

Newsletter May 2006



Fylde Bird Club

LANCASHIRE

Visit our Website at www.fyldebirdclub.org

Welcome by Kinta Beaver

Welcome to the FBC May 2006 newsletter. Since the last newsletter in February we have had two excellent presentations at FBC meetings. On 28th February Steve Knell showed us some wonderful photographs of Shetland wildlife. On 28th March Seamus Eaves gave a most interesting and informative talk on the Farming & Wildlife Advi-

sory Group.

Membership of Fylde Bird Club is at an all time high as you can see from the graph on page 12. At the time of writing we had 103 members ! I feel sure that the excellent website run by Chris Batty is mostly responsible for our increase in numbers, making so much information accessible on local birding.

The annual Fylde Bird Race officially took place in April. Chris Batty, Stephen Dunstan & Stuart Piner achieved an all time record count of 133 species. The team of Paul Ellis, Ian Gardner, Dave Hall & Peter Scholes also achieved an amazing count with 126 species. The full lists are available on FBC website.

I hope you enjoy the May newsletter .

Inside this issue:

<i>Welcome</i>	1
<i>Congratulations</i>	1
<i>The number of bird species recorded in Lancashire & the Fylde</i>	2
<i>Recent bird sightings</i>	5
<i>I have been known to twitch</i>	7
<i>Field Voles + Nest Boxes - Barn Owls</i>	9
<i>Moth identification</i>	9
<i>Local patch birding: North West Singleton 3rd March 2006</i>	10
<i>Business Round-up</i>	12
<i>A Birding trip to Fuerteventura, Canary Islands 5th to 11th February 2006</i>	13
<i>Diary Dates</i>	14



Theo Slade

Congratulations to our Chairman

Many congratulations to our Chairman Paul Slade and his wife Sarah. Paul and Sarah are the proud new parents of Baby Theo Ray Slade, born at 11.19am on Friday 19th May and weighing 6lb 11 oz. Is Theo destined to be the youngest member of FBC ?

The number of bird species recorded in Lancashire & the Fylde

By Frank Walsh

The first account of the birds of Lancashire was written by F.S. Mitchell (1884) with a revised 2nd Edition compiled by Howard Saunders in 1892. This was superseded only 60+ years later when Clifford Oakes produced his book of the same title in 1953. In 1973 Ken Spencer summarized the status and distribution of the birds of the same area. For all these books Lancashire included the Furness District (now Cumbria), large parts of what is now Greater Manchester and a significant area around Warrington, which is now Cheshire. At that time the Slaidburn-Stocks Reservoir area was in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Subsequently, the Local Government reorganization of 1973-74 substantially reduced the area covered by the Lancashire Bird Report and by the forthcoming Birds of Lancashire & North Merseyside.

In the 2nd Edition of Mitchell, 257 species (as defined in 2005) were recorded for the 'old' Lancashire. These were 170 non-passerines and 87 passerines. Of the rarer species many were, of course, shot. These included 10 non-passerines and 3 passerines which appear not to have been recorded in our 'new' area (Appendix I). This leaves us with a total of 244 species for our present area.

Oakes, in his excellently researched book, recorded 265 species (including Broad-billed Sandpiper in an Addendum), 174 non-passerines and 91 passerines. Of these, eight non-passerines and 4 passerines seem not to have been recorded in our 'new' area at that time (Appendix II). This leaves us with a total of 253 species for our present area.

Spencer gave some details of 314 species, 210 non-passerines and 104 passerines. So the proportion of passerines did not change much in that period (Table 1). Of those species listed by Spencer it seems probable that 7 non-passerines and 2 passerines had not been recorded in the 'new' area and three other non-passerines may not have occurred there (Appendix III). This gives a total of 305 species. In addition, Ross's Goose and Demoiselle Crane, listed by Spencer, are not on the British List.

The 2006 book edited by Steve White & Maurice Jones will record 361 species, not including escapes.

It is interesting that Oakes makes the point that up to c.1920 the published literature dealing with Lancashire was greater than that for any other

county (Mullens, W.H., Swann, H.K. & Jourdain, F.C.R. (1920) Geographical Bibliography of British Ornithology). It is also perhaps surprising that the rate at which new species were added to the County list was greater between 1953 and 1973 than subsequently. It is also perhaps surprising that the proportion of passerines has not increased greatly in recent times, despite the great increase in the bird watching population and the massive improvement in optics and other aids.

From a total of 361 species to be covered in the 2006 book, Appendix IV lists 54 which appear not to have been recorded in the Fylde to date. The key reference for Fylde Birds is Jones, M. (1978) Systematic List of the Birds of the Fylde. The Fylde Naturalist 4: 3-33. This paper covers all records to December 1975; it also gives the boundaries of the Fylde Region, which are now used by the Fylde Bird Club. I have updated the list using FBC Annual Reports and checked BBRC acceptance by reference to L&CFS Annual Bird Reports.

Many of these species yet to be recorded in the Fylde are essentially marine and coastal birds, so there is still plenty of birding to be done.

Table 1. Numbers of bird species recorded in Lancashire and the Fylde Region

Author(s)	Date	Non-passerines	Passerines (%)	Total species	New sp/ year
Mitchell	1892	160	84 (34.4)	244	-
Oakes	1953	166	87 (34.4)	253	0.148
Spencer	1973	203	102 (33.4)	305	2.600
White & Jones	2006	231	130 (36.0)	361	1.697
Jones & FBC (Fylde)	1978 and to end 2005	200	107 (35.1)	307	-

The number of bird species recorded in Lancashire & the Fylde
By Frank Walsh *continued*

APPENDIX I. - Species included by Mitchell (1892) but which had not been recorded in our 'new' area at that time.

