

Fylde Bird Club

Lancashire

March Newsletter 2014

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The days are slowly getting longer and Spring is on its way. At the moment the garden is studded with snowdrops and daffodil shoots are everywhere. All the excitement of a new birding year is here. What birds will brighten up our days this year? When will the first Sand Martins and Wheatears appear? Feel free to share your experiences with us.

In this newsletter are articles by Ellen on what's happening at Marton Mere and Stuarts round up of Fylde visitors. The results of the annual Fylde Bird Club Photographic Competition are here along with the winner of the first "The Under Exposed" category. It's never too late to get out your camera and prepare for next year!!!

We also have articles on Birding on the Wirral by Beryl Turner and Geoff Gradwell has an item on an unlikely relationship between a Bullfinch and a Goldfinch and Jean Wagstaff writes about the Goldfinch, the bird she is championing. John Barker writes about Long Tailed Tits and we have the first of, "A Year on the Fylde, Winter" in which Maurice Jones writes about the Fylde, past and present.

Finally, where have all the Owls gone, Barn Owls and Little Owls seem to have vanished Over Wyre. Any thoughts?

Peter Rhind

Thank You

This is a short note to say a big “Thank You“ to all members for the fantastic book that I was presented with on stepping down as Treasurer. By the way, I am writing this to you from Bermuda where the weather is warm and sunny, well somebody did say it was all lies, no really would I do that to you, it’s cold, wet and windy in Hollins Lane. Anyway back to the reason for writing this. The book is really amazing although I have only managed a small peek into it so please don’t test me on it yet. It was completely unexpected but most welcome, so a thousand thanks to you all.

John Barker

Marton Mere Report, October to December 2013

October is generally seen as a transitional period in the birding calendar, with some summer migrants still lingering, winter migrants arriving and others passing through. This was certainly true at the Mere; the Red-necked Grebe which had been found the previous day was still present on 1st October, while 22 Meadow Pipits flew south and a Little Stint and a Jack Snipe seen. The latter was there again the next day along with 6 Redwings. A female Garganey graced the reserve from the 3rd to the 7th. A Peregrine was also seen during this period and Water Rail numbers peaked with 5 birds on the 7th. On the 8th there was a Chiffchaff on the reserve and on the 11th over 160 Redwings were present. The 13th saw the first Fieldfare of the winter, while a Rook flew south on the 17th. Another member of the crow family which is scarce locally, a Jay, flew north on the 26th. 5 Stock Doves were seen the same day. There were 3 Whooper Swans on the 29th.

The first Goldeneye of the winter was a female on 2nd November. On the 10th, 4 Skylarks flew north and 6 Whooper Swans flew over the east field. 4 Tree Sparrows were seen at Mere View on the 17th and 2 on the 19th, while a Merlin flew south-west on the 18th. A Skylark flew north on the 23rd, while a Peregrine was spotted over the east field the same day. The large Starling roosts of previous years have unfortunately failed to materialise again this autumn, however there were over 1000 on the 27th. On the same day there were 2 Stock Doves on the barn and a Jack Snipe on Staining Nook Marsh. November highlights concluded with a Bittern on the 30th.

A Bittern was seen again, in flight at dusk, on 1st December. On the 2nd there were 3 Tree Sparrows at Mere View, with a Woodcock on the reserve. On the 4th, some 300 Pink-footed Geese flew over Chain Lane. During this period there have been frequent sightings of Barn Owl, which has been using the owl box on the island. I think it would be safe to say there was something totally unexpected seen on the 9th – an adult and a youngster in the box!! Sightings of 2 Barn Owls continued to the year end. While on the subject of owls, the first sighting of Long-eared this winter was a single bird on the 14th, with 3 seen on the 31st. On the 15th there were 2 Buzzards and a Woodcock present. The 18th saw a Barnacle Goose and over 5000 Pink-feet fly over, a Peregrine, a Weasel and last but not least, over 2000 Starlings in the east field. There was a peak of 4 Cetti's Warblers on Christmas Day and another mustelid was seen, this time a Stoat. On the 28th there were 2 Peregrines and on the 29th there was a Merlin.

