger (Mike & Pauline McGough). In case you missed the Kruger talk, you have an opportunity to catch up on some of the details of Mike &

Pauline McGough's South Africa trip starting on page 3.

The BTO/Bird Clubs Partnerships have a number of surveys planned and underway that may be of interest and these are reproduced on page 9 with the kind permission of the BTO/BCP.

I have been producing the newsletter for a year now. I hope you are finding it interesting. Unfortunately, work commitments mean that

the time I have to devote to the newsletter is limited and if anyone amongst you would like to take over from me please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Can I please encourage you to forward any articles or interesting snippets for the next newsletter, which is planned for November. Send all copy c/o Paul Ellis at the contact details given on the back page. Thanks

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Adult Cuckoo  
By David Moreton

Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park. 22nd July 2006



Adult Mediterranean Gull  
By Chris Batty  
Cockers Dyke. 6th July 2006

## More on Fuerteventura February 2006

By Stephen Dunstan

I was planning to do a few words on my trip to Fuerteventura for the newsletter at some point, having already done a trip report and species list for the club's intranet site. Exam commitments and Lancs bird report writing got in the way, and when I had time to get round to it I found Maurice had written an account of a trip which finished only four days before mine started. Nevertheless I thought it might be helpful to highlight some of the comparisons and contrasts with Maurice's trip and offer some additional tips that might be helpful for members visiting purely for birding or for a mixture of birding and sightseeing.

### Being vigilant, getting lucky

Not including one species only seen on Lanzarote (Swallow) we saw 50 species in a week, a good few less than Maurice's party and missing several desert specials. We did however get enough reward for time in the field, with crippling views of Fuerteventura Chat at Embalse de los Molinos and stunning flight and feeding views of Houbara Bustard at La Pared dunes. Best of all though was finding a Spanish national rarity in the form of a Yellow-browed Warbler in the grounds of the Oasis Park Zoo, La Lajita. Fortunately, some video footage was obtained of this stroke of outrageous good fortune. In the same zoo grounds the only Grey Wagtail of the trip was in the otter enclosure; the Monk Parakeets were a bit less satisfying but they all count.

### What a difference a week makes

We visited the main reservoir, Embalse de los Molinos, twice. We also visited Las Penitas reservoir twice, and we visited Cat-

alina Garcia reservoir. The only Swifts we saw were six Pallids over Costa Calma and one Plain in the Barranco de la Torre. Contrast thus with Maurice's party seeing flocks of up to 50 or 60 birds of three species at Embalse de los Molinos and Catalina Garcia the week before and it shows how things can change so quickly. The small reservoir Maurice refers to as dried up at Vega Palmas is the one I refer to as Las Penitas; in one week it had filled up completely and held several Coot (but no Swift!).

Oh, and the two American ducks at Catalina Garcia had gone...

### Gen

The Clarke and Collins guide to the Canary Islands is still pretty much accurate for Fuerteventura, and is recommended. For up to date gen the Rare Birds Spain website gives updates on all Spanish rarities and Canary Island only rarities recently recorded on the island. But remember it is only as good as the info it receives, so send in your own sightings if like Maurice or myself you are fortunate to see a Canary Island rarity on your trip.

### The island of Los Lobos

If you want to milk every last minute of birding out of a holiday then Los Lobos is probably not for you. If you want to see some spectacular and unique scenery then it is an absolute must. The whole island is a protected site, and no wonder as it is quite unlike anywhere else I have ever experienced. Boats are regular from Corralejo and give the option of half or full day trips. A full day gives the opportunity to walk round the whole island, including going up to the top of the former volcano now used as a Cory's Shearwater nest site.

### Doing' Lanzarote

Lanzarote lacks any avifauna that would merit a special trip, so most keen birders are likely to give it a miss unless required to go by sun worshipping family. If you can find the time though, particularly if staying in Corralejo, one of the full day tours of Lanzarote is a great experience. As well as visiting the Timanfaya volcanoes you can see the remarkable blind, albino crabs (at Jamos del Agua) that occur nowhere else in the world. In birding terms the ferry across gives seawatching possibilities (the only Cory's of our trip were on the return ferry at dusk), and in other seasons could give the outside possibility of Eleonara's Falcon in stopovers at cliff vantage points near Graciosa.

### Beaches

Depending on your circumstances this might be an important consideration. Maurice's article indicates that the sandier beaches are in the south of the island. Whilst there are some very good beaches in the south of the island, particularly around Jandia, there is a very long stretch of sandy beach and extensive dunes running south from Corralejo. We stayed in Corralejo, it is very 'English' and might not be everyone's cup of tea, but we enjoyed it enormously.

### Roads

If meeting a tractor coming the other way at Ealand Hill makes you uncomfortable, avoid the road beyond Vega de Palmas at all costs. Effectively single track with almost hairpin bends and large drops, definitely not for the faint hearted.

## South Africa 2005

By Mike & Pauline McGough

We left Manchester on the evening of the 26<sup>th</sup> August to fly to Johannesburg with Lufthansa, via Frankfurt. We arrived at 08.45 but customs clearance was very slow and it was 10.30 by the time we got to our hire car. We set off north on the N1 towards the Zimbabwe border in fine and sunny weather. Black-shouldered Kites and Lilac-breasted Rollers were common roadside birds and amongst those at service stations were Olive Thrush, Melba Finch, Violet-eared Waxbill, Striped Kingfisher, Southern Boubou and a singing Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird.