Black-throated Wheatear
Firecrest
Ortolan Bunting
Scops Owl
Spotted Eagle
Golden Eagle
Red-footed Falcon
Purple Heron
Ferruginous Duck (White-eyed Duck)
Baillons Crake
Roseate Tern
White-faced Petrel
Wilson's Petrel.

APPENDIX II. - Species included by Oakes (1953) but which had not been recorded in our 'new' area at that time.

Chough
Rose-coloured Starling
Pine Grosbeak
Ortolan Bunting
Golden Eagle
Spotted Eagle
Montagu's Harrier
Honey Buzzard
Wilson's Petrel
Kentish plover
Sooty tern

APPENDIX III. - Species included by Spencer (1973) but which had not been recorded in our 'new' area at that time.

Cory's Shearwater
Ring-necked Duck
Ross's Goose
Capercaillie
American Snipe
Whiskered Tern
Sooty Tern
Lesser Grey Shrike
White-throated Sparrow.

Also it is not clear that Red-crested Pochard, Ferruginous Duck and Golden Eagle had occurred in our present area.

The number of bird species recorded in Lancashire & the Fylde
By Frank Walsh *continued*

APPENDIX IV - Species recorded in the present area of Lancashire and North Merseyside but which are not yet authentically recorded from the Fylde Region.

Blue-winged Teal	Woodlark
Ring-necked Duck	Red-throated Pipit
Harlequin Duck	Thrush Nightingale
Black Grouse	Siberian Stonechat
Pied-billed Grebe	Pied Wheatear
Fca's Petrel	Aquatic Warbler
Balearic Shearwater	Marsh Warbler
Cattle Egret	Dartford Warbler
Squacco heron	Sardinian Warbler
Great White Egret	Greenish Warbler
Black Stork	Penduline Tit
Black Kite	Wallcreeper
Golden Eagle	Isabelline Shrike
Fleanora's Falcon	Blue Jay
Black-winged Pratincole	Serin
Semi-palmated Sandpiper	Arctic Redpoll
Stilt Sandpiper	Common Rosefinch
Marsh Sandpiper	Song Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	White-crowned Sparrow
Terek Sandpiper	Dark-eyed Junco
Franklin's Gull	Blackpoll Warbler
Laughing Gull	Chil Bunting
Bonaparte's Gull	Black-headed Bunting
Caspian Gull	
Caspian Tern	
Forster's Tern	
Brunnich's Guillemot	
Ring-necked Parakeet	
Tengmalm's Owl*	
Alpine Swift	
Little Swift	

***Note** I have made no value judgements about the validity of this or any other species. I have just worked from existing literature and manuscripts.

Please signal any errors to FBC Newsletters

Recent Bird Sightings by Stuart Piner

FEBRUARY

February's highlight was without doubt the Fylde's first Cetti's Warbler for five years, but otherwise February proved to be a quiet month. Long-stayers lingering into February included up to three Hen Harriers seen regularly over Warton Marsh, along with up to six Little Egrets. Three Long-eared Owls and two Bitterns at Marton Mere; an adult female Scaup at Conder Pool; at least one adult Mediterranean Gull at Pilling Lane; female Mandarin at Stanley Park and at least three Snow Buntings on St Annes North Beach.

A Short-eared Owl was at Warton Marsh on 1st, with other singles at Conder Pool on 2nd, Jameson Road Landfill Site on 16th and Burrow's Marsh on 28th; up to two were at Black Hill throughout the month. A Water Pipit showed at Warton Marsh on 3rd-4th and two were there on 20th. A Willow Tit reappeared at Cottam Brickworks and made appearances on 4th and 26th. Two Barnacle Geese joined Pink-footed Geese at Bond's Farm on 4th.

The month's star bird, a Cetti's Warbler at Marton Mere, was found on 11th, the first there since 2000. The bird stayed put into March, but proved to be typically elusive and may well have been present since late autumn.

A pair of Ravens flew over Warton Marsh on 12th and a Tundra Bean Goose was located amongst Pink-footed Geese at Eagland Hill on 16th. The 17th brought a return of the Marsh Tit to Warton Bank, where it remained until the month end.

A first-winter female Scaup joined the long-staying adult female at Glasson Basin on 17th (both staying until the month end), a Black Redstart was at Bispham on 23rd and a Barnacle Goose was on Pilling Marsh on 25th then at Fluke Hall Lane on 27th and 28th. Finally, a Velvet Scoter was seen from Rossall Point on 27th.

MARCH

March often proves to be an exciting month of striking contrasts; whilst winter keeps a tight hold on proceedings early in the month, as the days start to draw longer and the first summer migrants trickle in, appetites are wet for the spring ahead.

Long-stayers from February included the elusive Cetti's Warbler at Marton Mere, where up to three Long-eared Owls and two Bitterns also remained; Marsh Tit at Warton Bank; Willow Tit at Cottam Brickworks; three Snow Buntings at Starr Gate; two Scaup at Glasson Basin; Little Egrets were typically widely spread and Mediterranean Gulls were again seen regularly, with a peak count of five adults at Cocker's Dyke on 6th.