It has been a busy 3 months on the reserve, with another "first" - during the last quarter it was breeding Water Rails, this time breeding Barn Owls. Who knows what 2014 will bring?

Ellen Pemberton

Fylde Sightings

November 2013

On 12th November 2013 Chris Batty discovered a Semipalmated Sandpiper on Preesall Sands behind his home in Knott End. Although mobile between Knott End and Cocker's Dyke, the bird remained on show throughout the afternoon, allowing Fylde birders to connect with the latest addition to the Fylde List. As well as being a Fylde first, it was also only the second Lancashire record, and the first to be twitchable - the only previous record was an adult at Brockholes Quarry on 25th July 2004, but this bird was only identified after it had departed, having originally been identified as a Little Stint.



The Knott End bird was still in juvenile plumage, although the bird had replaced a row of upper scapulars with grey first-winter feathers. The bird was a classic Semipalmated Sandpiper; the heavily streaked crown, unsplit supercillium, blunt-tipped short bill, dark ear covert 'spot', heavy streaking on the breast sides (lacking any warm colours beneath the streaking), absence of white mantle 'braces', anchor-shaped dark

internal markings on the lower scapulars, lack of warm fringes to the tertials, short primary projection and, crucially, the presence of palmations between the toes all identified the bird as a Semipalmated Sandpiper.

Other highlights during November included two Siberian Chiffchaffs in Fleetwood, Red-crested Pochard at Glasson Basin 23rd-28th, a Bittern at Marton Mere, Barnacle Goose at Pilling Lane Ends, Black Redstarts at Knott End and Fleetwood and three Curlew Sandpipers at Fluke Hall Lane. Dark-bellied Brent Geese were at Pilling Marsh (up to three) and Rossall Point, at least 8 Greenland White-fronted Geese at Bone Hill with a further three in Fleetwood and a Long-tailed Duck was logged off Starr Gate on 24th. A Marsh Harrier at Warton Bank, up to three Purple Sandpipers at Rossall Point and two at Blackpool North Shore, Scaup at Glasson Basin and Rossall Point, Velvet Scoter off Blackpool, Water Pipits at Barnaby's Sands and Fleetwood Marsh and Snow Buntings at Starr Gate (8), Cockersand (2) and Fleetwood Marine Lakes were also recorded during November.

December 2013

The north side of the Ribble Estuary hosted a Glossy Ibis at Freckleton Marsh and a Great White Egret at Warton Bank during December. A Great White Egret also roosted at Pilling Lane Ends and another was reported flying north over Conder Green.

A Bittern remained at Marton Mere along with three Long-eared Owls. A Black-throated Diver flew past Starr Gate and Great Northern Divers were logged off Knott End and Freckleton Naze Point. A Shag visited Stanley Park late in the month and a Barnacle Goose joined Pink-footed Geese at Carr House Green Common, Fleetwood Farm, Marton Mere and Rawcliffe Moss, Dark-bellied Brent Geese were logged at Starr Gate (6) and Pilling Lane End and the wintering Marsh Harrier remained at Warton Marsh. Up to four

Purple Sandpipers, a Long-tailed Duck, Scaup, three Shag, Iceland Gull and two Water Pipits were logged in Fleetwood during December, a Scaup lingered at Glasson Basin, Snow Buntings were at Starr Hills (9) and Fairhaven Beach and at least four Velvet Scoters were off Starr Gate.