We were heading for the Soutpansberg Mountains area in the Limpopo region, especially the part near Louis Trichardt. Our first two nights were spent at Ben Lavin Nature Reserve, a wonderful reserve with many birds and mammals covering 2500 hectares. Accommodation comprised of safari tents and ensuite huts with a kitchen on the veranda. Because we had not had time to buy ingredients for a meal we decided to go a short way down the road to The Elephant and Castle, a bar/restaurant with excellent food - its name reflects the historical connection with a part of London, when this area was part of the African Ivory Route. Back at the camp we lapped some Hartebeest (Red?) and a lovely pair of Spotted Dikkop. That night our sleep was interrupted by a Veld Rat running about our

hut - eventually we managed to guide it out.

We awoke next morning to mist and drizzle. Unperturbed we had a drive around and came across a beautiful female Giraffe with two youngsters of different ages. On our way back we encountered them again, right on a junction where we needed to turn. Eventually they moved out of the way; we stopped and got out of the car a short way ahead, and looking back we could see her stood at the junction again staring at us - what a magical moment!

Back at the camp we saw our first Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Yellow-bellied Bulbul and Golden-breasted Bunting. Rain confined us to our balcony that overlooked a dry riverbed. A family of Warthogs appeared on the opposite bank and entertained us with their digging for roots and tubers (typical winter behaviour). When the rain stopped a small accipiter perched up - we saw it again the next day and it turned out to be a Little Sparrowhawk.

There are no dangerous animals on the reserve so there are walking trails. That evening we went along the Fountain Trail close to dusk. It was not long before the resident Fiery-necked Nightjars came out and we had good views of one on the ground and in flight, then another briefly as well as hearing others.

The reserve was full of birds, especially Black-eyed Bulbuls (at least 200 came out of their roost in the morning), Southern Boubous, Cape White-eye, Fiscal and Marico Flycatchers, White-bellied Sunbirds (had great views of a male displaying showing its yellow shoulder patches) plus robins, francolins and woodpeckers. There is a hide by the camp overlooking a waterhole. Early one morning we saw Blue Wildebeest having a drink. Other mammals seen included Impala, Bushbuck, Nyala, Kudu and Grey Rhebok. If you ever come to this region we highly recommend a stay here, and great value at around £25 per night per hut.

We reluctantly left this special place for our next stop-over, at Luonde Lodge. On route we went into Louis Trichardt for some supplies. On the south edge of town there is Kompost Place; here we saw 37 Hadedda Ibis and a minimum of 80 Cattle Egrets picking their way through the compost heaps - what a sight! West of the town is Spies Dam, an excellent spot to watch waterbirds. The highlight here was 3 Kittlitz's Plovers that were quite tame.

On to Luonde Lodge, which is situated on the south bank of Albasini Dam east of Louis Trichardt, with beautiful thatched chalets that cost around £35 per night per chalet. Acacia woodland and grassland dominate and there

## South Africa 2005

By Mike & Pauline McGough

is the dam to walk down to. Whilst relaxing on our balcony we had stunning views of a Lizard Buzzard perched up, then hunting in the long grass. Nearby a Black-headed Heron stalked through the grass and on the lawns were Yellow-throated Longclaw and White-browed Sparrow-weavers. Also on the lawns were large, round lights that during the day were used as hunting perches by Fiscal Shrikes and Brown-hooded Kingfishers. Down at the dam we watched lots of waterfowl, waders, egrets and kingfishers as well as White-throated Swallow, Black Tits, Rock Martin and Yellow Bishops. We also recorded our first Fish Eagles of the trip - their loud calls are the essence of Africa. An interesting record here was of a female Cape Shoveler with four young, an uncommon bird in these parts.

For our next stop-over we moved along the dam to Shi-

luvari Lodge, more expensive at nearly £60 (though this included breakfast), but very well-run with a good restaurant. The highlights on route were a Verreaux's (Black) Eagle in flight, a Brown Snake-eagle perched by the road on a telegraph pole and some enormous grasshoppers.

The birdlife at Shiluvuri was a bit more extensive because of the habitat (afro-temperate forest, lowveld riverine forest and Miombo woodland). Sunbirds were quite common (Scarlet-chested, Greater Double-collared, Collared, White-bellied) as were Purple-crested Louries, and our one record of Cape Batis was here. Opposite the restaurant a very large tree had a constant occupant during our stay - a very pale, immature Tawny Eagle. The owner had a lovely dog, an Afrikaans breed similar to a Mastiff, and she was followed everywhere by a pet Warthog. This Wart-

hog introduced itself to Michael by banging on the back of his leg while he was photographing something. It was very affectionate and like to be petted, but was also like a juvenile delinquent trashing dustbins and exploring everything. That night we decided to go lamping along a track. There were lots of medium-sized bats flying around, but the highlight was a Thick-tailed Bushbaby clambering along telegraph wires.

Our first five days in South Africa had been a wonderful experience, not just with the wildlife. The people were great too, though the contrast is sharp between the nonsense Afrikaans and the gentle Venda people of the region. It was time to move on to the next stage of our trip. KRUGER NATIONAL PARK beckoned .....

