



# Fylde Bird Club

## Lancashire



### Spring Newsletter 2013

Editors

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**We have three Robins** chasing each other round the garden and our new nest box is attracting the attention of a number of Blue Tits. I love spring with its promise of birds and gardening and maybe this year a year to remember for all the right reasons.



In this issue we have the final instalment of Stephen Dunstons "A year of Seawatching". I hope everybody has found it as interesting as I have.

Other items include a birding walk from Cocker's Dyke to Fluke Hall, details of this years pelagic from Fleetwood, Stuart Piners review of the highlights of the last three months birding on the Fylde and Ellen Pembertons article on Marton Mere.

Forthcoming events start with the Photographic Competition in April. Don't forget to enter. If you have never entered before make this the first time. Again it would really help me if all entries reached me by the end of

March. My contact details are [rhind1003@btinternet.com](mailto:rhind1003@btinternet.com)

May is a talk by Brian Ashton from the Lancashire Wildlife Trust on the Water Vole Project.

The June talk is about birding in North Wales and the speakers are Alan Davies and Ruth Miller, the authors of "[The Biggest Twitch](#)".

### Marton Mere report – October -December 2012

There is plenty to report for the last quarter of 2012, starting with 2 Skylarks and 5 Meadow Pipits flying south on 1st October. A Peregrine was present on the 2nd and a Kingfisher was seen on the 6th and the 19th. There was a great deal of activity on the 7th, with a Jay and 34 Gadwall present, also 35 Jackdaws flew south-west and in the east fields there were 125 Linnets. On the barn that day there was a Little Owl, while a Fox was seen to the west of the barn. On the 9th, A Grey Wagtail was on the dyke. The Little Owl was seen again on the 17th and 19th, with another sighting of a Fox on the latter date. Also on the 19th there were 12 Whooper Swans in the south-east field and a Black Swan on the reserve. Goose numbers peaked in mid-October, with 7000 Pinkfeet and up to 6 Barnacles. A Eurasian White-fronted Goose was present on the 20th. Linnet numbers remained high in late October, with 90 on the 25th and 75 on the 29th. Fieldfares and Redwings started arriving; high counts of the former included 275 on the 25th and 400 on the 26th. There were 60 Redwings on the latter date, along with another Skylark. A Woodcock circled over the south side of the reserve on the 27th. The Starling roost was down considerably on 2011, with a peak of 21540 birds on 29th October.



On 4th November, 72 Pink-footed Geese flew over. Another Jay was present on the 5th. Peak counts of Whooper Swans in early November included 50 on the 5th and 75 on the 8th. Starling numbers had dropped to 7000 by 5th November. A female Pintail was seen on 10th November. This month also saw a Fylde rarity at the Mere, with 2 female Bullfinches present on the 20th. At least one of them stayed well into December. A late sighting of a Chiffchaff occurred on 21st November, with a Goosander, a Barn Owl, 300 Teal and 43 Shovelers on the 27th. On the 28th there were 6 Water Rails heard and a Peregrine flew over the east fields. A Little Owl and a Swallow graced the reserve on the 29th - not the latest Fylde record, but possibly the latest for the Mere! There were 2 Woodcock and an unwelcome visitor in the form of a Mink on the 30th.

December's highlights included a female Blackcap on the 1st, with 2 high bird counts on the 2nd and 3rd - 312 Coot and 29 Pheasants respectively. With so many Waxwings entering the country, surely some would turn up on the Mere - and 3 were seen on the 5th! Also present on this date were a Barn Owl and a Woodcock. 2 Siskins were reported on the 8th and there were some 850 Teal on the 9th. A Little Egret also arrived on the 9th, with 1 or 2 visiting the area until the year end, into January. There were 2 sightings of Lesser Redpoll in December, 3 on the 12th and 1 on the 23rd. Also on the 12th, about 30 Black-tailed Godwits flew over. A Barn Owl was using the box on the island and a Fox was present on the 16th, with an Iceland Gull - possibly the same bird which frequented the Mere over the winter of 2011/12 - seen briefly around midday. A Peregrine and a Little Owl were present again on the 23rd, while on the 24th and 25th, Wigeon numbers reached 209 and 236 respectively. A Goldcrest and a Stock Dove were also seen on the 25th, while 2 Shelduck visited the east fields on the 27th. The Iceland Gull put in an appearance again on the 31st but once again it was only seen briefly. Hopefully it will put in some longer appearances before the winter ends.