Warton Marsh provided a spectacle to rival the best of winter raptor roosts on 1st, when a fantastic nine Short-eared Owls, ringtail Hen Harrier, Peregrine and two Merlin were logged, in addition to a supporting cast of two Water Pipits and four Little Egrets. The Short-eared Owl count had risen to ten by the following day; others seen during March included two at Black Hill Farm and singles at Burrow's

Marsh, Lytham and Bradshaw Lane. A male Hen Harrier was also at Warton Marsh early in the month, and another male over Broughton on 18th March was an unusual record.

Scrutiny of the Pink-footed Geese flocks provided the other early month highlight, a Taiga Bean Goose at Dam Side on 3rd. The same or another Bean Goose was on Cockerham Moss on 5th March. The only other waifs with the Pink-footed Geese were single Barnacle Geese at Fluke Hall Lane and Dam Side.

After a rush of excitement early in the month, things quietened a little, but a pair of Raven over Marton Mere on 6th and a male Scaup on Cockerham Marsh on 11th were both notable records. A Purple Sandpiper joined Turnstones at Fleetwood Marine Lake on 17th.

Water Pipits showed at Warton Marsh throughout March and by the end of the month many were beginning to look very smart in their summer dress. At least seven were there on 30th, and on the Wyre Estuary a Water Pipit and a Scandinavian Rock Pipit were at The Heads from 29th.

The final days of the month saw spring migrants arrive in force including a stunning trio of Black-necked Grebes at Marton Mere on 31st, the first spring record in the Fylde since 2003, and the earliest ever spring record on the Fylde. The 22nd produced the first White Wagtails at Lytham and Wheatear at Rossall Point; two Sandwich Terns flew past Rossall Point and the first Swallows and Sand Martins were at Marton Mere and Myerscough Quarry on 27th; a Willow Warbler was singing at Marton Mere on 28th and a Little Ringed

Recent bird sightings By Stuart Piner

Plover was at Myerscough Quarry on 29th. However, an adult Iceland Gull at Warton Marsh on 31st was a reminder that perhaps winter hadn't left us just yet.

APRIL

Many birders spend hour upon hour musing over an age-old question; when there are thousands and thousands of people watching and looking for birds at any given moment, why is it that it is often the same select few that always seem to find the quality rarities? Surely it cannot be just luck? Frustratingly, there doesn't seem to be a definitive answer, but whatever the magic formula is, Maurice Jones seems to have it. On 9th he found yet another first for the Fylde at Marton Mere, a superb adult Laughing Gull.

Last autumn an unprecedented number of this Nearctic gull were displaced to the east side of the Atlantic following a series of severe hurricanes. Individuals were widely spread across coastal Iberia, France and most notably in Britain and Ireland. The Fylde missed out on the autumn arrival, but we waited expectantly to see whether one of these birds would stop off in the Fylde, as it instinctively moved north. We

were not disappointed; a beautiful example of an adult in breeding dress intermittently showed very well, and even came to breed, during its nine day stay.

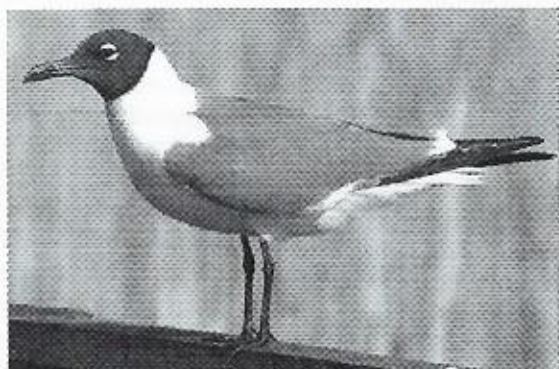
The Cetti's Warbler remained at Marton Mere until the 18th, although stayed frustratingly elusive. Other lingerers from March included the female Scaup on Conder Pool and Barnacle Goose on Pilling Marsh.

The 1st produced a male Ring Ouzel at Rossall Point, the first of the spring, and at least five Water Pipits, seven Mediterranean Gulls and three Short-eared Owls were at Warton Marsh. An impressive twelve Water Pipits were at The Heads on 2nd and another male Ring Ouzel was found, this time at Bispham. The impressive run of Ring Ouzels continued on 3rd, when another was located on Herons' Reach Golf Course and at Myerscough a female Marsh Harrier at Light Ash. A Hooded Crow and Great Northern Diver flew past Rossall Point on 4th (the latter also seen on 9th and 15th) and a male Garganey was located at Mythop on 5th. A Raven was noted at Winmarleigh on 7th, and at the month end a pair were seen with three on nearby Cockerham Marsh on 20th.

Another male Garganey was at Medlar Marsh on 8th, but more notable was a Red Kite seen flying west over the River Ribble near Penwortham - only the sixth Fylde record of this species. The following day an Osprey flew over Fulwood, a ringtail Hen Harrier was at Warton Marsh, the first Tree Pipit of the year flew over Fleetwood ICI Tanks, a Short-eared Owl was at Black Hill Farm and at least seven Mediterranean Gulls were at Mythop. Yet another Ring Ouzel was at Weeton on 11th and 14th produced a Marsh Harrier at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park and the first Whimbrel and Common Sandpiper of the spring, at Myerscough Quarry and Lightfoot Green respectively.

The first Redstart of the spring was at Newton Marsh on 15th, and the first Sedge Warbler was at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park. The following day produced the first Grasshopper Warbler at Fairhaven Lake. A Short-eared Owl was also at Barnaby's Sands.