See Page 5.

## Consultation—Blackpool's Countryside Experience

If you have any ideas or comments on Council owned green space in the Blackpool area then you are invited by Blackpool Borough Council's Parks & Green Environmental Services to drop in for a chat with their staff .

"There is a real opportunity to improve Blackpool's Countryside Experience which includes the Woodland Gardens, Heron's Reach, Lawson's Lower Field and Marton Mere Nature Reserve for the local community and wildlife. This drop-in public consultation exercise offers people the chance to find out more about what is on in this area and have a real say in the long term planning, management and future improvement of this important green space. We look forward to meeting you."

Drop in anytime from 1.00pm until 7.00pm on Saturday 26th August at the Visitor Centre, Stanley Park. For more information contact: Parks & Green Environmental Services, Stanley Park Offices. Tel: 01253 477477

## Kruger National Park (Part 1)

By Mike & Pauline McGough

This trip took place at the end of the South African winter during the dry season. At the time of writing this article there were 12.85 rands to £1.

### 31<sup>st</sup> August

We arrived at the Punda Maria Gate in the north of the National Park early afternoon. On arrival a park official appears, instructing you to park your vehicle and check in. Our passports were at hand plus the confirmation letter of booked accommodation. The daily conservation fee is 120 rands per person. Our length of stay was 9 nights so we opted for the Wild Card. This costs 1420 rands for two people, lasts 12 months and can be used in ALL South African National Parks. Officialdom over, we now had access to the National Park.

The first birds seen were six White-crested Helmet-shrikes and the first mammals just had to be Impala. Up to 150,000 Impala roam the Park and are an important indicator species of the welfare of predators. There are so many birds and animals to see that this article can only give you the highlights.

Punda Maria Camp is only nine kms from the gate, so it is not long before you are checked in. We were like kids at Christmas, not knowing what to do first. We had a walk along the Flycatcher Trail, managing to find the elusive Bearded Robin, and

near our room was a stunning Heuglin's Robin and Grey-headed Bush-shrike. Time was getting on and we were itching to get out there before the camp gates close at 6pm. We just had time for a short drive. Four elephants were not far from the gate, along with eight Kudu and a very tame pair of Natal Francolin (a common and widespread bird). On the way back in, towards dusk, a lovely Bushbuck was seen sat down in the grass. Back in camp medium-sized bats were flying about, the frog chorus started up and little geckos came out to hunt by the hut lights.

### 1<sup>st</sup> September

On our first full day in the Park and we decided to travel to Pafuri Picnic Site in the north-east corner. It's only about 50 kms, but with so much to see it took us 2 hours 45 minutes to get there! The speed limit is 50km (30 miles) per hour on

main roads and 40km (24 miles) per hour on gravel roads, but we had no chance of being close to that. A special bird to look for in this region is Arnott's Chat, and luckily we saw one male by the road. Shortly after a pair of Crowned Plover flew up from the road calling loudly, and a Pearl-spotted Owlet was perched up. Whenever the road crosses a river/riverbed you usually see hirundines and swifts - on this journey there were Greater Striped Swallow, Brown-throated Martin and Palm Swift. We briefly saw a Black-backed Jackal trot across the road not long before coming across the amazing sight of Baobob Hill (461 metres) ahead with its ancient tree on top - and to complete the picture a Brown Snake-eagle was perched on top of the tree.

Pafuri Picnic Site is renowned to South African birders for the chance of seeing birds from further north straying into



Blacksmith Plover by Mike McGough

## Kruger National Park (Part 1)

By Mike & Pauline McGough

this corner of the country (Tropical Boubou, Bohm's Spinetail and others) but we were out of luck on this visit; perhaps summer is a better time. However, there is still plenty to see and we contented ourselves watching White-fronted Bee-eaters, and a stately Goliath Heron walking through an area recently trashed by elephants. All the picnic sites have hot water, toilets and cooking facilities. Some have food kiosks but beware - there are monkeys and baboons as well. Along with the viewpoints and hides the picnic sites are a welcome break from staying in your vehicle.

On our return journey we stopped off at Klopperfontein Waterhole, a decent-sized bit of water in this otherwise dry region. Four elephants were bathing with waterbirds around them, one being our familiar Moorhen creating a surreal scene. A mammal you will only find in the northern areas of the Park is a beautiful antelope called Nyala.

They have particular habitat requirements, but the mopane thickets here suit them very well, so they are commonly seen.

Back at the camp Michael went for a walk with his camera gear and tripod. A group of female Vervet Monkeys with young were not impressed and threatened attack with bared teeth – only a thrown brick made them back off.