*Ellen Pemberton*

## **Bird sightings - November to January 2012/2013**

### **November**

During November Great White Egrets visited Pilling Marsh on 19<sup>th</sup> and Warton Marsh on 29<sup>th</sup>, a Lapland Bunting flew south over Rossall Point on 4<sup>th</sup> and Snow Buntings were discovered at Fleetwood (2), Fairhaven Beach and Starr Hills. Crossbills flew over Knott End on 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, Fairhaven Lake on 4<sup>th</sup>, Myerscough College on 8<sup>th</sup> and Galgate on 16<sup>th</sup>. Water Pipits were logged at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park and Warton Bank, Marton Mere hosted up to two Long-eared Owls and a couple of Purple Sandpipers were at Blackpool North Shore. Three adult Dark-bellied Brent Geese visited Burrow's Marsh, at least two Velvet Scoters and a Long-tailed Duck flew past Rossall Point during the month, a Black Redstart was observed in Fleetwood, Scaup were at Rossall Point (4), Glasson Basin (2), Starr Gate and Myerscough Quarry and Great Northern Divers flew past Starr Gate and Rossall Point. Waxwing flocks were reported at eleven sites, with peak counts comprising at least 160 in Preston, 35 at Fairhaven and 25 at Great Marton. A late Swallow was at Marton Mere on 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **December**

Highlight of the month was the sighting of a drake Green-winged Teal on the Wyre Estuary between Burrow's Marsh and Barnaby's Sands from 16<sup>th</sup>. A Great White Egret was seen on Warton Marsh on several dates during December whilst another visited Fleetwood. An Iceland Gull lingered in the Marton Mere area, a Snow Bunting and Black Redstart remained at Fleetwood and another Snow Bunting flew over Warton Marsh, Water Pipits lingered in Fleetwood and at Warton Marsh, Barnacle Geese accompanied Pink-footed Geese at Lytham Moss (2) and Sand Side, a Dark-bellied Brent Goose was at Lytham Moss, seven Eurasian White-fronted Geese were at Barnaby's Sands, a Greenland White-fronted Goose was in Fleetwood and a Long-tailed Duck arrived at Fairhaven Lake on 21<sup>st</sup>, where it remained into the New Year. A Shag was seen off Rossall Point, a Scaup lingered on Fleetwood Marine Lakes, a Velvet Scoter was at the Wyre Estuary mouth in Fleetwood, two Bitterns were at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, two Purple Sands remained at Blackpool North Shore and another visited Fleetwood Marine Lakes, two Long-eared Owls were on view at Marton Mere and Waxwings were recorded at ten sites, with peak counts of 27 in Fleetwood, 21 at Greenhalgh and 15 at Preston.

### **January 2013**

A number of scarce geese were recorded amongst the Pink-footed Goose flocks during January, the rarest being a blue morph Lesser Snow Goose which was first seen on the Fylde at Crimbles on 13<sup>th</sup>. The same bird had previously been seen accompanying Greenland White-fronted Geese on Islay (Argyll) on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012. Goose watchers also unearthed Tundra Bean Geese at Lytham Moss and Bone Hill, Greenland White-fronted Goose on Lytham Moss, Barnacle Geese at Stake Pool (3), Cockerham Moss Edge (3), Cockerham, Lytham Moss and Pilling, Dark-bellied Brent Geese at Pilling Marsh and Fluke Hall and Pale-bellied Brent Goose at Pilling Marsh.



On the Wyre Estuary the Green-winged Teal was seen again on 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. Scaup visited Preston Dock (5) and Glasson Basin and the Long-tailed Duck lingered at Fairhaven Lake throughout the month, whilst others flew past Blackpool North Shore and Starr Gate. A Great White Egret flew over Poulton-le-Fylde whilst another lingered on Warton Marsh. Purple Sandpipers were at Blackpool North Shore (2) and Fleetwood Marine Lakes (2) and an Iceland Gull lingered in the Marton Mere area, where a Bittern and two Long-eared Owls were also present. A Little Auk flew past Rossall Point on 31<sup>st</sup>, a Siberian Chiffchaff visited a Knott End garden on 5<sup>th</sup>, a Black Redstart, Water Pipit and Bittern remained in Fleetwood, two Water Pipits were on Burrow's Marsh, Snow Buntings were discovered at Cockersand and Blackpool North Shore and Waxwings were recorded at five sites, a peak count of 37 in Preston.

*Stuart Piner*

## **WINMARLEIGH MOSS**

Owned and managed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust. It is a few miles east of Pilling at SD4447 and adjacent tetrads. A public footpath runs North east alongside Crawley's dyke from (SD436474) separating it from Cockerham Moss. A place that is difficult to traverse so boots or wellies are recommended. A place where Hobby, Rough legged Buzzard, Buzzard, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine and Merlin have all been recorded from and Red Grouse too in the distant past. Willow Warbler, Meadow Pipit, Reed Bunting, Cuckoo and Redpoll are all present at different seasons but the reason I like going there is that there is nowhere else quite like it in the Fylde, a place well worth visiting. It is however one of those places you'll either love or hate, but you will have to find that out for yourselves.

It is also the only site in the Fylde where butterflies the Green Hairstreak and Large Heath (davus form) can be found.

