



# **Fylde Bird Club**

## **Lancashire**

**OCTOBER 2009 NEWSLETTER**

Apologies for another late newsletter, hopefully there will be no further problems with timeliness as the winter nights draw in...

The autumn was certainly eventful on the Fylde. Unfortunately for your newsletter editor most of the excitement occurred in the two weeks he was on Shetland and he wasn't able to share in the excitement. If you do have any special memories of some of the autumn's highlights (Long-billed Dowitcher and Great White Egret in particular) it would be great to hear from you for the next newsletter.

In this edition we are fortunate to have received two travelogues. Firstly Ellen Pemberton takes us through a holiday of a lifetime in Spitzbergen. It is great to receive material from a new contributor and I would stress to any of you who are considering writing for the first time that all material will be well received by me and the wider membership. A few lines about your local patch or a particularly good day out would be great if you are stuck for inspiration.

By contrast Maurice Jones is of course a stalwart contributor to the club, and to the newsletter. It is nevertheless always delightful to hear of his travels, and his account of a trip to Tanzania over the summer is as ever an absorbing read.

As the newsletter was already running to 14 pages I have not included images to help keep the size down, including file size for those of you receiving it electronically. I welcome feedback either way on this. Ellen kindly submitted some images from her trip so I may include some of these next time.

Good birding,

Stephen.



## Trip Report

### Spitsbergen - 22<sup>nd</sup> June - 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2009

*by Ellen Pemberton*

When my grandma passed away in 2005, my mum gave me a rather large sum of money from her estate. Not really knowing what to do with it, I put it away in a bond for a couple of years and let it gain some interest. When it matured in 2008, I decided to treat myself to the holiday of a lifetime. After some deliberation, I settled for an Arctic adventure. Last Christmas, there was a thread on Teletext's music page, Planet Sound, asking who could come up with the best parody of the song "Hallelujah", as performed by the X-Factor winner. I sent a version something like this:-

"In summer I will have a trip, around Spitsbergen on a ship,  
You need to wrap up, or the cold goes through yer,  
They have some lovely wildlife there, like Little Auk and Polar Bear,  
There's Walruses and Arctic Foxes, too, yeah,  
Hallelujah!"

To my surprise, they actually printed it. Most people I know, when I told them about my holiday plans, had one question – where's Spitsbergen?! For anyone who doesn't know, it's the main island in the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, to the north of Norway. Getting there involved flying to Oslo, staying overnight and then flying to Longyearbyen, the main settlement on Spitsbergen island. From Longyearbyen I would board the ship – a specially ice-strengthened vessel, originally built in Finland but now Russian-owned, the Akademik Shokalskiy.

My dad saw me off at Manchester Airport on the evening of 21<sup>st</sup> June. My flight was at 7.50pm, due in Oslo at 10.45 pm local time. Luckily I was staying at the Radisson SAS hotel, just across the road from Oslo Airport. By the time I'd collected my luggage and staggered into reception, it was 11.15 (and still light outside!). Once I was in my hotel room, I did my E.T. impression \*-much to my dad's relief when I spoke.

I slept for about an hour that night – it was warm and I was very excited. After breakfast, I took my luggage down to reception and waited for the rest of the group. There was the leader, a guy from Cumbria and a couple from London. We made our way back to Oslo Airport for the flight to Longyearbyen. Due to my lack of sleep I drifted in and out of consciousness – but while I was awake the views of the mountains and fjords were amazing. None of us saw any blue parrots, though!

We arrived in Longyearbyen about 2 o'clock that afternoon and saw our first polar bear – a model in the middle of the baggage carousel! A coach took our luggage to the ship and as we were not due to board until 4 o'clock we did a spot of birding; in the bay there were 9 King Eiders, about 20 Barnacle Geese, 2 Glaucous Gulls, Kittiwake and Black Guillemot. In a field on the edge of the town there was an Arctic Skua and Svalbard's only passerine, Snow Bunting. Not a bad start.

To get to the ship, we had to board a little inflatable rubber boat, known as a zodiac, for which we had to wear life jackets. Once on board, we all had afternoon tea in the bar, followed by a lifeboat



drill. Later that evening we were introduced to the ship's crew, before complimentary champagne and dinner. The Akademik Shokalskiy can carry up to 48 passengers, however there were only 35 on this trip in total. They were mainly British and American, with some from Germany, Holland and Denmark; there was even a French couple who were on their honeymoon!

*\*Phone home!*

After dinner, we all tried out the waterproof boots and parkas which the cruise company would lend us (and which we would need for zodiac excursions). The latter had a fleece lining and a (bright yellow!) waterproof outer jacket. I'm not sure if that was so they couldn't lose any of us; I felt like I should've been clamping illegally parked vehicles!