A short drive from the camp (30km) is the Mahonie Loop, which is ideal for an afternoon adventure. Black-headed Oriole, Red-faced Mousebird and Crested Guineafowl were added to our ever-growing list of birds. A feature of this region are the enormous red termite mounds. We sat admiring one of these, lit by the setting sun, when a little animal appeared. It was an adorable Dwarf Mongoose, soon joined by three others; an enchanting scene. More of the usual mammals were seen, and nearly back at camp

about 250 Little Swifts were doing their pre-roost flight together. As dusk fell over the camp we could hear the unmistakable calls of Purple-crested Louries nearby.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> September

At dawn, whilst loading the car to leave, a bird flew over then landed for a short spell and turned out to be an Ovambo Sparrowhawk. No sooner had we enjoyed that sight than a ranger approached. He had just come into the camp and said there were six lions just 1km from the gate! Off we went, but there was no sign of them. We slowly drove up to the spot, avidly looking left and right, then we saw a lion back from the road laid down and looking straight towards us. Shortly after it got up and walked to the road at an angle, still looking but not at us. Four more lions came out and sat on the road in front of us. Michael was in his element, taking photos and film galore while I'm saying 'get that window up now' or words to that effect, because we were told there were six. Moments later number six appeared from the left, a magnificent mature male joining the others on the road. What a sight that was, and nobody else was around at the time. Eventually, they walked off back into the scrub. A little further down the road an African Civet strolled across in front of us - all this and it was still only 6.40a.m.



Bateleurs By Mike McGough

## Kruger National Park (Part 1)

By Mike & Pauline McGough

We were now heading south towards Shingwedzi (70km). We came across a Sharpe's Grysbok by the road, looking back at us in its characteristic frozen mode. This little antelope thrives among the baobabs, but a common and more widespread small antelope to be seen is the Steenbok. Giraffe and Zebra are a little more numerous now and we found the first Blue Wildebeest near Shingwedzi.

Amongst the birds recorded on the way were Dark Chanting Goshawk, African Green Pigeon, Red-headed Weavers and Lilac-breasted Rollers.

At Babalala Picnic Site we met a visiting South African called Barry who shared an interest in photography. Michael needed to put his batteries on charge, but had the wrong adaptor (do not get a worldwide adaptor, you need to get one specifically for South Africa). With Barry having the right adaptor we adjourned to Shingwedzi Camp to sort it out. It was early afternoon and 34

degrees C, so we relaxed and chatted on our verandah and got out some biscuits. All hell broke loose as we were inundated with birds hoping for a few spilled crumbs. There were hornbills, glossy starlings, sparrows (including Yellow-throated) and a bossy Fork-tailed Drongo took up position on a barbecue stand plus a Tree Squirrel sat below. Our first African Mourning Doves appeared on the

scene. We also enjoyed great views of Yellow-billed Kite and Bateleur flying overhead.

Barry departed because he was staying at the next camp down, and we went for a drive nearby on the Kanniedood Loop. A dam produced the first Hippos and Fish Eagles. Further on there was a great view of what would be a river in the wet season, but at this time of year it was very low. This results in lots of fish being stranded in the shallows, which attracts many birds to feast on them. There was a feeding melee of Marabou and Yellow-billed Storks, Hadeda Ibis, Hamerkop, White Pelican, African Spoonbill plus herons and egrets.

Back at camp near to dusk the grandly-named Peter's Epauletted Fruit Bats emerged. In recent years staff have been erecting special roost boxes on poles which the bats have taken to very well.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> September

We visited Kanniedood again first thing. This time there was a troop of Chacma Baboons quietly feeding by the roadside, and some waders down on the mud - not just the familiar Common and Wood Sandpipers but White-fronted Plover as well.

Before continuing on to Letaba Camp (109km) we went on the Red Rocks Loop. Very quickly we added Kori

Bustard, Ground Hornbill (three adults, unfortunately not very close) and Black-backed Puffback. Also on this route we were held up by a large bull elephant standing on the road, then a herd of several hundred buffalo ambled across to a riverbed. This was certainly a lesson in keeping watch on the time it takes to get to places. Red Rocks Lookout is very scenic, and the resident Fish Eagles put on a good display (these birds are a common sight from now on).

Back on the main road to Letaba found us in more open habitat. Long-tailed Shrikes and Bateleurs are more prominent. Later we saw our first Martial Eagle perched up, looking enormous because of its long legs. About half way through the journey there is an opportunity to get out and stretch your legs at a hide overlooking Pioneer Dam. The usual waterbirds are here, including Blacksmith and Three-banded Plovers. A surprising record was of a Stierling's Barred Warbler in full view by the hide. There are plenty of waterholes on the way to the camp, and at Twisappel Dam nearly 40 elephants were a fine sight.

Letaba Camp is quite special, overlooking the river of the same name. Our accommodation was very close to the north side of the camp very near to the river. There was plenty going on out there but

## Kruger National Park (Part 1)

By Mike & Pauline McGough

the highlight was at dusk when the Mozambique Nightjar came out. Earlier we had walked round the camp, enjoying Brown Robin and Kurrichane Thrush and one of the resident Bushbuck laid down in front of us with a Red-billed Oxpecker on its back. We went on our first Night Drive from here recording Spotted Hyena, Side-striped Jackal, African Wild Cat, Scrub Hare and Water Dikkop. All the camps provide organised drives three or four times a day and are worth every penny.

The following morning we went in search of Natal Robin without much success, but enjoyed good views of Brown-headed Parrots and Speckled Mousebirds eating flowers. Further along the path we told some other birders about these, and before they left to view them they told us about a Natal Robin beyond the restaurant, so our search for this special bird was now over. We had more spare time today because our next camp was less than 40km away.