It is good too for Large Red Damselfly, Four-spotted Chaser and Black Darter dragonflies. Also present is the Bog Bush Cricket and a large range of moths including many daytime fliers, not forgetting some interesting bog plants.

*Barry Dyson*

## **A SEAWATCHING YEAR – FINAL INSTALMENT**

### **October**

The first weekend of the month provided a cameo that said something about seawatching, and birding in general. A Marinelifelife volunteer came to Blackpool on the 6th in the hope of observing seals and porpoises. We spent a couple of hours scanning from North Shore, it was too choppy for cetaceans and our highlights were limited to birds including a couple a Gannet, 10 Pintail south and a few Common Scoter dotted around.

The next day the wind had dropped quite a lot, and though it wasn't quite a millpond it wasn't far off. I saw at least a couple of Harbour Porpoises on and off all afternoon, and a Grey Seal was 'bottling' on full view all the time. That's birding...

The next couple of weekends I was fortunate enough to be birding on Out Skerries in Shetland, where the notable birds I found were an Olive-backed Pipit, a Hoopoe and two Great Tits (seriously). The ferry trips from mainland Shetland to Skerries and back were enlivened by late Great Skuas as well as commoner seabirds but unfortunately on this trip no whales or dolphins were seen.

The weekend after returning from 'Skerries' I was fortunate to be able to volunteer on the Marinelifelife survey on the Stena route between Liverpool and Belfast. I say fortunately but it was generally fairly quiet most of the way across, though we did see a couple of Little Gulls which are always a delight and there were a few Guillemots and Kittiwakes. The highlight of the trip though was very large numbers of Eider as we entered Belfast Lough. Counting dense flocks from a moving ferry is not the most straightforward task, but there appeared to be in the region of 2000 birds. This was the largest gathering of Eider I have seen in many years, possibly ever. It would have been nice to have chance to search through them for 'northern' or even 'Dresser's' types but you can't have everything.

At the end of the month I began a holiday in Madeira with the family. We were fortunate to have a balcony looking on to the sea, whilst it was a couple of hundred metres to the sea this did enable me to do a bit of scanning over the waves. Anyone who knows anything about Madeiran birds will know that it is one of the prime seawatching venues in the Western Palearctic. Anyone who knows anything about Madeiran birds will know that all the reasons for this (Fea's Petrel and Zino's Petrel in particular) do not apply in November when the birds are not nesting. Having said that I was hopeful of some passage activity maybe involving skuas and the like.



The first three days of the holiday fell within October and I was able to do several stints of watching. These produced hundreds of Cory's Shearwaters, but absolutely nothing else unless you count passing Yellow-legged Gulls and four Grey Herons that landed on an outcrop offshore for several hours.

A few days into the holiday a chance to put this right came up when we travelled to the island of Porto Santo on the ferry for the day. At the very least we hoped for some dolphins. We didn't get any. We saw a few more Cory's Shearwaters between the two islands and around 150 as we came alongside Porto Santo but that was it. More positively Porto Santo was great and I went to the birding hotspot that is Tanque Pond where I saw a flock of Plain Swifts and several species of wader and ducks, as well as Berthelot's Pipits scuttling around in the scrub.

## November

November was to be our salvation in terms of Madeira, whilst October had let us down we were booked on a whale and dolphin spotting trip on the last full day of our break and we were sure we would have a turn in luck. Unfortunately the trip was cancelled because of the weather so that really was that for Madeiran seabirds. Given I saw both the endemic landbirds (Madeiran Firecrest and Trocaz Pigeon) I suspect I won't return, but never say never I guess.

After a lot of travelling (no sympathy expected) it was good to get back to some local seawatching during the month. On the 10<sup>th</sup> I was at Starr Gate and it was clear that large numbers of Cormorants were about with over 150 seen. An adult Little Gull was welcome and a few Razorbills were on the move.

The following day saw an unprecedented count of Cormorants off Starr Gate with 1500 passing. Increasing counts have been made in the Ribble, and it appears that a large proportion of the birds roosting there are feeding at sea. It is tempting to suggest that having had to resort to sea feeding in greater numbers in the freeze ups of 2009/10 and 2010/11 the species has adapted to this habitat in greater numbers. This is of course entirely conjecture.

Also on the 11<sup>th</sup> some late Gannets were seen. They appeared to have been drawn in to the 'bait ball' that was encouraging a lot of the Cormorants to feed close inshore. Two Little Egrets flew south, whilst this species is now firmly established in the area it remains a scarce bird on seawatches and still feels like a touch of the exotic to me in that context.

Finally in a relatively restricted month due to the weather a watch on 17<sup>th</sup> from Starr Gate yielded a couple of views of a Bottle-nosed Dolphin offshore. It really has been a fantastic year for Bottle-nosed dolphin sightings off the Fylde, largely because of the pod of half a dozen or so animals that took up partial residence in the summer. Hopefully this isn't a one off, but time will tell.