On 17th the first Arctic Skua of the year flew past Rossall Point and a Whitethroat had returned to Marton Mere. An early Black Tern was at Thornton ICI Reservoir on 18th, and possibly the same Black Tern showed well at Fairhaven Lake on 20th. A Reed Warbler was singing at Marton Mere on 18th and Mealy Redpoll was an excellent record at Fleetwood Marsh on 19th. A fall of Redstarts occurred on 20th; two were at Thurnham and singles were at Marton Mere and Fleetwood Cemetery. The first of an impressive spring for Yellow Wagtails by recent standards were at Cockersand, a notable flock of four. At least eighteen



Laughing Gull by Mike McGough

Recent bird sightings By Stuart Piner

passed through in April. The first Arctic Terns flew past Rossall Point also on 20th and a Swift, the first of the spring, was at Fairhaven Lake. A pair of Garganey arrived at Mythop on 21st and remained into May and nearby a Short-eared Owl was at Marton Mere.

Fleetwood enjoyed a decent fall of migrants on 22nd, best of which were two male Redstarts and a Wood Warbler along with the first Whinchats of the spring. Elsewhere, a Lesser Whitethroat was singing at Bartle Pools. The first Garden Warbler of the year was at Bourne Hill the following

day and a Great Skua flew past Rossall Point. A pair of Avocets at Myerscough Quarry on 23rd were the first inland record of this Fylde scarcity. The same day produced an Osprey over Newton Marsh and a Wood Warbler was singing in Stanley Park, where it remained until the month end, and was joined by another on 28th. The first Pied Flycatcher of the year was also in Stanley Park on 26th.

Second only to the Laughing Gull this month was a frustratingly brief Hoopoe on Fleetwood Golf Course on 27th. Found early morning by Bob Stinger, only

those quick off the mark managed to connect with the bird before it flew off south. The same morning produced a male Blue-headed Wagtail, also on the golf course; a real migration hot-spot! The same day produced an impressive list of scarcities, including the first Spotted Flycatcher of the year at Stanley Park, female Marsh Harrier at Weeton Camp and seven Little Terns and an Arctic Skua past Rossall Point. On 29th the fifth Ring Ouzel of the spring was at Mythop, where it remained into May, another Arctic Skua flew past Rossall Point and two Common Terns, the first of the year, were off Warton Marsh.

All records are from Fylde Bird Club's website at www.fyldebirdclub.org/sightings.htm. Please report your sightings to news@fyldebirdclub.org

I have been known to twitch by Stuart Meredith

I'm pretty fortunate, as I just manage to scrape a living out of watching birds around various parts of Britain, Europe and beyond. Unlike one or two people that we could mention (think ex Leeds Utd and England midfielder here or 70's glam rock band) I wasn't 'born to bird' and the idea of flying off (literally) to a far flung Scottish island in the hope of glimpsing some knackered waif or stray doesn't really appeal to me at all these days, although I 'have been known to twitch' many times in the past including recent forays for the Anglesey Sooty Tern and the Scilly Cream coloured Courser.

Many moons ago I was part of the twitching team that also included our honourable Chairman & Secretary, Ian Gardener and Pete Scholes and over a period of some years did indeed accumulate a list of all sorts of strange feathered beasts, some

of which have never occurred in these Isles again (and are unlikely to ever do so again).

However, over the years, travelling and birding abroad has sort of brought the futility of twitching home to me. These days it is difficult to justify the expense and

"Poland has everything that you could wish for in a European birding holiday."

effort involved in hauling myself off to some far flung remote corner of the country at some unheard of hour of the night to jostle for position in a mob of frothing at the mouth birders with clanking tripods, camera lenses the size of Wales, all hyped up

on a diet of Mars Bars and crisps washed down with coke. And that's just the Chairman and Secretary – you should see the rest of them!! No thank you. More the sedate, relaxing, octogenarian dominated bird tour for me these days.

Probably my two favourite destinations at the moment are Florida and Poland, although I was really looking forward to spending a couple of weeks in Nepal until the natives started shooting each other resulting in the cancellation of our tour.

Poland has everything that you could wish for in a European birding holiday. A list of sought after species including 9 woodpeckers, excellent accommodation, food and superb countryside that's reminiscent of what it was like here 50 years ago (or so the octogenarians tell me).

I have been known to twitch *continued* by Stuart Meredith

However, for a winter break, Florida takes some beating. I've been taking groups there for 7 or 8 years now and every visit has provided exceptional birding. We average around 170 species per trip but it's not the numbers of species that is the only attraction, it's the numbers of actual birds. The place is 'swamped' with them.

Over the dozen or so winter visits that I've made to the sunshine state there have been numerous highlights that include Mangrove Cuckoo, Florida Scrub Jay, 20 or so species of really gaudy warbler (nothing like those miserable looking brown things that we'll all be cooing about in a month or two), a flock of 14 Magnificent Frigatebirds, Scissor tailed Flycatchers, Red headed and Red cockaded Woodpeckers, Lesser Nighthawks, Long billed Curlew, Marbled Godwits, Reddish Egrets, waders (or shorebirds as

the mouth.

Most American birders don't look at the waders as they find them too difficult. Short billed or Long billed Dowitcher? Greater or Lesser Yellowlegs? To be honest they're not really bothered most of the time and the peeps – forget it! But they do enjoy not knowing what the bird in front of them is as much as if they did know what it was.