Our first excursion outside was on the other side of the river, to the Mantambeni Hide overlooking Englehard Dam east of the camp. This is a major expanse of water hosting lots of waterbirds, including large numbers of Egyptian and Spur-winged Geese, White-Faced Whistling Ducks, Black Crakes, African Jacanas and Openbill Storks. Interesting sightings were a

Black Egret demonstrating the umbrella mode of its wings when stalking fish and a Lesser Jacana, a rare species (full description taken). We then relocated to overlook Mingerhout Dam from the road - we counted 28 Crocodiles hauled out plus a few Woolly-necked Storks.

Arrived at Olifants Camp mid-afternoon. This is set high up on a bluff with spectacular views of the river and the plains beyond, and the accommodation is terraced. A particular bird to see here is the Red-winged Starling. Also, a Klaus's Cuckoo dazzled us with its bright green plumage while it picked off insects visiting flowers. Down by the river a pair of Fish Eagles had two young in the nest, and as dusk approached about 40 Red-billed Oxpeckers came in to roost. The Night Drive from here was similar to last night's except this time we had our first encounter with a Leopard. Whilst observing a female Hyena curled up by the road with remains of a meal, this Leopard strolled across the road behind the vehicle then sat down behind some vegetation. We observed it for about 15 minutes but it was evident it would not come back into the open while we were there.

### 5<sup>th</sup> September

An interesting circular route near to Olifants takes in Nwamanzi Viewpoint overlooking another section of the river at an elevation similar to that at

the camp. There were plenty of herons and waders on view and across from us a Tawny Eagle was perched up. Down on the rocks a pair of lions were canoodling.

We were now just a little over halfway through our visit to the National Park and about to continue south to Satara. The southern half of the Park has more open habitat and larger concentrations of mammals.

*To be continued .....*

*Part 2 of Mike & Pauline McGough's exciting trip into Kruger Park can be enjoyed in the next FBC Newsletter in November 2006.*



White-fronted Bee-eater  
By Mike McGough





The following information is taken directly from the Spring 2006 newsletter of the BTO/Bird Clubs Partnership with kind permission of the BTO/BCP.



The Spring 2006 newsletter of the BTO/Bird Clubs Partnership contained some very interesting information on surveys planned and in progress, which may be of interest to FBC members. Derek Toomer (Membership Development Officer) has kindly given permission on behalf of the BTO/BCP for the following information to be reproduced from the BTO/BCP newsletter. If you would like any information about the BTO visit their website at [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)

#### **Breeding Little Ringed and Ringed Plover Survey 2007 (NOTE: subject to funding).**

The BTO is planning to organise a national survey of Little Ringed Plover and Ringed Plover during the 2007 breeding season. This will be the first census since 1984.

The first pair of Little Ringed Plover nested at Tring Reservoirs in 1938. Ever since breeding numbers have increased continuously, accompanied by a west- and northwards range expansion. The latest population estimate available, in the *BTO New Atlas of Breeding Birds (1988-91)*, is about 800-1,000 summering pairs for the 1988-91 period.

The 1984 census of Ringed Plover revealed a national total of ca. 8,600 pairs, about two thirds of which bred in Scotland. There had been several local

and regional population declines and a distinct spread from the coast to inland sites since the 1970s. The species is now Amber-listed, and the UK and the Republic of Ireland together hold around 80% of the temperate breeding population of the nominate race, making it important to monitor the national population on a regular basis.

The main objective of the survey is to obtain updated population estimates for Ringed and Little Ringed Plover. Also, we are interested in the current spatial distribution, habitat dependencies and patterns of co-occurrence of the two species. There will be a large number of sites involved, and we will probably aim to survey a sample of previously recorded sites and sites known to have been colonised subsequently, plus a stratified selection of random sites. The field methods will involve three site visits between April and July 2007 counting the number of pairs / adults present. The level of skill required for this survey is the ability to identify Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers.

If you would like more information about this survey or know of a site which you would like to survey, please contact Markus Handschuh at BTO HQ (E-mail: [markus.handschuh@bto.org](mailto:markus.handschuh@bto.org) Tel: 01842 750050). *Markus Handschuh & Niall Burton*

#### **Breeding Great Crested Grebe Survey 2007 (NOTE: subject to funding).**

In 2007, the BTO plans to organise a national Great Crested Grebe survey (currently pending funding). This will be the first national survey of the species in over 30 years, which will provide an updated breeding population estimate. The breeding population has increased considerably, as illustrated by the results of the previous surveys in 1931, 1965 and 1975, which revealed estimates of ca. 2,800, 4,700 and 6,800 individuals, respectively. A further increase was indicated by the *BTO New Atlas of Breeding Birds (1988-91)*, which estimated 8,000 breeding individuals in Britain and a further 4,150 in Ireland. Together with increasing breeding numbers the species' distribution has also expanded.

The methods for the survey are being trialled during spring/summer 2006, however, it is likely that two to three survey visits will be required during the survey period (April to July). The bulk of the survey will involve counting the number of breeding adults as well as nest and family parties. Some basic information on the type of water body will also be collected.

If you would like more information about this survey or know of a site which you would like to survey, please contact Greg Conway at BTO HQ (E-mail: [greg.conway@bto.org](mailto:greg.conway@bto.org) Tel.: 01842 750050). *Greg Conway & Niall Burton*



The following information is taken directly from the Spring 2006 newsletter of the BTO/ Bird Clubs Partnership with kind permission of the BTO/ BCP.