## December

The final month of the year and a combination of unsuitable wet conditions and lack of available daylight limited the amount of seawatching that I could undertake locally. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> I did manage to do some watching at Starr Gate, and there were still plenty of Cormorants leaving the Ribble to feed at sea with a minimum of 860 passing north. There were also divers on the move, with a total of 30 Red-throats going south.

In the run up to Christmas I was fortunate to be able to go on the Marineline survey from Immingham to Brevik in Norway and Gothenburg in Sweden. We arrived at the port late on Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup> and grabbed some sleep on the boat before being on the bridge at first light. We were some way into the North Sea at this stage and though it was quiet at first we eventually saw some porpoises and a small pod of Bottle-nosed Dolphins. These were eclipsed though by good numbers of Little Auks close to the boat. Whereas other auks were diving clear the Little Auks were floundering away like baby turtles on the beach, and could easily be picked out with the naked eye on this feature alone.

The following day we were unable to survey as it was dark when we arrived in Brevik and again after we left. We were allowed ashore though and spent several hours surveying the fjord and looking for landbirds. Although there was snow on the ground the temperature was relatively mild and we covered several kilometres. Tufted Duck and Eider were about the best on the water, in terms of landbirds cracking views of Hawfinches were the highlight but we also saw the local subspecies of Bullfinch and Great Spotted Woodpecker.

The following day it was again dark when we entered and left Gothenburg. The survey team are not allowed off the boat at Gothenburg so in between entering the survey results thus far onto computer we were birding from the boat. Ducks were the highlight, with close views of Goosander, Red-breasted Merganser and Goldeneye together about the best. In all we managed over 20 species, good going considering we only had 30 or so in Norway when we were able to disembark.

Day 4 it was good to be surveying again, initially things were again quiet but we were hopeful of seeing more Little Auks in the same area as the Sunday. We were not disappointed, we had more than 80 making over 130 for the whole trip. Interestingly they were all flying away from the boat this time, perhaps they make an assessment of the best course of action based on the wind direction relative to the boat. A handful of Puffins, a single Great Skua and a migrating Velvet



Scoter were also highlights.

The Velvet Scoter reminds me of what a strange year it was for me for this species on the Fylde. In the first winter period I saw them on a large number of occasions, including the unforgettable morning where nine passed among over 5000 Common Scoter. Then an unseasonable bird in July, followed by a completely blank second winter period.

Other things were more predictable. As the year drew to a close there were some strong winds that typically push Kittiwakes and Little Gulls nearer to shore where they can be viewed better. These winds were no exception, and watching these two elegant species feeding gracefully among the white caps was as good away to finish the year as any.

I hope you have enjoyed reading about my seawatching exploits through 2012. If you haven't done much seawatching I hope it encourages you to give it a try.

***Stephen Dunstan***

## **The Eagle Has Landed**

I grew up with a general interest in birds, British breeds, the Blackbird, Bullfinch and Barn Owl. Later I took part in the RSPB Garden Watch, visited Leighton Moss Reserve for tasty lunches and thought I was a fully fledged birder.

NOW... the eagle has landed. Okay the pigeon has perched, but it could be a rock dove or stock dove!

I joined Fylde Bird Club and soon realised that I had a lot to learn. It was all there for the taking, daily sighting records with expert photos, lectures and advice all freely available.

So I set off for Rutland Bird Fair. I came home with new bins and a photo of Bill Oddie but no sightings.

I realised that I had to work harder to understand the secret life of birds.

Why did the Pallas Warbler sit in a tree at Knott End for a week in October? How could I identify a Lesser Black-backed Gull from a Great-backed Gull? What state of tide is best for birding?

I share the frustrations of others on their missions when birding but I'm also starting to experience the buzz after spotting the Short Eared Owl or Spoonbill despite taking a windier route to get there. I check size, silhouette, bill contour, wingbeat, actions, call and habitat and then refer to the Collins Bird Guide scanning the pages looking for minute variation of markings until I'm happy.

But I'm still unsure of identifying a rarity. I will one day and my records will be used confidently and perhaps I will be able to give something back to Fylde Bird Club.

In the meantime I'll keep my eyes and ears open enjoying my jaunts in the countryside and seaside and feel closer to the secret life of birds.

***Sandra Langhorne***



## Cocker's Dyke to Fluke Hall.

After retiring in 1996 I left the hills and valleys of West Yorkshire and settled on the flatlands of Over Wyre. It left us more time to walk and bird in an area we needed to explore.

A walk we do regularly is on the sea wall that runs east from Knott End. We join it at Cocker's Dyke half way to Fluke Hall. As you top the sea wall Morcambe Bay is spread out in front, from Walney Island in the west round past the Lakeland fells to Lancaster and the flat top of Ingleboro to the east. The outfall from the dyke can attract hundreds of gulls, all the common ones plus Med and Yellow Legged and last year an Iceland. Lots of fun for gull lovers who like a challenge. The bay in winter is always full of the normal waders, Knott, Dunlin, Curlew, Lapwing, Grey and Golden Plovers. They are joined by a variety of ducks and masses of Shelduck.