January 2014

A Glossy Ibis frequented wet fields by Thurnham Hall from 16th until the month end whilst a Great White Egret continued to visit Warton Marsh. A Bittern and three Long-eared Owls lingered at Marton Mere, another Bittern was in Fleetwood, Great Northern Divers and Velvet Scoters both flew past Starr Gate and Rossall Point and December's Shag remained at Stanley Park until 1st, whilst others flew past Starr Gate and Rossall Point. A Slavonian Grebe was off Little Bispham on 20th and Dark-bellied Brent Goose were at Fleetwood and Pilling Lane Ends. Immature Glaucous Gulls visited Cockersand Fleetwood Docks, whilst Iceland Gulls were logged at Fleetwood Marsh and Marton. A Leach's Petrel flew past Rossall Point on 3rd, a Long-tailed Duck flew past Starr Gate and a Marsh Harrier continued to frequent Warton Marsh. Purple Sandpipers were at Blackpool North Shore (2) and Fleetwood (4), Snow Buntings were at St Annes North Beach (3), Starr Gate (7) and Fleetwood and three Water Pipits were at Warton Bank.

Stuart Piner

A Grand Day Out

Just over an hour, the Wirral is a regular birding destination from our home in Greater Manchester.

Where we bird depends on the season. However, we often take advantage of the motorways, M60, M56 and the M53 that runs from the M56 in the south to New Brighton in the north.

In autumn, with NW gales, New Brighton can be a great spot for seeing Leaches Petrels swept into the Mersey River and if you're lucky, coming in quite close. In winter you could be unlucky if you didn't see Purple Sandpipers on the raft on the Marine Lake.

We would then usually head SW to Leasowe Lighthouse and walking along the rough grassland on the sea wall watching skylarks soaring above our heads and keeping one eye on the shore checking for gulls and waders until we reach the groyn. This is a haven at high tide for resting Oystercatchers, Redshanks, Turnstones and other shore birds.

From here we head inland following the path beyond the horse fields back towards the lighthouse. This part of the walk can be excellent in spring for early migrants such as Northern Wheatear, Whinchat, Stonechat and Pipits.



Again, dependent on the time of year and the height of the tide, we would head for Hoylake promenade. In the right conditions in autumn and winter there may be literally thousands of birds, mainly waders with Knot being the most numerous with counts of 20,000+, Dunlin, Sanderlings, Ringed Plovers and Black tailed Godwits plus good numbers of

large gulls. The birds are driven quite close and, in inclement weather, may be observed

from the comfort of your car! It is worth noting that Hoylake is also the location of the well known sea-watching site of Red Rocks and the starting off point (given the right timing) for the famous Hilbre Island.

Making our way south we usually call at the historic port of Parkgate and, again, with a good high tide we can expect great views of Short Eared Owls, Hen Harrier and Water Rails.

To finish off the day we would visit the new RSPB reserve of Burton Mere Wetlands at the south end of the Wirral. This reserve is the amalgamation of the 'old reserve' of Inner Marsh Farm and newly purchased land including several 'fishing ponds'. In the not too distant future the two reserves will be linked by a perimeter trail allowing you to walk from the Reception area through to the original hide at Inner Marsh. In fact, this link would have been finished earlier if it wasn't for the 'problem' of nesting Little Egrets. The reserve is also very close to Denhall Lane/ Burton Marsh area, another excellent area recently grabbing the headlines with the long staying Buff Bellied Pipit.

Burton Mere Wetlands with its' welcome 'facilities' and good birding is a great place to finish your day on the Wirral.

Beryl Turner

Now and Then – Changed Status in Some Lancashire Birds

This is the first of several articles illustrating the changing status of local bird life based on over 60 years of fairly intensive birding here in Lancashire! I hope new members, in particular, find it interesting.

Whooper Swan: It is a feature of our Winter birding to see large flocks of Whooper Swans feeding on moss lands Over Wyre, on Lytham Moss, Mythop and Warton. From 1952 I saw Whoopers – small family groups – only at Leighton Moss until 3 on the Naze pool, Freckleton in March 1962. They began to frequent Cleveley Mere at Scorton from the mid 1960's for a few years but only since about 1995 have numbers increased in the Fylde, coinciding with ever increasing numbers at Martin Mere WWT. Numbers now reach over 2000 in Lancashire.