### Collating information on farmland and woodland birds

A UK wide project to collate information on farmland and woodland bird populations from a range of sources has just started. This project is focused on relatively scarce species and will ensure that initiatives such as the Government's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, and the English Woodland Grant scheme are targeted to the right areas to help species like Tree Sparrow, Lapwing, Grey Partridge, Nightingale, Spotted Flycatcher and Nightjar. This could be used to encourage provision of over-winter stubbles in areas thought to hold concentrations of seed-eating birds, or to improve woodland where important concentrations of woodland birds exist. The project is a continuation, and expansion, of the previous Farmland Bird Database project, which contributed to *Nature on the Map*, a public-access website hosted by English Nature that can be used to check on the distributions of farmland birds near any particular site.

Data collation of records from 1990 to 2005 is being undertaken by a close working Partnership between the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, English Nature, Forestry Commission, Rural Development Service, and the British Trust for Ornithology, who will be contributing their nationally-held datasets. The target species are: Tree Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Black

Grouse, Stone Curlew, Cirl Bunting, Twite, Ring Ouzel, Yellow Wagtail, Turtle Dove, Grey Partridge, Woodlark, Lapwing, Curlew, Redshank, Snipe, Firecrest, Grasshopper Warbler, Hawfinch, Lesser Redpoll, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Long-eared Owl, Marsh Tit, Nightingale, Nightjar, Pied Flycatcher, Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher, Tree Pipit, Whinchat, Willow Tit, Wood Warbler, Woodcock.

County bird recorders and bird clubs will shortly receive a request for additional data (i.e. not data previously supplied to the Farmland Bird Database) with information about how the data will be used. We hope that you are able to contribute and we look forward to your support for this project to make a real difference to farmland and woodland bird conservation. For further details, please contact the project officer (Sally.Fisher@rspb.org.uk) or David.Noble@bto.org at BTO Thetford HQ. *David Noble*

### The Non-estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey (NEWS) December 2006 – January 2007

The United Kingdom is internationally important for its numbers of wintering waterbirds, and many of these are monitored annually by the BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC Wetland Bird Survey counts (WeBS). However, most WeBS counts are made on estuaries and inland waterbodies, thereby leaving the majority of our coastline uncounted. Impor-

tant populations of several species occur around our shores outwith estuaries, and consequently their numbers are not monitored annually by the WeBS counts. In a bid to bolster our knowledge of waterbird populations around our coastline, the 1984-85 Winter Shorebird Count (WSC) was organised by the BTO, and found that the non-estuarine coast held particularly important numbers of Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone. Building on the success of the WSC, a repeat survey, the Non-estuarine Coastal Waterbird Survey (NEWS), was carried out over the 1997-98 winter. Comparing the results from NEWS to those of the WSC revealed declines in the numbers of Ringed Plover (-15%), Sanderling (-20%), Purple Sandpiper (-21%), Bar-tailed Godwit (-44%) and Turnstone (-16%) wintering around the UK coastline. NEWS also revealed changes in the winter distribution of species such as Ringed Plover and Purple Sandpiper, with the greatest densities of birds recorded on the Western Isles. These changes could be linked to our changing climate, with milder winters allowing birds to winter further north.

It is nine years since the 1997-98 survey, and we are running it again next winter (December 2006-January 2007). There is plenty of anecdotal information to suggest that the populations of species such as Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone (amongst



The following information is taken directly from the Spring 2006 newsletter of the BTO/ Bird Clubs Partnership with kind permission of the BTO/ BCP.



others) have further declined since the previous survey, whilst the distribution of other species has continued to change.

We achieved good coverage during the last survey, but inevitably, we are likely to have a shortage of counters in some regions, such as Highland Scotland, the Inner Hebrides, the Western Isles and Shetland. So, if you think that you would like to contribute to a worthwhile survey over the festive period, then please contact Steve Holloway at BTO Thetford HQ, E-mail: Steve.Holloway@bto.org

#### **2006 Woodlark and Dartford Warbler – Breeding season records required.**

All records are required for singing male Woodlarks (between 15th February and 31st May) & Dartford Warblers (between 1st April and 31st July). This information will be used to supplement records collected by the national surveys, currently taking place this summer. Both surveys are a joint collaboration between the BTO, RSPB, Forestry Commission (England), JNCC and English Nature but organised by BTO and RSPB.

Although the main sites are already being covered, we are still very keen to receive details of additional records during the breeding season, particularly from potentially new sites or parts of the country where breeding records are scarce.

Please contact Greg Conway at BTO Thetford HQ (Email: greg.conway@bto.org; Tel.: 01842 750050). Recording forms and further details of the surveys can be obtained from the following website: [http://www.bto.org/survey/special/dartford\\_woodlark.htm](http://www.bto.org/survey/special/dartford_woodlark.htm)

### **Black tailed Godwit Nest Watch 2006**

by Paul Ellis based on a report produced by Carol Coupe of the RSPB

Two pairs of Black tailed Godwits nested on Newton Marsh in 2006. Round the clock wardening by volunteers and RSPB staff was organised. Electric fences were erected to deter cattle from accidentally trampling the nests.