Migration brings in Stint, Whimbrel and Curlew Sandpipers. The winter numbers of Pink Footed Geese can be awesome and the flock is always worth sifting through for more unusual species. Some days are special, New Years Day, a frozen sea at high tide and a group of Whooper and Bewick swans floating amongst the ice.

We turn right and head west towards Fluke Hall with the sea on our left and Ridge farm on the right. The farmland has always been good for Grey Partridge and many other game birds although the game bird hatchery casts some doubt on their parentage! The hedges on the right are full of Whitethroats, Tree Sparrows, Greenfinches ( at last making a comeback ) Linnet and Goldfinches. In winter there is usually a large flock of Twite wandering between Knott End and

Fluke. Sparrowhawk, Peregrine and Merlin appear in winter and Sparrowhawks are always around. Buzzard are now becoming more regular and owls are represented by Barn Owls, Little Owls (becoming more unusual ) and the occasional Short Eared Owl.

As you reach Fluke Hall car park watch out for Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, Wheatears and Pied Wagtails. Spring has brought White and Yellow Wagtails plus Lapland Buntings.

Walking on the road through the woods with all the usual woodland species brings you to fields on the left. A good place for swans and geese and a reliable site for Stock Doves. Highlights here have included Black Swan, Redbreasted Goose and Glossy Ibis.

Birding brings unforgettable days. I took two friends down one winters evening to see a group of four Snow Buntings that had been around for a week or two one of whom was moulting into summer glory. We found them and they had been joined by a dull bird with a bright red rump, a Black Redstart. As we watched we heard the sound of Pink Feet, it grew and grew till hundreds descended through the low clouds to roost on Preesall Sands. We rounded off the day with a Short Eared Owl hunting at Cocker's Dyke.

I haven't even mentioned the two juvenile cuckoos who spent up to a fortnight feeding up by the sea wall, the second made famous by David Moretons photographs plus the increasing numbers of Little Egrets and the fact that gales can blow almost anything into the bay.

Many birds are missed off in this article, sorry, try making your own list and if you find a Wryneck ring me and Stuart Piner, me first.

Feel free to share your favourite birding walk.



*Peter Rhind*



## Owl boxes at Blackpool Zoo

Tawny Owls are in decline and the availability of suitable nest sites and competition for them with introduced grey squirrels may be a factor. Natural nest sites are scarce in managed parks and woodland where damaged and dead trees are removed for safety reasons. Therefore the provision of additional nest sites, by installing nest boxes, should improve the chances of Tawny Owls breeding successfully. A further problem with nest boxes in public places is the risk of interference and disturbance by people. Tawny Owls have previously bred in the Blackpool Zoo and Stanley Park area and have been seen there again recently. Therefore the perfect location to site a Tawny Owl box is

within the Zoo grounds, where it will be protected and where there are suitable trees. Tawny Owls are woodland birds and are strictly nocturnal. They are difficult to locate at their day roosts, where they sit still and quiet during day light.

Tawny Owls are most

likely to be heard during the winter when they give their distinctive hooting and 'keewick' calls.

Barn Owls are reliant on suitable nest sites near good hunting territory, in open rough grassland. Such sites are limited and largely within

buildings. The provision of suitable nest boxes can make a real difference to their population. It is known that Barn Owls have bred in buildings at the Zoo before and there is suitable hunting habitat for Barn Owls to the east of the Zoo in the Lawson Field, Marton Mere and De Vere Golf Course area. The Zoo was therefore a natural choice for the location of a new Barn Owl nest box. Unlike Tawny Owls, Barn Owls are not so strictly nocturnal and are likely to be seen at dawn and dusk hunting short tailed field voles, along the edges of paths and fields.

The Fylde Bird Club works to promote and support active conservation measures in the Fylde area. A part of this work is the provision of nest boxes for a number of species where this activity is known to be of benefit. The Club is therefore pleased to be able to collaborate with Blackpool Zoo, in the conservation of two local owl species, by providing nest boxes for wild owls within the Zoo grounds.