Bewick's Swan: Prior to 1966 Bewick's Swans were fairly scarce in Lancashire, mostly occurring in March as they returned from Irish wintering sites. Five birds at Cleveley Mere, Scorton from 20th November 1966 to late January 1967 were Lancashire's first winterers. From the 1970's numbers began to increase resulting in big flocks on the Ribble at Crossens and Marshside and at Martin Mere WWT. Over 1000 were at Martin Mere in November 1990 (contrast just 1 this winter!) and county totals have dropped to well below 200 in recent years with a decent percentage here in Fylde.

Pink Footed Goose: Numbers only reached 2000 over Wyre in the 1960's increasing from the 1970's though few were seen before January. Many thousands were on the South West Lancashire moss lands, inland of Southport and Formby, in this period. County maximum counts rose from 20,000 in 1980 to 40,000 by 2005 coinciding with increased breeding birds in Iceland and Greenland.

Marton Mere Duck Numbers: Prior to 1976, the Mere was much smaller and duck numbers were very few; youths with airguns were frequent. In 1952 my maximum duck counts were Mallard (20), Pochard (3), Tufted Duck (7), Teal (11), Shoveler (2), Wigeon (4), Gadwell (1), Goldeneye (15) and Common Scoter (6). In a different league was my

flock of 9 Garganey (6 males) on the 15th March, 1952, which is still Lancashire's highest spring count.

Scaup: These were much commoner on the Mere and offshore from 1953 to 1958. Mostly in ones and twos but with 8 on the Mere on 19th February 1956 and 27 offshore in March 1954.



Eider: Eider's began to breed on Walney Island in 1949. Two off the Blackpool North Pier jetty in March 1954 were only the third County record in the 20th Century. In the 1980's numbers off Rossall began to increase with 1800 in December 1989 and 2500 eight years later. Recent counts have only been a fraction of these peaks but a small breeding colony has become established on Bank's Marsh on the Ribble and females with broods can be seen from Lytham in June/July.

Black Grouse: Trips to Stock's Reservoir and Gisburn Forest up to the 1970's were sometimes successful in locating Black Grouse and the species hung on there into the 1980's. Other locations were at Higher Thrushgill, North of Wray to the mid 1980's and North of Kirby Lonsdale. Today your searches must try further North in the Yorkshire dales and Upper Teasdale.

Grey Partridge: These have become much scarcer in recent years because, at least in part, of the numbers of introduced Red Legged Partridge and Pheasants. One or two pairs were regular in the fields around Marton Mere but they now seem to have gone and the same applies to the Lytham St Annes Nature Reserve where they bred in 1987 but none were recorded after 1988.

Fulmar: Until late in the 19th Century, Fulmars only bred on St Kilda but 100 years later had spread to all of the British coastline. Here in Lancashire observers, using better optics, began seeing increasing numbers. Day peaks of several hundred occurred in Summer in the 1980's and the 1990's but very low numbers are normal in recent sea watches; a situation that is difficult to explain.

Bittern: Bittern's were very frequent at Leighton Moss as they flew to and fro feeding young from the start of my visits in 1953 until the recent decline with winter visitors now predominating. At Marton Mere reed beds were much smaller than they are at present prior to the Mere's enlargement in the 1970's. There were only 5 records prior to 1988 but winter visitors have been annual ever since then. A large influx in 2003 recorded 8 birds on 4th January but 1 –3 is normal.



Little Egret: A national rarity until the late 1980's, Little Egret's can now be seen on every visit to suitable habitat in Fylde and are nesting in Cheshire and Cumbria. It took me 21 years to see my first one in Lancashire on the Naze pool, Freckleton on 27th May 1973!

Great White Egret: Two or three of these former vagrants to Britain are now a regular feature of recent winters, especially on the Ribble and Morecambe Bay. This species has undergone a vast increase as a breeding bird throughout Europe. The first for Lancashire was at Crossens on 16th October 2001. One roosted briefly on the Naze pool in Autumn 2009 with the first for Marton Mere as recent as February 2012.