The first nest was predated, probably by a fox but the pair re-laid.

Three chicks hatched from the second nest. Unfortunately they were only seen for a few days and may have perished during the poor weather which prevailed at the time.

Ultra sonic deterrents and a Lion scented repellent were deployed in an attempt to protect the third nest (replacement for the first) from predation. The effectiveness of deterrents was uncertain, however no foxes were seen to enter the electric fenced areas or approach them after they were introduced. Subsequently three chicks hatched from this nest. Within two days two of these chicks had disappeared but the third survived and remained with its parents until the 21st July.

Thanks are due to all the

volunteer wardens and the staff of the RSPB, particularly Carol Coupe.



Juv Black tailed Godwit  
by Paul Ellis  
Mythop. August 2004

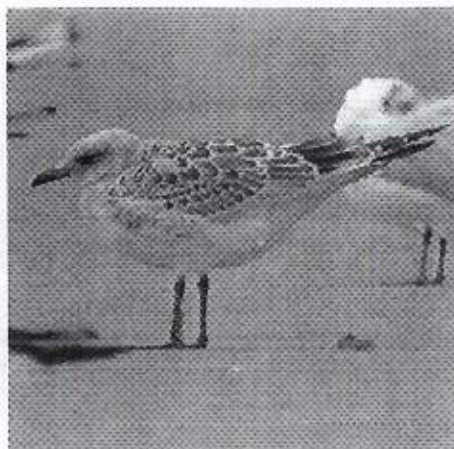
## Recent Bird Sightings by Stuart Piner

### MAY

Another month, another class national rarity found in the Fylde. And there are no prizes for guessing who the finder was... Yes, once again, 'Magic Maurice Jones' conjured a Broad-billed Sandpiper with Dunlin at Cockersand on 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. This is only the fifth Fylde record, and the first since 1987.

*"'Magic Maurice Jones' conjured a Broad-billed Sandpiper with Dunlin at Cockersand on 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>."*

Even rarer in Fylde terms was a first-summer Night Heron at an undisclosed site in north Fylde, to which the landowner would not allow general access. Present from at least 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> May, it constituted only the third modern record. It is a crying shame that nothing could be done to allow keen locals to see such a fantastic rarity.



Juvenile Mediterranean Gull  
By Chris Batty  
Cockers Dyke. 6th July 2006

On 7<sup>th</sup> came a report of a Black Kite flying south over Lytham; if this sighting passes the assessment process of the Lancashire Rarities Committee, it will be the first accepted Fylde record.

Lingers from April included a pair of Garganey at Mythop (the male staying until the 20<sup>th</sup>), a female Scaup on Conder Pool (till 5<sup>th</sup>). On 1<sup>st</sup> a pair of Garganey were at Bispham Marsh, a Great Skua flew north past Rossall School and a Spotted Flycatcher was at Stanley Park; Spotted Flycatchers were widespread during the first half of the month, including 6 in Stanley Park on 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>.

The following day a Black Tern flew past Starr Gate and a Yellow Wagtail was at Mythop. Another Yellow Wagtail was at Fairhaven on 3<sup>rd</sup>, and two Wood Warblers were singing in Stanley Park on the same day, where at least one remained till 6<sup>th</sup>; another Wood Warbler was singing in Thurnham early in the month. Classic 'Black Tern weather' on 4<sup>th</sup> produced a couple at Marton Mere and a further three were logged past Rossall Point, along with two Little Terns and an Arctic Skua; Arctic Skuas were

typically regular off coastal sites throughout first half of the month. Another six Little Terns headed north past Starr Gate on 5<sup>th</sup>, with three more past Rossall Point on 6<sup>th</sup>; four Tree Pipits were also logged over the latter site.

Starr Gate produced a fantastic set of birds on 7<sup>th</sup>, chief of which was a Puffin. A Great Northern Diver, 18 Black Terns, three Little Terns and two Mediterranean Gulls formed an impressive supporting cast. The Starr Gate show continued on 8<sup>th</sup>, with Black Tern, two Little Terns and two Scaup all being logged. A Short-eared Owl was at Burrow's Marsh on the same day. Starr Gate once again stole the headlines on 9<sup>th</sup> when an adult pale morph Pomarine Skua flew south, and at Rossall Point a male Garganey was an exciting seawatching record.

The 10<sup>th</sup> offered a Hooded Crow at Jameson Road Landfill Site, Wood Warbler at Bourne Hill, Yellow Wagtail at Newton Marsh, and a first-summer Dark-bellied Brent Goose was located at Cockersand, where it remained till 20<sup>th</sup>. An adult Black Guillemot flew past Rossall Point on 11<sup>th</sup>. In south Fylde, a male Marsh Harrier was over Warton Marsh on 12<sup>th</sup>. Another Hooded Crow was at Bank End on 14<sup>th</sup>, along with a Little Stint and nearby two Curlew Sandpiper joined Dunlin at Cockersand. An Osprey was seen flying over the same site by those twitching the Broad-billed Sandpiper on 15<sup>th</sup>. The 16<sup>th</sup> produced an impressive total of three Pomarine Skuas past Rossall Point, whilst elsewhere an Osprey was over Newton Marsh and female Marsh Harrier was at Rawcliffe Moss.