***Paul Slade***



## FYLDE BIRD CLUB ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION ( April 23rd 2013 )

Each year the Fylde Bird Club holds a photographic competition. All members who paid their subscriptions for 2012 are invited to enter and may submit up to **TWO** photographs for each geographical category:

- Fylde
- British Isles (does **NOT** include photographs taken in Fylde)
- World (does **NOT** include photographs taken in Fylde and British Isles)

Digital photographs taken in the calendar year prior to the competition are acceptable. All entries to be submitted to Peter Rhind (by e-mail or by flash drive) preferably by the last day of March although it will still be possible to enter on the night. If you have any queries please contact Peter: Tel. 01253 812495; E-mail: rhind1003@btinternet.com

### Competition rules

- Only **TWO** images per category per photographer
- All photographs must be taken during 2011
- No photographs taken at the nest
- No photographs of captive or trapped birds
- Please submit digital photographs only; slides/hard copies/prints will not be accepted (but may be submitted as scanned images).
- Only photographers who have taken the top five photographs in each class (as voted by members) will be asked to elaborate on their entries (e.g. where the photograph was taken, type of equipment used etc).

Winning entries will be available for viewing on the Fylde Bird Club photographic competition webpage:  
<http://www.fyldebirdclub.org/photocomp.htm>

**PS Look out your favourite photos from 2012 (birds of course ) and enter. I love seeing bird photos.**

*Pete Rhind*

### Hello Everyone,

I wanted to let members of the bird club know that Fylde Ringing Group is starting a colour ringing project on Turnstones. The aims of the project are to:

- generate some information on wintering sites and distribution of wintering Turnstone in the Northwest of England or further afield.
- attempt to find out what the turnover of the birds wintering at Fleetwood Marine Lakes is.
- where are they coming from to roost/forage at the site.
- measure winter site fidelity and implications of disturbance if they show high winter site fidelity.
- generate re-sightings to look at migration routes.
- try and ascertain whether there are any relationships between wintering areas and breeding areas.
- possibly measure phenology if we can catch them over a number of years.

The birds will be trapped at a feeding station at Fleetwood Marine Lakes and on the right leg the birds will have a metal BTO ring above the knee (on the tibia), a green colour ring below the knee (on the tarsus) and on the left leg above the knee a black leg flag inscribed with white lettering. The aim is to try and mark up to a 100 birds each winter for five years.

I would be grateful if members could report any sightings of these birds to [nwturnstones@gmail.com](mailto:nwturnstones@gmail.com) A full sightings history will of course be sent to anybody reporting a colour marked bird to us.

Cheers,

*Seamus*





## Local patch – Record species count 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

It is almost 6 years since I last wrote about my local patch, but I felt the visit made on the 19/2/13 starting at 7.45am and ending at 10.45am was worthy of a mention as it smashed my record for the number of species seen on any one visit. The following is a short report of that morning.

With the impending electrification of the railway line the farm bridge I cross over at the start of my local patch is currently out of bounds so this reduced the likelihood of any record species count which in any event was the last thing on my mind. I therefore started from the public footpath that takes you into Poulton Industrial Estate.

The day was calm, sunny and cold and I had no expectations of it being anything out of the ordinary but this was soon to change. After seeing the usual Feral pigeons, Herring gulls and Black-headed gulls a sighting of a pair of Greenfinch near the footbridge that spans the main dyke was unusual here but not nearly as unusual as the Pintail on the main dyke. This was only my second record for this species the other being 9 flying over on the 28/10/08. It was clearly nervous and agitated and flew off in the company of 5 Mallard.

After crossing the footbridge and logging Blackbird, Chaffinch, Dunnock, Robin, Rook, Blue Tit, Woodpigeon, Common Gull and Curlew I clambered over the galvanised farm gate to enter private farmland. The fields were part planted with winter wheat but much of it still lay under water. As I walked alongside the dyke a Kestrel flew over and 2 Mute Swans sailed serenely by. A further Mute Swan was struggling to extricate itself from the iced over floods and on eventually doing so flew away. My approach to 9 out of sight bleating teal must have been heard as they exploded into the airspace above, and circled round a few times before heading off to pastures new. In the partially flooded stubble field several Skylarks took to the air chasing one another and chirruping. I always love the way they look over their shoulders as they fly away, not unlike Short-eared owls do.

It was here I saw my only Hare of the day. Three years earlier almost to the day I saw 16. I fear that the increasing number of Buzzards might well be taking their toll on the leverets making the population crash but hope I am mistaken and that numbers may return to former levels.

As I approached the boundary hedgerow something had clearly spooked the birds on the other side. Up went 83 Lapwings and a flock of about 50 Linnet. I could be sure about the Lapwing numbers because they do not fly off in a compact group but are more scattered and their flight is often leisurely making them relatively easy to count in flight, providing of course there are not many hundreds of them. The Linnets of course are a completely different matter. They usually remain together in a bounding, undulating flight, and because of their smallness and constant changing of direction make an accurate flight count impossible.

Here too were my first pair of returning Shelduck and a pair of piping Oystercatchers a sure sign that spring is on its way and courtship is about to begin. An alarmed Redshank flew over calling noisily while the call of a Golden Plover drew my attention to a flock of about 30 high above flying north. A Cormorant also put in an appearance having come up from the main dyke. My only Wren of the day was seen here as it made its way along the hedgerow.