### 23<sup>rd</sup> June

I was already up and about when the wake-up call came on the tannoy; I saw a Puffin on the sea and the first of many (blue phase) Fulmars flying past the ship. After breakfast, we had a lecture on how to dress/board the zodiacs. Firstly, a demonstration on what not to wear; one of the expedition crew, David, entered the lecture theatre in shorts, T-shirt, trainers and spraying an aerosol (the contents of which I couldn't identify) everywhere! Next, another crew member, Dr. Charles, came in, properly kitted out, in waterproof boots, waterproof trousers, the trademark yellow parka and a life jacket.

Our first trip today was to a site called Ny London, where, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Ernest Mansfield set up a marble mine. The hut and various pieces of rusty machinery still stand; however, when the marble was shipped south, it cracked and couldn't be used! The area was carpeted with flowers, including Arctic Mouse-Ear, Mountain Avens and Alpine and Purple Saxifrages. A Long-tailed Skua was on its nest; its mate landed on a wooden post by the marble mine. We also saw a Purple Sandpiper on the beach and a pair of Long-tailed Duck in the bay; the drake gave the call, which has been likened to "I'm going up!" On the hillside there was a Reindeer with a calf. The Svalbard race of Reindeer has shorter legs than its mainland relative.

In the afternoon we visited the 14<sup>th</sup> of July Glacier, where we cruised past cliffs and saw small parties of Puffins and Brunnich's Guillemots. A Glaucous Gull and a Barnacle Goose had nests on the same rock and a Black Guillemot sat on a tiny ice floe near the shore. A larger iceberg further out had about 100 Kittiwakes resting on it. On this overcast day, many of the icebergs looked pale blue rather than white.

After dinner the boat took us to the Lilliehook Glacier, where, from the top deck we had stunning views of the snow-covered mountains surrounding the fjord. 2 Bearded Seals were hauled out on the ice and about 10 Blue Fulmars flew over the boat. In addition to the hundreds of Brunnich's Guillemots on the water, a couple of Little Auks flew past – prelude to tomorrow, as we would be visiting one of their colonies.....

### 24<sup>th</sup> June

In this country, sightings of Little Auks generally amount to birds whirring past over the sea at extreme range, or "wrecked" on land after storms, in which case, to put it tactfully, they're on their way out. The bird's influence, however, extends further than you think; it's even been immortalised in song by the rock 'n' roll revivalists Showaddywaddy.

When I went out onto the deck before breakfast, 10 Little Auks flew past – a ray of sunshine on this grey, drizzly morning. After breakfast, we took the zodiacs out to the colony at Fuglesangen (Norwegian for birdsong!), which holds about 10000 pairs of these cute little birds. The



path was steep and in some parts covered in deep snow; on more than one occasion I got stuck and had to be pulled out! On the way down I fell on a muddy patch – eat your heart out Glastonbury! Some of us also fell backwards on the snow coming down; that's one way to descend quickly, I guess!

Once there, we approached within 15-20 feet of the birds. They were very obliging, sitting up on the boulders, hopping and waddling towards one another. We even saw a few pairs doing, well, what comes naturally! Occasionally they would suddenly all take off and circle round the cliff, chattering all the time, before settling back on the rocks.

We stayed at the colony for about 90 minutes, during which time I took about 150 photos (including some of the auks doing “naughty” things!). I should mention that, not having my own camera, I borrowed a small digital one belonging to my dad. I'm no photography expert and I doubt I'll be entering the Bird Club competition any time soon but I was quite pleased with the way the pictures came out.

After lunch, the sun came out and from my cabin I saw a raft of 6 Brunnich's Guillemots. The sea was flat calm and we went for a zodiac cruise into the fjord at Hamiltonbukta. The Akademik Shokalskiy does several cruises during the brief Arctic summer; when the ship was in this area a week earlier, the fjord was still covered in ice. Much of it had now broken up. There were thousands of Kittiwakes and Brunnich's Guillemots flying around the cliffs; a few were also perched out on the ice floes. About halfway up the cliff, on a vegetated patch, was a Barnacle Goose nest. A small flock of Eider and a Bearded Seal were resting on what remained of the ice sheet. On the water there were about 15 Black Guillemots; we were able to get close enough to them to hear their whistling calls. During this zodiac cruise, we also saw 3 lots of Polar Bear tracks – but no bears!

The ship later moved into Raudfjorden – blazing a trail through the thin ice! That evening we passed the latitude of 80 degrees north – the furthest we would sail in that direction. The sea was very calm and we had a distant view of a seal on an ice floe. We drank vodka on the bow of the ship and when we crossed the line the captain sounded the horn! A Blue Fulmar then flew right overhead as if to gatecrash the celebration!