Species Champion. Long Tailed Tit. (*Aegithales caudatus*)

A bird you will all know well and, if you are like me, always feel happier for seeing one. It's an uncommon breeder in the Fylde and is most likely seen in Autumn when groups come



together. Then their tiny, fluffed out bodies and extremely long tails are seen flitting from one tree to the next, always on the move. The nest, if you are lucky enough to find one, is made out of moss and hair with cobwebs holding it all together and then the outside covered with lichen and small feathers and about 1500 to 2000 are used to line it with the entrance towards the top. Most local names, and there are many of them, have as a basis the shape of its

nest and include, bum barrel, bush oven, feather poke, hedge jug, jack in a bottle, long pod, poke bag, pudding bag, kitty long tail, huckmuck, jug pot, and particularly "two-fingered piedy" referring to the fact that the entrance hole just accommodates two fingers! They are mostly insectivorous and are susceptible to very cold winters when they not only find food hard to come by but are also affected by their small body size which loses heat and therefore energy very quickly. So although they do come occasionally to bird tables they have, in cold weather a very high mortality, some reports suggesting as high as 80%. So enjoy them when you see them because if the winter is cold they could be thin on the ground next spring.

John Barker

My Champion Bird - Goldfinch

I have been monitoring the Goldfinch from my conservatory window since last March, their favourite food is sunflower hearts from a feeder. They seem to come with House Sparrows, when other birds come down they fly off quickly.

March - on average four birds at each visit.

April - three birds each visit.

May - two adult birds and on the 30th May one Juvenile

June - early June, one bird not visiting as often but by the middle of June four adults with three juveniles, on the 26th I had five adults with one young and on the 27th one very young juvenile

July - six adults with fewer visits, by the 18th three adults with one juvenile

August - one juvenile on the 10th and on 26th nine adults (are these the young that have matured)? Your thoughts please to me at jean.wagstaff@hotmail.co.uk or rhind1003@btinternet.com

September - the last date a young was seen was the 14th

October/November - have been quiet months with infrequent visits

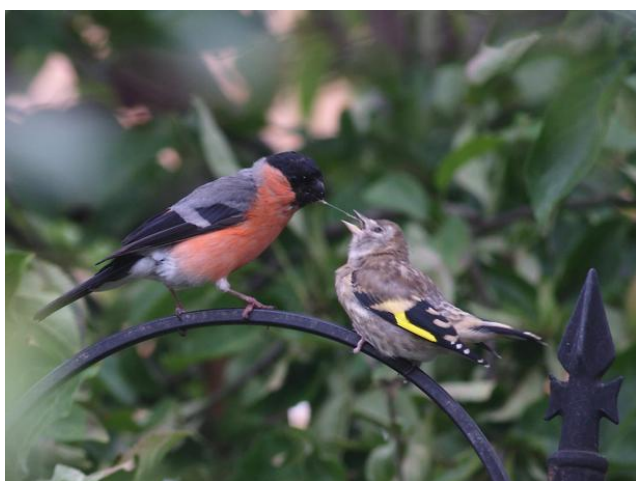


December - five was the most seen, and into the new year four are regularly coming and as I sit to compose this article there is one Goldfinch on the feeder, it looks in good condition with its markings so vibrant.

Jean Wagstaff

Bullfinch feeding Juvenile Goldfinch

Many readers will know from the Fylde Bird Club sightings that I have been fortunate with bullfinch hereabouts in north west Preston. I have to confess to making a house purchase based on it being adjacent to parkland, that is officially known as Savick Park (by Preston City Council); an area north and south of the Ribble Link; although in the urban jungle, the surrounding open areas do attract a myriad of birdlife, including bullfinch, siskin, blackcap, great spotted woodpecker and goosander recently (and rats, mink etc).



In the interest of brevity, I first saw bullfinch in the area years ago but more regularly around 2007 and I had three male bullfinch and two female bullfinch visiting the garden throughout 2013. In August five juvenile bullfinch appeared as well as the adult birds.