The rangers (we call them wardens here) are very friendly and helpful as long as you don't ask them too many questions about birds. Ask them about Alligators and you'll never shut them up.

The reserves are excellent. The interpretation and displays in some of the visitor centres are incredible and if you've been to the Everglades NP or to Ding Darling NWR on Sanibel Island you'll know what I mean. Every RSPB / WWT warden should be taken to the US (at their own expense of course – or even better on a Ribble Bird Tour) to see how to really show people wildlife.

As I arrived in Florida this past January I was a little concerned what effect last autumn's storms would have had on the bird population of the area. Florida was impacted by 6 Hurricanes over a 12 month period that included two direct hits in the south just last October and November. I needn't have worried too much because, although some species numbers were down on the norm, the only birds we missed were because parts of the Everglades were closed due to the damage suffered.

My 'Hummingbird Hotspot' in the south had been smashed and looked like a war zone but, incredibly, after a couple of minutes searching through the debris a stonking adult male Ruby throated popped up into view as usual. Nearby we had our staked out Burrowing Owls, Scissor tailed Flycatchers, Western Kingbirds and the bonus of Cave Swallows which don't usually arrive in southern Florida until late January at the very earliest.

One morning we watched countless thousands of Black and Turkey Vultures leaving their overnight roost along with 30+ Short tailed Hawks, Ferruginous Hawks and Swainson's Hawks. Magic. This all goes on at a spot that has Painted Bunting and Yellow breasted Chat to keep you entertained should you go bog eyed trying to count all those raptors.

Florida can be comfortably done in 2 weeks in winter. If you should go in spring you'll need an extra few days for the Dry Tortugas, about 70 miles off the end of the keys. April here is a great time.

But for all the superb birding that Florida has to offer they don't have Black tailed Godwit do they? Marbled Godwit yes but Black tailed Godwit – no. They do in Poland...and Iceland...and of course the Ribble. As we all know, the Blackwit is the worlds most glorious creature. Even more glorious than Charlize Theron but they don't get em in Florida....which just goes to show you that you can't have everything....even in Florida.

"...for a winter break, Florida takes some beating. ...every visit has provided exceptional birding."

the yanks call them) by the million, pools teeming with herons, egrets and ibis and point blank views of Crested Caracara, Bald Eagle and Whooping Crane to name but a very few.

The average American birder is not in the same league, in terms of skill, as UK birders but they sure do know how to enjoy their birding – and they don't froth at

Field Voles + Nest Boxes = Barn Owls

By Monty Myerscough

Being an inquisitive person, I wanted to know the reasons for the sudden increase in the local Barn Owl population, after many years of decline. Surely it couldn't be purely due to the provision of nest boxes and I wondered if they might have changed their diet from being heavily dependent on Field Voles; accounting for 80% of their total intake according to studies.

So I look to analysing Barn Owl pellets from a wide variety of nest sites. Luckily just about everything a Barn Owl eats is readily identifiable from the skulls, when you know what to look for. Teeth are the main identification feature. After analysing 100's of pellets I can confidently state that Barn Owls are just as dependent on Field Voles as they have ever been.

My studies revealed that at least 75%, and in some cases over 80%, of all prey items were indeed Field Vole. The remaining 20-25% included shrews, mice and Bank Voles, in that order.

Other interesting finds were Water Shrew (2 skulls), Harvest Mouse (2 skulls) and Meadow Pipit (1 part skull) and one or two unidentified bones. I'm still hoping to find my first dormouse.

So, Barn Owls are eating the same things they have always eaten. That rules out my first theory; Barn Owls haven't changed their diet.

What other factors could be involved? More suitable habitat being set aside and change of land use? That's one possible explanation. The only problem with that is that Barn Owls are now breeding on farms that haven't changed at all in recent years. Even farms that do not appear to have any suitable hunting i.e. rough grassland, have now got breeding Barn Owls. The Barn Owls on these sites still have a large dependency on Field Voles. That says a lot about the phenomenal hunting technique of this amazingly well adapted hunting machine.

That only leaves suitable nest sites as the main reason for the decline and subsequent population explosion here in the Fylde and also in a number of other areas throughout Britain. I've also considered the possibility that their main prey item, Field Voles, could have suffered a major decline over a long period, due perhaps to disease, loss of habitat or reaction to chemicals. However, there are no studies or documented proof of this.

So, it seems that by simply providing suitable nest sites, in the form of nest boxes, a much loved bird such as the Barn Owl has been helped back from near extinction and is again a welcome sight at dusk and dawn around the countryside. I just hope that this total dependency on nest boxes does not have any adverse consequences in years to come. A modern farm building is about as much use to a Barn Owl as a chocolate tea pot.

Moth identification

By Monty Myerscough

With today's digital technology, it is now quite simple to obtain good quality pictures of even very small subjects. In particular, I'm talking about moths. Many of us carry a small digital camera around with us nowadays when out and about birding. The reason for this article is to encourage those who have such a camera to take pictures of any interesting looking moths they come across while out birding or in the garden. Write the details of

where and when the picture was taken on the back and let me have a copy. I will find out the identification of the moth and pass the information back to you.