### 25<sup>th</sup> June

The ship was approaching Liefdefjorden, home of the glacier Monacobreen. Shortly after breakfast, an announcement came on the tannoy of a Polar Bear on a nearby island; I was in the bathroom and consequently missed it! As it was calm and sunny (the weather, not the bear!) we set out in the zodiacs. There were a lot of ice floes, one of which had a small group of Arctic Terns on it. We spotted a few things which looked like bears but turned out to be rocks! We were then rewarded with a very distant Polar Bear, which walked about 50-60 feet, then ran away. I should mention that, when we went out in the zodiacs, we couldn't land if there was a bear seen in the area. The leaders also had to carry rifles in order to scare away any bears that approached too close to us.

During this zodiac cruise we also saw 2 Red Phalaropes, as the Americans call them. It made a change to see these delightful birds in their bright red breeding dress rather than the grey and white winter garb in which they turn up in this country. They didn't stay very long, but we would encounter more during our voyage. We arrived in Monacobreen just before lunch. Mist was forming and the sea was carpeted with ice floes. The rest of the day was spent on the ship.

After lunch we saw 2 more Polar Bears on the ice, this time a mother and cub. One of the leaders set a telescope up on the top deck as the bears were quite distant. As I panned the 'scope to find them an Ivory Gull flew through my field of view! The visibility was becoming poor, however and the



expedition staff took this chance to do some lectures. I attended one about the different seal species found in the Arctic. After birds, seals have to be my favourite animals – especially with those lovely round eyes.

### 26<sup>th</sup> June

Today we had an early start – a wake-up call at 5.15 a.m., ready to board the zodiacs at 5.45 and cruise round Alkefjellet (“Auk Fell”). There were thousands of Brunnich's Guillemots wheeling around the sheer cliffs; a few Glaucous Gulls were also patrolling the area. The rough sea and lack of sleep, however, proved too much for me. I had to lean over the side of the zodiac and do the obvious! From what I was later told, I wasn't the only one who was sick that morning.

When we arrived back at the ship I had a travel sickness pill and slept for a couple of hours. By this time the sea was a little calmer and I went out onto the deck, when an announcement was made of a Polar Bear sighting – which turned out to be a Reindeer! We went out in the zodiacs again, this time to Augustbukta, a polar desert with a shingle beach. We saw some Purple Saxifrage in bloom and some Polar Bear tracks in the snow.

There were half a dozen Arctic Terns fishing in the bay and a couple of Purple Sandpipers at the water's edge – and I alerted the group to an Ivory Gull flying along the shoreline! Many of you will remember the bird which showed up in Granny's Bay early in 2002. Not having a pager or (at the time) internet access, the first I knew of it was an article in the Blackpool Gazette. I went to look for the gull the following day; there were many birders there but it didn't show. To say that I was gutted would be the understatement of the decade! This sighting more than made up for my seasickness earlier today.

We spent the afternoon on the ship sailing past the east coast of Spitsbergen Island and past the world's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest ice cap, the Braskvellbreen. Another Ivory Gull flew past the bow of the ship. In the evening, the sun came out and we continued towards Kong Karls Land. We saw 2 more Ivory Gulls, also lots of Kittiwakes and 2 more Polar Bears. One of these was lying on an ice floe; it raised its head twice. The ice was only just beginning to break up here and we sailed very slowly through the night.

### 27 June

We stayed on the ship for most of the day, spending the morning sailing past the east coast of Edgeoya island. It was very bright and calm; there was a lot of ice but also a few patches of open water. We saw another half-dozen bears, including a couple of cubs, one of which rode on its mother's back, in the water!

After lunch, I uploaded my photos onto the ship's computer. All the passengers had been invited to put their best 10 pictures in; these would be included in a DVD which everyone would receive at the end of the voyage. I needed a lot of help with mine – I had no idea how to transfer the pictures into the appropriate folder. Also, which of my Little Auk photos would be in my 10 favourites? I joked with other passengers that my pictures included some “adult” content (see the write-up of the visit to Fugelsangen on the 24<sup>th</sup>)! The gift shop was also open, selling among other things, T-shirts, woolly hats and cuddly toy Polar Bears!

Late on in the afternoon, we had a zodiac cruise among the icebergs. They had many interesting formations, including one which was shaped a bit like a mushroom. An inquisitive seal (I think it may have been a Harp Seal) popped its head out of the water a few times before swimming under an ice floe, within a few feet of us. We found in ice sheet thick enough to stand on and took turns to photograph one another doing so. When we arrived back at the ship, there was the option of a



“polar plunge” (a quick dip in the sea) before dinner. I was feeling cold enough already and decided to give it a miss!