Climbing over a wired fence into another field I could see 200+ Woodpigeons on the ground and 300+ Starlings. The flushed Lapwings were also here with a scattering of gulls for me to count. A cock Pheasant was in the distance with a pair of Carrion Crows nearby but once again some unseen predator scared the birds away leaving behind only empty fields. I climbed over a stile into a wood and flushed some Blackbirds. Chaffinches were in good song, as too were a Dunnock, Great tits and several Robins. Other than that the wood was quiet with no sign of any Roe Deer which I often see around here.

Coming out of the wood I made my way uphill to another wood hearing an unseen mewing Buzzard and the chattering of 12 Fieldfares as they flew directly over me. A Song thrush was singing in the wood and a Great spotted Woodpecker was drumming away. The Great Spot had made some token drumming in mid January but now it was serious stuff. More Chaffinches were singing here and were joined by another Dunnock. Paired Great and Blue tits were in courtship mood but 2 Goldcrests were possibly early migrants. Don't you just love their approachability – nothing seems to scare them expect no doubt a Sparrowhawk.

More of the same species followed until a distant Magpie and 7 chacking Jackdaws lifted the days total to 39 species. I was about two thirds into my local patch and knew I could expect a few more species but too many false dawns in the past stopped me looking at a record total. Nevertheless there had been a lot of birds to be seen to day and that wasn't going to end. The final wood I entered is usually quiet but can be counted upon to produce something and sure enough in the distance it was obvious that some Redwings were shuffling through last years leaf litter as they searched for worms and insects. Always shy they heard or saw me from afar and one by one flew into the tree canopy before flying away completely as I once again got too near. Not at all shy was the Treecreeper as it went about its business totally indifferent to me. I average about three a year so it was good to get this one under my belt so soon in the year.

Leaving the woods behind I entered into pasture where I immediately saw 5 Curlews and 1 Blackwit feeding there. I could see more Curlews in an adjacent waterlogged field and as I approached them a Sparrowhawk appeared chasing a Blackbird but narrowly missing it. Fortunately the Curlews continued feedin

ount 70. As I did so 4 Long-tailed Tits arrived and just like



the Goldcrests were indifferent to my presence. I turned round to see what else I could see in the wet fields and as I did 63 Blackwits circled the sky gradually dropping lower and lower before finally deeming it safe to drop in there. Out of the corner of my eye I nearly missed the departure of 3 Greylags and could easily have missed 10 Snipe had I not carefully scanned the cow trodden, divoted field. With just their heads and some mantles showing I was pleased to spot them but not for want of trying couldn't find a Jack Snipe. Nevertheless my species count for the day had now exceeded my previous best February total of 42 species and with still about a mile to walk things were looking good for a local patch record.

On returning to the main dyke I carefully looked over the fence and sure enough the expected Moorhens were present before submerging and making for their hiding places at the base of the embankment. I was nearly back at the footbridge when a Grey Heron obligingly landed on it using it as a perch to survey the broad dyke below. It stayed longer than I thought it would but then flew into the adjacent field as I made my way to the bridge. Jammy doesn't begin to describe how I timed

***Barry Dyson***

## **Rossall Point Observation Tower**

February 10<sup>th</sup> saw the broadcasting of the Rossall Point Observation Tower, Radio Lancashire was live on air from 11o'clock on the Sunday morning till 2pm. Other groups who plan to use the building were represented and gave interviews, the broadcast was made mainly on the roof which was exposed to the elements. The weather on the day was a typical winter's day, windy, wet and very cold.

The centre was officially opened on the 28th February by the Mayor and Mayoress for Wyre, Mr Don and Mrs Vera Lawrenson.

The Fylde Bird Club will have use of the first floor and we are putting together some information with photos and a display of the wintering birds especially the 1000s of Pink Footed Geese which come down from the Arctic circle to spend the winter here on the Fylde. Visitors who are perhaps new to birding will have some displays and photographs to help to them identify some of the birds which visit the Fylde. Paul Ellis spoke on Radio Lancashire for our club; he explained the work we do in the Fylde, and the conservation and protection of the bird life. He said Rossall is on the edge of Morcambe Bay which is one of the largest intertidal areas in the UK and one of the most important sites in the UK for overwintering Oystercatchers, Curlews, Redshank and Turnstones.

Rossall Point is a very good place to see shorebirds in the bay as they can roost very close to the sea wall. When asked about the contribution made to science by birdwatchers, he replied that thousands of amateur volunteers all around the country provide coordinated monthly bird counts to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) whose scientists collate and interpret the data. The results reveal population changes that can prompt further study to investigate the reasons. He added that it's also important to derive some enjoyment from going out, watching and counting birds

The windows of our viewing room will need some attention they are difficult to open and close. Alison Boden from Wyre Borough said she would report it back to the Council; hopefully they will be able to resolve the problem quickly. I mentioned to Alison that some seating would be needed and she agreed that she would mention this as well. Members of the club, Sandra, Barbara, along with Peter Mason came to show their support.