Quite a number of species of moths are being found well outside their normal range and flight times, probably due to climate change. New species for the Fylde and Lancashire have turned up fairly frequently in recent years so you could be help-

ing to update the records and knowledge of those species expanding into our area. A number of more familiar insects such as butterflies e.g. Speckled Wood, Comma, Peacock are now seen everywhere but didn't occur regularly in the Fylde until just a few years ago. Any help you can provide will be greatly appreciated. Who knows you might even turn up a species new to this region? Contact Monty Myerscough on 01772 461364

Local patch birding: North West Singleton 3rd March 2006

By Barry Dyson

It was a sunny but bitterly cold day, having dropped to -5°C overnight. As I made my way to the local Happy Shopper I could hear Whooper Swans to the west. I saw 5 between a gap in the houses but was not quick enough to know for sure how many there had been. Stocked up with Everton mints (Come on the Toffees) I made my way to the start of my patch.

For those of you who remember my previous write-up for 26/12/01 you may recall I start at Poulton industrial estate. Since then I have changed the starting point to compensate for the loss of habitat due to the estate expanding. With kind permission from the farmer I now cross over the farm footbridge that spans the railway line just NE of the wood known locally as 'T' wood, owing to its shape, but shown as Brockholes Wood on OS maps.

The winter wheat field was white with hoar frost and for once was birdless. It was 8.25am as I made my way south to the SW corner of the field from where a Buzzard flew east towards Carr Wood. A Robin started up its song as did two cock Chaffinches. In the field below T wood, 20 Fieldfares were searching for food along with a tight flock of about 700 hungry Starlings in the bright morning sunlight that had already melted the frost on the sloping hillside. Turning east I made for the main dyke and approached with caution. Sure enough the expected Teals were there but directly under the embankment I appeared from. Whoosh - the startled birds flew along the dyke in both directions; 34 in total. A Mute Swan was by itself as it made its way southward along the dyke.

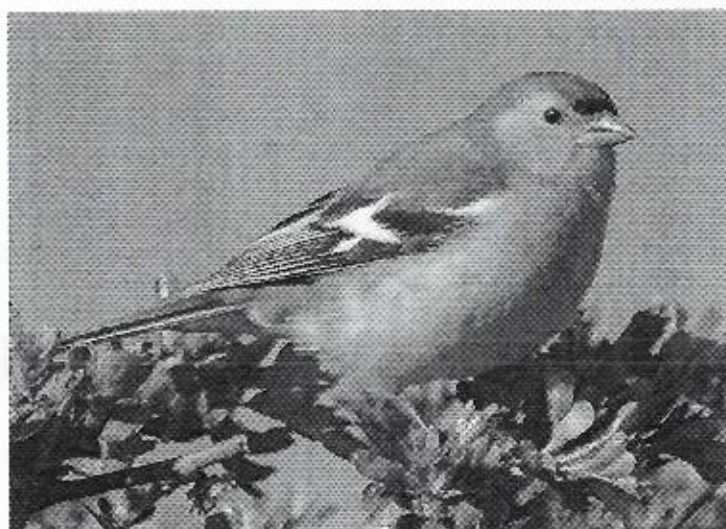
I continued along the embankment edge towards the public footbridge that spans the dyke. Again I put up some Teal, which regrouped to the south together with two pairs of Mallard. On the field across the dyke 132 Lapwings were roosting and 5 each of Common Gulls and BH Gulls were scouting around for food. A lone Moorhen scrambled up the bankside to hide in the cover and a distant unseen Redshank uttered its alarm call.

I crossed the footbridge into the field that is now owned by Stanah Horse feeds. It is now used solely for the production of grass whereas previously it had been crop-rotated. You don't need me to tell you which species no longer occur there. A distant Carrion Crow and a skein of 65 Pinkfeet were all I recorded until reaching Long wood where several Chaffinches, a Blackbird and a singing Song Thrush put in an appearance. Even here it was unusually quiet as I approached my trump card.

The field to the east of Long wood had been left untouched since harvest time and the stub-

ble provided cover and food. On my last visit I had flushed a Woodcock which flew back into the wood. This time I walked slowly, more in hope than expectation. A Great Spot skimmed over the wood calling as it carried on by. 5 skeins of Pinkfeet flew over, about 580 in total. They had come from the direction of Todderstaffe Hall where they are known to feed and were heading over Wyre after no doubt being disturbed for Pinkfeet will stay in the same field all day if they are left alone. But where were the farmland birds I had seen on my previous visit?

I needn't have worried as one by one the 'invisible' Skylarks rose from the stony ground chirruping as they gained height and chased one another in the air. After several recounts I settled on 35 for they are not an easy species to count in flight as they split up, circle around you, gain height and generally make things difficult for the counter. No such problem with my next species for the day. At the foot of this sloping 20 acre field is a phragmites fringed dyke with several mature



Chaffinch by Paul Ellis

Local patch birding: North West Singleton 3rd March 2006

By Barry Dyson

hawthorns along its edge. Here perched and staring at the feeding ground that I had disturbed them from were 11 Reed Buntings, mainly females; a record count. I must have misjudged my approach as several of them took off and flew away in that jerky way they have, trailing their 'twisted' tails behind them. Two Snipe flew out of the dyke calling as they almost invariably do. I made my way back up the slope and observed two crouched Hares. They eventually saw me, and as I drew nearer moved away in a tired manner, rather like I felt. In the SE corner of this field are mounds of recycled sewage waiting to be spread over the land. It seems to be a favoured area for the next two species I encountered and with there being a pond nearby, with more mature hawthorns, they were well catered for.