### 28<sup>th</sup> June

Today was another sunny day. When I went out onto the deck before breakfast, I saw a Walrus on an ice floe – the first of 3 sightings during the day. We took to the zodiacs after breakfast for a cruise around Thousand Islands. Eiders, Black Guillemots, Arctic Terns and Little Auks were all out in force; the latter were wheeling around like Starlings! We came to a low-lying, rocky island. Near its shore were 3 Red Phalaropes and a Red-throated Diver. On the island itself was a Polar Bear; this one, however, wasn't in the best of health. It had a large scar on its left flank (possibly from another bear or a Walrus) and was seeking out birds' eggs among the rocks, while being dive-bombed by 2 Great Skuas.

We came back to the ship and I was halfway through a cup of hot chocolate when the expedition leader alerted everybody to another Walrus on an ice floe, straight out from the bow of the ship! This was a young male with fairly short tusks; we approached slowly and he didn't enter the water until we were almost on top of him! We had got closer to him than we would be able to approach Walruses on land.

In the afternoon, the crew continued with their programme of lectures, including one on skuas, gulls and terns, also one on interaction and learning in animals. The latter included a slide of a Polar Bear cuddling a Husky. After this, they showed the “Ice Worlds” programme, which was part of the 2006 TV series “Planet Earth”. This included footage of a Polar Bear in a Walrus colony, trying (unsuccessfully) to take one of the pups.

I went out onto the deck again before dinner and as I was watching Blue Fulmars glide alongside the boat, we sailed past yet another Walrus. This was another male and he had lost half his left tusk. As the expedition leader put it, though, that's what happens when you have to fight over the ladies!

After dinner, there was a quiz held in the bar, the prize being a free drink! The questions were all multiple choice, related to the things we had done and learnt on the voyage. Many of the questions had some silly choices, e.g. which settlement in Svalbard, set up by the Dutch, was known as “Blubber Town”? One of the options was the Shokalskiy dining room! The correct answer was a place called Smeerenburg, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century whaling station. My team (the “Nanuk Akademik Team 2009”) scored a respectable (though not enough to win) 19 out of 25.

### 29<sup>th</sup> June

Last night the ocean began to swell, causing me once again to be sick. While the others went out in the zodiacs I spent most of today in bed. When my travel sickness pills did nothing, the ship's doctor gave me a different batch and explained that if they didn't work, he could give me a needle, which would put me to sleep for about 6 hours. Luckily, he didn't need to resort to such drastic measures.

I woke up late in the afternoon and by 6.00pm, I was feeling hungry again! This evening there was an “Arctic Barbecue” on the bow of the ship. Being a vegetarian I was limited as to what I could sample, but I managed some corn-on-the-cob and a baked potato. Afterwards there was a zodiac cruise among the ice floes. The star of this overcast and drizzly evening was undoubtedly a Bearded Seal, which hauled out about 20 feet away! At one point, it entertained us by rolling on its side and raising



its flipper – a trick to rival the Common Seal raising its head and hind flippers off the ground and making a “banana” shape!

Afterwards, the driver of the zodiac which I was in had trouble negotiating the floes and in the end, the ship had to come to us. Nevertheless, it was good to have been able to get out after having been confined to my cabin for much of the day. One guest told me that I hadn't missed any birds.

### 30<sup>th</sup> June

We had enjoyed some excellent weather on this trip but today we woke up to fog and drizzle! The day began with a tundra walk in Recherchefjord. As might be expected there were a lot of plants, including Polar Willow and Purple Saxifrage. We saw a Snow Bunting displaying and an Arctic Skua keeping a lookout from a mound of stones. On the water were small parties of Eider and Black Guillemot. There was also an old whaling hut on the shore.

After lunch we visited Bamsebu (“Home of the Bear”), another former whaling site. The rain had stopped by this time, although it was still very overcast. As we landed, 2 Red Phalaropes flew along the shoreline and 2 Purple Sandpipers were foraging among the shingle. On the beach lay the remains of up to 500 Beluga Whales which had been slaughtered in the 1920s and '30s; there was another wooden hut bearing the site's name.

This area also has an expanse of tundra, which a couple of the group got stuck trying to cross! Luckily the expedition staff were able to rescue them. We had an early start the next day so continued sailing that evening.

### 1<sup>st</sup> July

Our first outing today (at 5.45a.m.!) was to Poolepyneten, to see Walrus. We had hoped to land here, but couldn't do so, as the sea was too choppy! Those of us who were feeling brave boarded the zodiacs and sailed around the spit of land where they were hauled out. A morning at Rossall Point in January has nothing on the conditions we experienced today! There were 2 groups of Walrus, one of 4 and another of 8 or so. Some of them were lying on their backs, tusks in the air, oblivious to the biting wind.

After breakfast, we had another zodiac cruise, this time to Isfjord. The wind had dropped and the sea was much calmer. In the middle of the fjord were 2 rocky islets. One had a pair each of Great Skuas and Barnacle Geese and the other had Arctic Terns displaying. There was a flock of about 500 Eiders (mostly drakes) on the water. We had a short walk up a rocky slope, scanned over the fjord and the surrounding snow-covered mountains and took a minute to reflect on what we had seen and done over the past 8 days.