## Recent Bird Sightings by Stuart Piner

From mid-month things began to slow down, but a single Little Tern past Rossall Point on 18<sup>th</sup>, and a brace past Starr Gate on 25<sup>th</sup> were both notable. Two male Garganey were at Marton Mere on 25<sup>th</sup> and another male was at Newton Marsh 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. Finally, a Curlew Sandpiper was at Lytham on 31<sup>st</sup>.

### JUNE

There was very little to shout about during a typically quiet June. A Wood Warbler was heard singing at Thurnham Hall on 4<sup>th</sup>, and the same day produced a male Garganey at Marton Mere, Little Egret at Fairhaven and a Curlew Sandpiper at Freckleton Naze Point, the latter being a good June record. The Marton Mere Garganey was joined by a second male on 6<sup>th</sup> June, and they were present till the 7<sup>th</sup>; one remained until the 8<sup>th</sup>. News of a pratincole species seen at Warton BAe Systems on the 8<sup>th</sup> was frustrating. Hot on the heels of last year's adult Collared Pratincole at nearby Freckleton, this could easily perhaps have been the same bird.

Myerscough Quarry hosted three adult Mediterranean Gulls on 8<sup>th</sup>, presumably the same birds that were also seen there towards the end of the month, along with two first-summer birds. Single Mediterranean Gulls were seen at several sites during the month. A couple of Arctic Skuas flew past Starr Gate on 12<sup>th</sup> (another was noted there on 22<sup>nd</sup>) and a Little Egret was at Shard Bridge on 16<sup>th</sup>.

Strong westerly winds on 22<sup>nd</sup> forced two Storm Petrels close enough inshore to be seen past Cleveleys, along with an Arctic Skua. Other Storm Petrels, probably different birds, were logged past Little Bispham and Blackpool Central Pier. Freckleton Naze Point hosted a Little Egret on 28<sup>th</sup> and the first Quail of the summer was heard singing at Eagland Hill, where it remained into July.

### JULY

The majority of the month was decidedly quiet, and even late July, a period which has provided excellent local birding in recent years, was relatively uneventful. The Quail at Eagland Hill, initially found in June, was present until at least 3rd, and was the only individual reported during what has been a very poor summer for this species. Mediterranean Gull numbers typically began to increase during the month and Little Egrets were more abundant than they have ever been, with a record count of eight at Freckleton Naze

Pool on 29th. The adult Yellow-legged Gull returned to Glasson on 13th July.

An adult Curlew Sandpiper joined the Dunlin flock at Skipool Creek on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25th but wasn't at all easy to connect with, only being seen on the two mentioned dates. A Wood Sandpiper was at Mythop 25th-26th.

Just as July threatened to pass without producing any local rarities, a stunning adult Roseate Tern was located at Knott End on 29th. The bird was only present intermittently over the high tide period in the afternoon, only allowing enough time for a fortunate few to successfully twitch it. Given the recent increase in the species in the British Isles and the regular late summer gathering of terns at Knott End, future records of Roseate Terns are likely; those who dipped on this individual are certainly hoping so!

The penultimate day of the month produced five Ravens over Warton Marsh and three Arctic Skuas were logged at Rossall Point during the latter days of July.



Adult Roseate Tern  
By Chris Batty  
Knott End. 29th July 2006

## Forthcoming FBC meetings

River Wyre Hotel, Poulton Le Fylde. 7.45pm

26th September: Birds of the Pantanal by Paul Hopkins. Introduced by Tony Myerscough.

24th October: Business Update & members slides

28th November: Birds of Bowland with Peter Wilson

19th December: Xmas Social, Quiz & Buffet

The full programme for 2006 can be found on the FBC website

## Diary Dates

### 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 (grey boxes in table), 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.

### Wyre Guided Walks (with Fylde Bird Club)

Sunday 10th September: Waders & Wildfowl

A walk with Fylde Bird Club and Rangers to look for migrating and wintering wildfowl and waders in Morecambe Bay. 10.30am–2.00pm. Meet at Pilling Lane Ends.

Date			Time	Height m
Sep	Sat	2	1829	7.1
	Sun	3	0714	7.0
	Sat	9	1300	10.0
	Sun	10	1340	10.0
	Sat	16	0641	7.1
	<b>Sun</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0820</b>	<b>7.2</b>
	Sat	23	1230	9.2
	Sun	24	1300	9.3
	Sat	30	1633	7.5
	Oct	Sun	1	1759
Sat		7	1152	9.9
<b>Sun</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>1234</b>	<b>10.1</b>
Sat		14	1717	7.4
Sun		15	0620	7.0
Sat		21	1128	9.1
Sun		22	1159	9.2
Sat		28	1523	8.1
Sun		29	1522	7.7
Nov		Sat	4	0942
	Sun	5	1027	9.8
	Sat	11	1444	8.0
	Sun	12	1545	7.6
	Sat	18	0918	8.6
	<b>Sun</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0954</b>	<b>8.8</b>
	Sat	25	1332	8.6
Sun	26	1420	8.4	



## Good Birding

Visit the Fylde Bird Club website at [www.fyldebirdclub.org](http://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 4<sup>th</sup> 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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