Looking towards the sun I could make out several small silhouetted birds on the mounds and then as they took off their calls gave away their identity. They made for the hawthorns and landed. The 13 Meadow Pipits flew in more or less one at a time whereas the 20 or so Linnets

took off, grouped together and flew around in a bobbing fashion before alighting in the bushes almost simultaneously. I kept my distance and observed them preening for some time. I entertained myself with the thought that most of us do the same now with the vast array of moisturisers and skin care treatments that are now available to us. I was 'awakened' from my musings by the far carrying hammering of the Great Spot which was probably the one I had seen earlier.

A coincidence now occurred with the next 3 new species all beginning with Gold, sadly eagle wasn't one of them. Making for Knowle wood I heard the Meadow Pipits take flight and, turning to look at them, 9 Golden Plovers flew through my field of view. At the same time 2 Goldfinches flew out of one of the hawthorns that had concealed their presence. On entering the wood that fearless of gems could be heard calling its shrill si,si,si notes and sure enough allowed close approach as it searched out its tiny insect prey. Occasionally it would hover but then land on a leaf stalk scanning for prey with outstretched neck. It was

one of 4 Goldcrests I saw in the woods today, a record equalling count and perhaps signalling the start of the spring passage. A Long-tailed Tit was joined by another, both had feathers in their bill reinforcing the feeling that spring was just around the corner. My, were they in for a shock.

I made my way through the wood passing the pond where the numbers of Mallard had now dwindled to 7. With only 4 Pheasants seen today the shooters had taken their winter toll. Numbers will remain small until restocking takes place in the summer. An unobtrusive Goldfinch was seen from the corner of my eye. Goldfinches away from their usual haunts of untilled land appear to be on the increase in woodland as they feed almost unnoticed in the canopy and also at shrub level. One bird you won't see high up is Britain's favourite bird, the Robin, which always seems to be below head height or ground dwelling and never fails to lift one's spirit. There were several in the wood matching in number the Great Tits that were constantly on the go and vocal to boot.

I made my way out of the wood and followed the footpath alongside an oil seed rape field that had been sheltering and providing food for 4 Song Thrushes. It has been a good winter for Song Thrushes with a maximum of 8 seen on two occasions. It also seems to have been a good year for lambs with many family parties seen on the adjacent pasture, far more than I can recall previously. I felt like the Pied Piper as they converged on me, no doubt mistaking me for the farmer.

It was now 10.15 am and the wind had got up, watering my eyes and clearing all signs of the previous nights frost. I entered the woods



Lapwing by Paul Ellis

Local patch birding: North West Singleton 3rd March 2006 *continued*

By Barry Dyson

once more and put up two Red-wings that had been ground feeding. As usual they flew into the canopy where they are always difficult to see. I carried on, flushing the odd baby Rabbit along the way. Then a flurry of activity as I could hear in the canopy the unmistakable song of a chorus of Linnets. It is interesting to note that along with Skylark this is one farmland species you never find at a feeding station. Blackbirds scolded me as I disturbed their feeding while Chaffinches and Great Tits went on with their business as too did a pair of Goldcrests. A bonus today was a Treecreeper seen only occasionally in these woods and absent in some years, so one to 'stay with' when you see one. Not today though as it quickly disappeared never to be seen again.

I climbed over the stile out of the wood and into the green desert of 'Stanah' land, only this time there were birds to be seen. 22 Lapwings took flight and in the distance 19 Fieldfares stood still. One of the local names given to Fieldfares is Blue back and one I heartily approve of. Last September following the re-seeding of this field I saw another species with the less than endearing if quite appropriate nickname of Clodhopper. I'm sure its name will come to you with a little thought. A Kestrel flew out of the unkempt hedgerow and a Collared Dove looked on from the roof of the recycling plant at the eastern edge of the industrial estate. Here too, as always were a party of Chaffinches scavenging amongst the piles of steaming recycled garden refuse

Approaching the footbridge over the main dyke I saw my first Blue Tit of the day! They had been conspicuous by their absence in the woods. 2 Rooks, 6 Jackdaws and 4 House Sparrows completed my species list for the morning that totalled 41 in all. It was now 11.10am and once again my local patch had not let me down despite a slow start. I suppose I am lucky in that I very much have it to myself, for I wouldn't be without my local patch fix. I once again wholeheartedly recommend local patch working to you for the pleasure, knowledge, experience, feelings and exercise it provides and for a greater understanding of the ecology of our commoner birds.

Business Round up

By Paul Ellis

Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve

The Chairman and Secretary met with the Head Ranger Lisa Kersey on 1st April.

In summary: works to safeguard Health and Safety will take priority. Refurbishment of the infrastructure including paths, signage and hides is planned. It is intended to remove the three steel shelter hides and replace them with raised 'viewing platforms'. The Spillway is collapsing and must be rebuilt. It was agreed liaison with the Borough Engineers was important to ensure the design still allowed migrating eels access

A plan was being formulated to tidy up the south bank. The Reed bed and tree plantings would not be affected but fenc-

ing, bins, life belt installations, grassland management, etc would be addressed.

A Heritage Lottery bid is in preparation. A visitor centre, situated between the De Vere Hotel and the LNR, is proposed.