Our last landing of the day was at Alkehornet, a pyramid-like cliff with a boggy meadow at its base. Thousands of Brunnich's Guillemots and Kittiwakes were coming and going from the cliff, whilst on the tundra 3 Reindeer grazed, eventually coming within about 25 feet of us! We also saw 3 Arctic Foxes and a gaggle of 20 Barnacle Geese. Snow Bunting, Arctic Skua and Glaucous Gull all had nests in this area. As we were making our way back to the zodiacs, a skua was chasing one of the gulls.

That evening, after dinner and complimentary champagne, we were invited to watch the DVD, of which we would all receive a copy before leaving the ship, compiled from guests' photographs. I recognised a couple of mine – one of Purple Saxifrage and the other I had taken in Longyearbyen, of a



red takeaway van with a cartoon Polar Bear on it, selling “kebab”, “hamburger”, “pommes frites” and “brus”! One guest had also made up his own slide show, which we watched in the bar afterwards.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> July

This morning we had to be off the ship at 8.00 as there was another group of passengers boarding that afternoon! A coach was ready to take us to our various destinations; some guests were staying in Longyearbyen and were dropped off at various hotels. Those of us who were catching the afternoon flight to Oslo were taken into the town square and would be picked up again at 12.30 and dropped off at the airport.

I went along the main road out of Longyearbyen, with the party I had travelled with initially. Although it was sunny it was quite cold. A lot of the bird life was concentrated around the husky kennels; it may be that the dogs' barking and howling deter Arctic Foxes. Most of the pools had at least one Purple Sandpiper and there were about 50 Eiders; some were still on eggs, while others had newly-hatched ducklings.

On the opposite side of the road from the kennels were nesting Arctic Terns, of which we had to run the gauntlet! We also saw Arctic Skua, Glaucous and Ivory Gull, 2 Long-tailed Ducks and some rarities (for Svalbard, anyway!) - 2 each of Dunlin, Ringed Plover and drake Teal. When we arrived at a famous sign (depicting a Polar Bear, with the wording “Applies to all of Spitsbergen”) we decided it was time to head back into town.

After lunch, we boarded the coach again to Longyearbyen Airport. The flight to Oslo called at Tromso, as did the Oslo-Longyearbyen flight. This time, however, it wasn't quite so straightforward; for some reason which I didn't catch, we all had to disembark at Tromso and go through Immigration Control, which we hadn't had to do on the way out.

In Longyearbyen that morning I had a long-sleeved T-shirt, a thin fleece and a waterproof coat. When we landed in Oslo I had to remove the last 2 items; the temperature there that evening, as announced on the plane, was 30C! This time, I was carrying on to London with the main group and staying overnight at the Heathrow Ibis, as there wasn't a flight to Manchester till the following day and this option was cheaper than an extra night in Oslo.

I arrived at the Ibis hotel about 10.00p.m and caught a few hours' sleep before returning to Heathrow Airport the next morning for the flight to Manchester, where I was again met by my dad. As we made our way to the railway station, Manchester was living up to its reputation of “The Rainy City”! When we got home, I had a lot of unpacking to do and 2 weeks' worth of mail to sort. Nonetheless, I now have over 1100 pictures, a DVD, a certificate – and lots of happy memories!

I nearly forgot! Those of you who have drawn a blank on Showaddywaddy's homage to the inhabitants of Fuglesangen – I'm sure many of you will remember the song....”Let's go for a Little Auk.....under the moon of love!”





## **Tanzanian Holiday 2<sup>nd</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> June 2009 by Maurice Jones**

Where to go on my summer holiday? A tough choice with so many fantastic places available but as my non-birder daughter had agreed to go too the hunt was on!

Whilst browsing through a Travelsphere holiday brochure, I noted a Safari to Tanzania, covering most of the main parks with a good amount of time at the major ones. After doing a bit of a comparison to other holiday companies, which do not seem to offer the same range of sites, but are slightly cheaper I opted for the Travelsphere one. Even better, compared to a Naturetrek holiday visiting the same National Parks it was over a £1000 cheaper – an important consideration for a pensioner like me!

I knew my opportunities for birding would be more limited with non-birders for company but my daughter is keen on photography and with destinations such as the world renowned Ngorogoro Crater and the Serengeti Plains, how could we go wrong!

We flew from Manchester to Amsterdam and then on to Kilimanjaro airport near the bustling (to say the least) town of Arusha. We arrived late in the evening and all we could do was meet our fellow travellers – 18 of us in all, have dinner and then disappear to our lodges with the promise of our first game drive the next day.