There is access to the roof of the main building when the visitor centre is open. There is also access at any time to the roof of the toilet block, the padlock has a key code which is **1945** and a button underneath to press to open.

The centre opens on **1<sup>st</sup> March**

**Winter** 11am to 3pm Thursday ---- Sunday

**Summer** 10am to 4pm Wednesday --- Sunday

Rangers and volunteers will man the Centre. Any members who wish to get involved can contact Alison Boden at [Wyre.gov.uk/Rossall Point](http://Wyre.gov.uk/Rossall Point) or email Alison Boden [aboden@wyrebc.gov.uk](mailto:aboden@wyrebc.gov.uk)

The ground floor is not only a visitor centre with items on display but has closed circuit television which can be used to scan the beach and the walkway.

Len wants visitors, to not only look around the centre but to get involved with the conservation of the surrounding area. There will be many events planned including bird watching not only for the experienced birders but people who wish to learn about the many species found on our coast.



## Request for Responsible Behaviour when Birding Rural Over Wyre

A number of instances have been reported of individuals behaving unacceptably in the Bradshaw Lane Area. Please remember that the feeding stations only exist because of the consent of the landowners and the work and funding of volunteers who maintain them.

Continued irresponsible behaviour will lead to their demise. In the interests of good relations with local people and conservation please observe these basic requests.

Stay on the public roads and footpaths.

- **Do not drive down private tracks.**
- **Do not park blocking access to farm tracks.**
- **Do not park so as to cause obstructions on the roads.**

If viewing from the entrance to a track and a vehicle needs access, move without hesitation.

Please be courteous to farmers & landowners and respect their requests.

### **Ribble Bird Tours have limited availability on a few tours this coming spring**

#### **March**

Western Ireland ( 7 days ) 3 places left  
Black Grouse & NE Coast ( weekend ) 3 places left  
Speyside ( 4 days ) 3 places left

#### **April**

Texas Coast ( 15 days ) 2 places left  
Cyprus ( 8 days ) 2 places left  
Mull & Iona ( 4 days ) 4 places left

#### **May**

The Danube Delta ( 8 days ) 2 places left  
Eastern Poland ( 8 days ) 2 places left  
Norfolk ( 4 Days ) 3 places left  
Speyside, Shetland, Orkney, Mull & Iona ( 16 days ) 3 places left  
Kazakhstan ( 14 days ) 3 places left

#### **June**

Iceland ( 11 days )  
Farne Islands & Northumberland ( 4 days )

Autumn tours include Hungary in August, Cape May USA in September, Scilly in October ( 1 place left ), Australia – East Coast & Tasmania in October / November ( 2 places left ) and South East China in October / November ( 4 places left ).

New tours for next spring include Cuba, Morocco, South East Turkey & Azerbaijan, British Columbia and Hungary, Romania & Slovakia plus our usual departures to Florida, the Texas Coast, Lesvos, Shetland & Orkney and Eastern Poland.

***Stuart Meredith***

***Email [smrbt@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:smrbt@blueyonder.co.uk)***



## Species Champions Required!!

In February 2013 Fylde Bird Club member Barry Dyson approached the Committee with an exciting new idea which aims to increase the interest in recording common birds - [Species Champions](#). The idea is simple - each Species Champion represents and promotes the recording of their chosen species.

We are asking each Fylde Bird Club member to become the Species Champion for one species. This need not be an onerous task, nor will it involve too much time or effort - members can make as much out of the project as they wish. The only commitment is that Species Champions will be expected to write their species' account for the annual Fylde Bird Report. It is hoped that in addition to enjoying their everyday birding each member will focus particularly on their favourite species. All participating Species Champions will be listed on this page and members will be encouraged to report their sightings of the relevant species to them.

Some ideas of how to make the most of the project are:-

- pick a common resident, breeding or wintering species rather than a scarcity.
- produce breeding reports, fact files or just snippets of information for the newsletter.
- collate records provided by members and add them to the sightings page.

To become a Species Champion please email your chosen species (a species that hasn't already been selected) to:

[news@fyldebirdclub.org](mailto:news@fyldebirdclub.org).

*And finally...*



### ***Help with Data Entry needed !!***

- Do you have access to a computer?
- Are you familiar with data spread sheets (e.g. Excel)?

If yes, we would really welcome your help with inputting data for the annual Fylde Bird Report. Each year we have a number of records that are submitted on paper that need to be entered into our computer database. If you could provide help inputting records this would be greatly appreciated. We are not just looking for one person but hope to build a small team of people who could assist each year with putting in records. Training will be provided on how to enter the records. If you are willing to help, please contact Stuart Piner.

[stuartpiner@hotmail.com](mailto:stuartpiner@hotmail.com)