The Club has arranged to meet English Nature on site in the near future. Contact details were given:

Lisa Kersey
01253 478428

Office.
01253 476000

Parks Dept
01253 478012

Police:
PC Lee Philipson
01253 604202
/ 607005 Voicemail

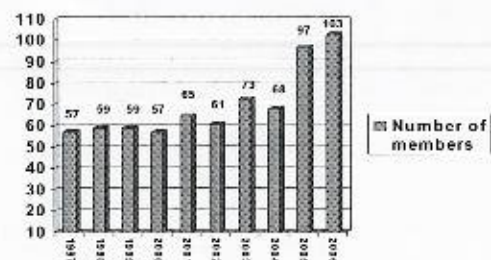
Tree Sparrow Update

39 chicks have already been ringed at Todderstaffe this spring. 78 new boxes, provided by the Club, were put up earlier this year

Membership Update

Membership tops 100!

Fylde Bird Club membership
1997-2006



Correct to 26.05.06 Kudu Beaver



A Birding trip to Fuerteventura, Canary Islands 5th to 11th February 2006 By Maurice Jones

Participants: Maurice Jones, David Hindle, Christine & Brian Dodding

We stayed at Broncemar Beach Hotel, Cala De Fuste, about half way down the east coast and a few kilometres south of the airport. There were many more mountains and hills than I had expected but also stony plains and rock strewn lava fields. Vegetation was entirely of low desert shrubs except for around habitations where trees and palms were found. The sandier beaches are in the south. The road network was completely new but birders do require to drive stony tracks – don't tell the car hire company! A word of warning – do not attempt to drive the track leading to the dam at Catalina Garcia if the weather is wet or has been wet recently. We were very nearly stuck in our hire car on the last day. Below are some of the main sites visited with the bird highlights. We recorded **65 species**.

Barranco de la Torre.

Here we recorded about five male and one pair of the endemic Fuerteventura Chat and three pairs of Trumpeter Finch, Egyptian Vultures, Spectacled Warblers and two Ruddy Shelducks.

Los Molinos Reservoir

Up to 16 Ruddy Shelducks, Egyptian Vultures, 50 Pallid Swifts, 12 Plain Swifts, one Little Swift (accidental in Canaries), Barbary Falcon, Fuerteventura Chat, Hoopoe plus several common waders and ducks. On nearby plains we had one of only two Houbara Bustards, eventually at only 25 metres from the car.

Plains NW of Tindaya

Up to eight Cream Coloured Coursers, one Houbara Bustard, five Black Bellied Sandgrouse.

Plains South of El Cottilo

Six Cream Coloured Coursers, one very close Stone Curlew, Stonechat

Catalina Garcia Reservoir

Three Spoonbills, 13 Little Egrets, 60 Pallid Swifts, two Plain Swifts, one pair Ruddy Shelduck, three Kentish Plover, one light phase Booted Eagle (accidental), one female Lesser Scaup (accidental), one male Ring Necked Duck (accidental).

Jandia

At the roadside of this southern resort are the Stella Canaris Gardens. Here are two nests of Monk Parakeet – huge collections of sticks in the crown of

Palm trees. With about 20 of these were two Ring Necked Parakeets.

Betancuria and Vega De Palmas

This central mountainous area is very scenic with palms and other tall vegetation. We had Sardinian Warbler and the special race of Blue Tit here. Also two Turtle Doves and Egyptian Vulture. The small reservoir at the latter site had dried up.

Throughout the island in suitable habitats we saw quite regularly Southern Grey Shrikes, Ravens, Buzzards, Spanish Sparrows, Spectacled Warblers, Trumpeter Finches, Egyptian Vultures, Berthelots Pipits, Lesser Short Toed Larks and Hoopoes. The only bird which we failed to find was Barbaray Partridge.

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FOR DETAILS

Forthcoming FBC meetings

River Wyre Hotel, Poulton Le Fylde. 7.45pm

27th June: Birding South East Peru with Paul Ellis
25th July: Birds & Mammals of Kruger with Mike & Pauline McGough
22nd August: Bird Migration: The Great Eastern Flyway with Mike McKavett

Diary Dates

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

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 30th July: Waders in the Wyre
07.30–10.30am. Meet at Shard Bridge Inn

Newton Marsh Black tailed Godwit Wardening

The RSPB are still looking for volunteers to help with the Black-tailed Godwit Nestwatch, the wardening rota will run as long as necessary and may go on well into June. The wardening is organised by the RSPB, in partnership with the Fylde Bird Club

Contact Carol Coupe to volunteer
Mobile: 0773 965 9643

Date			Time	Height m
Jun	Sat	3	1501	7.4
	Sun	4	1803	7.2
	Sat	10	1056	8.5
	Sun	11	1137	8.7
	Sat	17	1616	8.4
	Sun	18	1715	8.2
	Sat	24	1050	8.7
	Sun	25	1139	8.7
Jul	Sat	1	1534	8.1
	Sun	2	1615	7.9
	Sat	8	0933	7.9
	Sun	9	1028	8.2
	Sat	15	1509	9.0
	Sun	16	1557	8.8
	Sat	22	0945	8.0
	Sun	23	1045	8.2
	Sat	29	1428	8.7
	Sun	30	1500	8.5
Aug	Sat	5	0747	7.2
	Sun	6	0905	7.5
	Sat	12	1406	9.6
	Sun	13	1448	9.5
	Sat	19	0828	7.4
	Sun	20	0944	7.7
	Sat	26	1329	9.1
Sun	27	1359	9.0	



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.

General enquiries: Paul Ellis (Secretary) 18 Staining Rise, Staining, Blackpool. Lancashire. FY3 0BU.
Tel: 01253 891281. E-mail: paul.ellis24@btopenworld.com