The following morning we headed into Arusha to get some local currency. Much investment in Arusha has created a mix of the traditional way of life living side by side with suited businessmen and glass skyscrapers – not what you imagined somehow. Local street traders are quite persuasive trying to barter their wares whilst the markets are bustling and colourful. We then went on a visit to the Cultural Heritage Centre, which had the most incredible woodcarvings and Tanzanite gems on display. The rest of the first day (3<sup>rd</sup> June) was spent in Arusha National Park. A large flat crater had many Warthogs and Olive Baboons, a troop of Banded Mongoose, Waterbucks and 12 Giraffe. The forest held Blue Monkeys, Black and White Colobus Monkeys, and in an open area, Saddleback Stork and Crowned Crane.

Back then to Arumera River Lodge in Arusha for our second night. This was the first of many quite luxurious places we stayed in but it still retained a friendly, welcoming feel. At each lodge I was able to bird watch in the grounds before breakfast and even had a small stream teeming with birds and wildlife outside my balcony at one lodge.

On 4<sup>th</sup>, we journeyed to Tarangire National Park; this has open plains, scattered Acacias and many huge Baobab trees as well as being home to hundreds of Elephants, including cute bay calves. On game drives we saw many Zebra and Impala, several Ostrich, Rock Hyrax, Kirk's Dik Dik (a tiny antelope), 450 Buffalo, our first Secretary bird, Lilac Breasted Rollers and 5 huge Ground Hornbills. We stayed at Tarangire Sopa Lodge on 5<sup>th</sup>. Whilst still in Tarangire we saw about 100 White Backed Vultures, 2 Maribou Stork, 1 Hammerkop, 100 more Buffalo and Superb Starlings.



Leaving the Park, we headed along a good tarmac road to Manyara Serena Lodge perched on the escarpment of the Great Rift Valley overlooking the huge Soda expanse of Lake Manyara. We had an afternoon game drive to the lake, which held thousands of Lesser Flamingos. A freshwater pool had 25 Hippos and birds included 300 Collared Pratincole, 20 Hadada Ibis, 10 Squacco Heron, 3 Goliath Heron, many Egyptian Geese, Knob Billed Duck, various Plovers and 2 Pied Kingfisher. The hippo lake gave us the chance to get out of the vehicles and stretch our legs but a tale of a tourist being attacked by a lion after wandering off kept us well within site of the vehicles! Sadly that day, we didn't see a tree-climbing lion – something the park is famous for according to the guidebooks.

A night drive through the forest down to the lake that evening provided 200 or so Slender Tailed Nightjar, 2 Pearl Spotted Owlet, 2 Silvery Cheeked Hornbills, a pair of roosting Fish Eagles, Lesser and Greater Bush Babies, Crowned Plovers, 2 White Tailed Mongoose and a small Spotted Genet. About 30 hippos were grazing the grass and can put on a fair turn of speed! The sounds of the forest with no light pollution when the vehicle stopped were amazing.

On 6<sup>th</sup> by lunchtime we had reached Gibbs Coffee Plantation adjacent forested hills. The area has several plantations developed by the German settlers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A gentle stroll took in the plantations vast fields and a secluded waterfall. As the others walked ahead, I had a young bird guide and we soon dropped behind as I clocked up lifers. A Veraux's Eagle soared overhead and I had my first Chameleon. After a lovely lunch – 3 courses were the norm in all the lodges! - we set off to the Ngorogoro Sopa Lodge perched 7,800 feet above sea level on the rim of the World's largest complete Caldera (260 km square).

Louise went for a guided walk along the crater rim with some of the others, which afforded her views of Massai villages and herdsman bringing in their cattle and sheep for the night whilst I watched White Naped Ravens, Speckled Pigeons, Little Bee Eaters and Golden Winged and Tacazze Sunbirds close to the lodge with sunset over the Crater making for a spectacular view.

Waking to the sound of a distant lion roaring and buffalo roaming in front of the lodge windows made you know you were in for a good day. The three Toyota land cruisers in our group descended into the crater 2000 ft below. The crater is home to 25,000 large mammals and within 15 minutes of entering the crater, we started the day with a pride of 8 Lions at a Wildebeest kill interacting with Buffalo. Then came 70 Thompson's Gazelle, Kori Bustards, Black Backed Jackals, big lone bull Elephants, Ostrichs, Crowned Cranes, more Lions, 3 Black Rhino, our first Cheetah, Eland, hundreds of Zebra and Wildebeest. A pool with 20 Hippo provided the backdrop for lunch with Sacred Ibis, Spur Winged Goose, tame Superb Starlings and Rufous Tailed Weavers. Later we saw Hartebeest and Spotted Hyena. When one of our trucks broke down, Lake Ndutu afforded closer views of hundreds of Lesser Flamingo, 1 Greater Flamingo, 20 Blacksmith's Plover, a close Secretary Bird, 2 Kittlitz's Plover and 2 Golden Jackals.



The following day after circling the crater rim we continued west on gravel roads. Louise took in an optional tour of a Massai village, which was a bit commercialised but did give an insight into how these people live in this environment. Meanwhile a few of us opted out and headed up to Olduvai Gorge and museum with the others following on later. This is well worth a visit - the site is rich in prehistoric history. It's actually called Oldupai Gorge but the German who visited it and named it misheard the locals when they pronounced its name! The immediate area was very arid and the hoped for birds weren't there – only Yellow Fronted Serin.

We then pressed on to the Serengeti National Park. En route to the Serengeti Sopa Lodge housed within the park we saw Bateleur Eagle, Ostrichs, Kori Bustards, Secretary Birds, 10 White Storks, 3 Tawny Eagles, many Grant's and Thompson's Gazelles and 15 Elephants with young. As we neared the lodge, we were treated to the sights and sounds – and dust! – of thousands of Wildebeest crossing in front of the vehicle. After lunch, we had an afternoon drive through the park, which is teeming with wildlife. As well as thousands of Wildebeest and Zebra, 80 Buffalo with attendant Yellow Billed Oxpeckers, Wattled Starlings and 1 Lappet Faced Vulture.

Later from my hotel balcony I estimated 9,000 Wildebeest in view although the population census is 1,250,000!!

Highlights from the following all day drive (9<sup>th</sup>) included 2 Leopards resting in sausage trees – one with a kill, numerous Giraffes, 30 Hippos, 11 Topi, Dwarf Mongoose, Nubian Woodpeckers, D'Arnaud's Barbets, 2 White Headed Vultures, Fischer's Lovebirds, 1 Crocodile, 11 Hartebeest, a tree climbing Lion – again in a sausage tree - and Elephants. Best of all was a female Cheetah with 4 full grown young. They were quite active and playful and it gave the opportunity to observe their behaviour with each other. Mum stalked a Reedbuck but gave it up as a bad job!

The final day we again had a 2-hour drive through the game packed plains with thousands of Wildebeest crossing our route and White Backed Vultures circling. We had a spectacular flight from the tiny airport in the middle of the Serengeti with great views of Ngorogoro and other volcanic craters including the only one still active in the area, Oldoinjo Lengai. With some time to wait before our overnight flight back home we lunched and relaxed at the Arusha Coffee Lodge near Kilimanjaro Airport. Even here we had 6 White Helmet Shrikes, African Drongos, Red Headed Weaver and Ring Necked Dove.

In all I managed 38 mammal species (plus 2 bats) and an unimpressive 147 birds with 41 "lifers" – a spectacular trip and highly recommended.



## RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Stuart Piner

### June

At least five Quail were located during June (at Warton Marsh, Cockerham Moss Edge, Eagland Hill, Winmarleigh Moss and Rawcliffe Moss). Marsh Harriers were logged at Rawcliffe Moss (a male on 9<sup>th</sup>), Warton Marsh (an adult female on 21<sup>st</sup>) and at Out Rawcliffe (a male on 23<sup>rd</sup>) and five Ring-necked Parakeets lingered at Lytham Crematorium.

Common Terns began to nest at Preston Dock, potentially only the second ever breeding attempt on the Fylde. The only confirmed occurrence of breeding was recorded in 1956, when a nest containing three eggs was found on Barnaby's Sands. However, Oakes (1939), in *The Birds of Lancashire*, states that '*Martin Mere, near Blackpool* [presumably Marton Mere rather than Martin Mere WWT], *and the dunes near Lytham were former nesting haunts in the Fylde*', so perhaps Common Terns once bred in significant numbers in southern Fylde.

An adult Black Guillemot flew past Starr Gate on 12<sup>th</sup>, a 3<sup>rd</sup>-summer Yellow-legged Gull was observed in the high tide roost at Cocker's Dyke 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> and a Wood Sandpiper dropped in at Mythop on 30<sup>th</sup>. An adult Spotted Redshank returned to Conder Pool on 16<sup>th</sup> – the species' absence from the Conder Pool/Conder Estuary area during the breeding season lasted just 29 days this year.

### July

Two young Common Terns hatched at Preston Dock - the first occurrence of breeding Common Terns on the Fylde for fifty three years.

Just like last summer, Crossbills irrupted into Britain; Fylde records comprised seven over Devonshire Road Rock Gardens on 25<sup>th</sup> and two over Warton Aerodrome on 31<sup>st</sup>. Singing Quails continued to be audible at Warton Marsh, Rawcliffe Moss and Cockerham Moss Edge during the month.

The only Marsh Harrier report involved a female at Warton Marsh on 26<sup>th</sup> but the rarer Hobby was reported twice, once at Warton Marsh and it or another photographed at nearby Newton Marsh on 8<sup>th</sup>. The adult Wood Sandpiper first located in June remained at Mythop until 2<sup>nd</sup>, a couple of Avocets visited Skippool Creek on 6<sup>th</sup> and an adult Black Guillemot flew past Cleveleys on the same day.

A 3<sup>rd</sup>-summer Yellow-legged Gull (first seen at the end of June) was again at Cocker's Dyke on 7<sup>th</sup>. Photographs confirm this to be the same bird present on the Lune Estuary on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. After being seen at Cocker's Dyke in the morning high tide roost on 7<sup>th</sup>, presumably the same bird relocated to the Lune Estuary later in the day, where it remained until at least 20<sup>th</sup>. This bird is also more that likely the same individual that frequented the Lune Estuary from 13<sup>th</sup> July to 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008, then again briefly on 19<sup>th</sup> November. Sadly, the adult Yellow-legged Gull that visited the Lune Estuary each summer for the last seventeen years, failed to make an appearance this July.



## August

A showy Green Woodpecker and fly-past Sooty Shearwater were the two headline birds discovered during August. Mike McGough stumbled across the former in Garstang Road Cemetery, Poulton Business Park, on 21<sup>st</sup> but the bird had apparently been present for several days before Mike made the discovery. The bird showed well until the end of the month. Mike also found the last 'available' Green Woodpecker, at Todderstaffe Hall in March 2005.

A strong westerly wind on 16<sup>th</sup> prompted Paul Ellis to seawatch at Starr Gate in the evening. After arriving in the hope of perhaps adding Fulmar or Kittiwake to his Fylde yearlist, he left having added Sooty Shearwater to his Fylde life list! With only fifteen records in total, and the last occurring in 1992, Sooty Shearwater is a highly desired prize off the Fylde coast.

Yellow-legged Gulls were a regular feature on the website sightings page during August; Cocker's Dyke hosted a juvenile on 20<sup>th</sup>, only the second to be identified in our recording area, whilst a third-summer also made occasional visits to the same site. Two third-summers - including the Cocker's Dyke bird - were also seen intermittently on the Lune Estuary throughout the month.

Wood Sandpipers made appearances at Mythop on 9<sup>th</sup> and Conder Estuary/Glasson from 21<sup>st</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> and an adult Curlew Sandpiper lingered at Glasson from 7<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>. A juvenile Garganey visited the former site on 14<sup>th</sup>, Hobbies were logged at Pilling Lane on 4<sup>th</sup> and Cockersand on 19<sup>th</sup> and a juvenile Hen Harrier hunted over Cockerham Marsh on 9<sup>th</sup>. Marsh Harriers were recorded at Warton Marsh, Out Rawcliffe, Cockersand, Eagland Hill, Stake Pool and Marton Mere.

Both Rawcliffe Moss and Winmarleigh Moss hosted two singing Quails and Yellow Wagtails were reported from Bank End (2), Fleetwood Docks and Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park. An adult Black Tern joined a Sandwich Tern roost on St Annes Beach briefly on 12<sup>th</sup> and seawatching records (in addition to the Sooty Shearwater) comprised Arctic Skuas past Starr Gate on 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> (2) and Great Skuas past Starr Gate on 17<sup>th</sup>, Rossall Point on 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> and off Cockerand on 31<sup>st</sup>.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Christmas Bird Hunt

The popular sponsored Christmas Bird Hunt will again be held this year. Full details are on the website and if you are able to get sponsorship that will be greatly appreciated. Failing that keep your eyes peeled over the festive period to see if you can spot any new species for the total; the website is kept up to date during the period of the count so you can see what species are still required for the overall tally.

### Atlas visits

The wintering and breeding Atlases are now half way through. Whilst progress on the Fylde has been good there is still opportunity for more members to get involved. If you are interested in undertaking Atlas timed visits but want to find out more you are welcome to join another member on a count to see if it is for you, contact the newsletter for more details.

### 2010 Bird Club Calendar

Bird Club member David Moreton has designed and produced a very high quality calendar featuring the very best photographs taken by Bird Club members in 2008. The calendar will be sold for £4 a copy (£5 if to be mailed out) with any profits from sales going to the Club. Order at the Club's meetings or post cheques payable to **Fylde Bird Club** to the Secretary (Paul Ellis, 18 Staining Rise, Staining, Blackpool FY3 0BU).



### Attendance at Bird Club Meetings by Non Members

Until now the Club has allowed non members to attend meetings with no charge, on the understanding that visitors could sample the Club and then decide if they would like to join.

The Committee have now decided to introduce a nominal charge of £2 per head for non members attending our meetings. Should the visitor later choose to join, then the fee paid at their most recent visit would be deducted from their annual subscription charge.