To cut a long story short, one male bullfinch appeared at the feeding station with a juvenile goldfinch. Coincidence. But the two, juvenile goldfinch and male bullfinch, kept appearing – together.

Coincidence. Then I realized the juvenile goldfinch was begging to be fed. And the bullfinch subsequently was seen feeding the juvenile goldfinch!

As time passed the male bullfinch was seen feeding a juvenile goldfinch several times and accompanied by more than one juvenile goldfinch; so it appears the male bullfinch was feeding more than one juvenile goldfinch. Indeed I was able to sit and listen for the begging calls of the goldfinch, visually check the garden and sure enough, see a male bullfinch feeding the juvenile goldfinch. This went on for a number of weeks, it was not a solitary chance occurrence.

The big problem was photographing/recording this activity. The male bullfinch would often attend the feeding point and be seen eating black sunflower seed. Then he would fly up and into a large cherry tree in the back garden, followed by the juvenile goldfinch, and with all the leaves it was difficult to see let alone photograph.

However I was able to get one or two photographs throughout August 2013 and some video footage (to be loaded onto the Fylde Bird Club flickr site). The male bullfinch was regurgitating the chewed sunflower seed and feeding it direct to the juvenile goldfinch. As there was more than one juvenile goldfinch it appears this was more than the single imprinting of one juvenile goldfinch on a male bullfinch (or vice versa).

The bullfinch continued to appear in the garden regularly but in August and September no sightings of any goldfinch, juvenile or otherwise (so no adult goldfinch seen). I have not seen the plumage of these bullfinch-fed goldfinch; but nor have I seen the juvenile bullfinch change and grow into adult bullfinch plumage.

The following can only be conjecture: I began by stating I had three males and two female bullfinch and it makes one wonder if there were two pairs and the 'odd' male bullfinch's breeding instincts were so strong he pursued these in an unusual manner; did the male bullfinch breed with a female goldfinch? Did the male bullfinch simply inadvertently come across a nest he 'took over'? It is interesting the male bullfinch appeared to be feeding as many as four juvenile goldfinch, not just one; I contacted the BTO and they had not heard



of this behaviour in the wild; I noticed in the caged bird world, bullfinch and goldfinch are bred together.

I maintain a watching brief.

(Update: I have now as many as 4 female and 5 male bullfinch in the garden on multiple daily

visits (probably the grown-up juveniles – there is a pecking-order) ... and in January 2014 now have 14 goldfinch attending regularly (since feeding sunflower hearts... nyger seed ignored all year!). Nothing unusual to date (no cross-plumage evident). Anyone wishing to come and see bullfinch may visit the parkland at any time (SD501310/SD501311) or if you want to visit the house/garden contact me by email at (flaminnorajack@gmail.com). Any feedback on this story welcome.

Geoff Gradwell

Fylde Bird Club Boat Trip

Our Chairman, Paul Slade, has arranged two boat trips from Fleetwood out into Morecambe Bay for this year.

The dates are:

Mon 21st July 3-8pm and **Thursday 4th Sept 2.30-7.30 pm**

Cost £26 per person per trip.

Meet at Fleetwood on the beach by RNLI, access directly off beach via steep ladder or plank

Contact Paul Slade to book on 07970 986904 or email sladey67@yahoo.com

Payment in advance, full refund if cancelled (possible owing to weather).

Paul Slade

F.B.C. Photo Competition Results 2014

The Fylde

1 st	Jim Wacey	Barn Owl.
2 nd	Jim Wacey	Kestrel
2 nd	David Moreton	Crossbill



The UK

1 st	Jackie Moreton	Spotted Redshank
2 nd	Peter Rhind	Skylark
2 nd	Paul Ellis	Pine Grosbeak



World

1 st	Paul Ellis	Little Auk
2 nd	Paul Ellis	Wallcreeper
3 rd	Jim Wacey	Silvereye



The Under Exposed

1 st	Steve Oddy	Nuthatch
2 nd	Mike Foy	Coal Tit



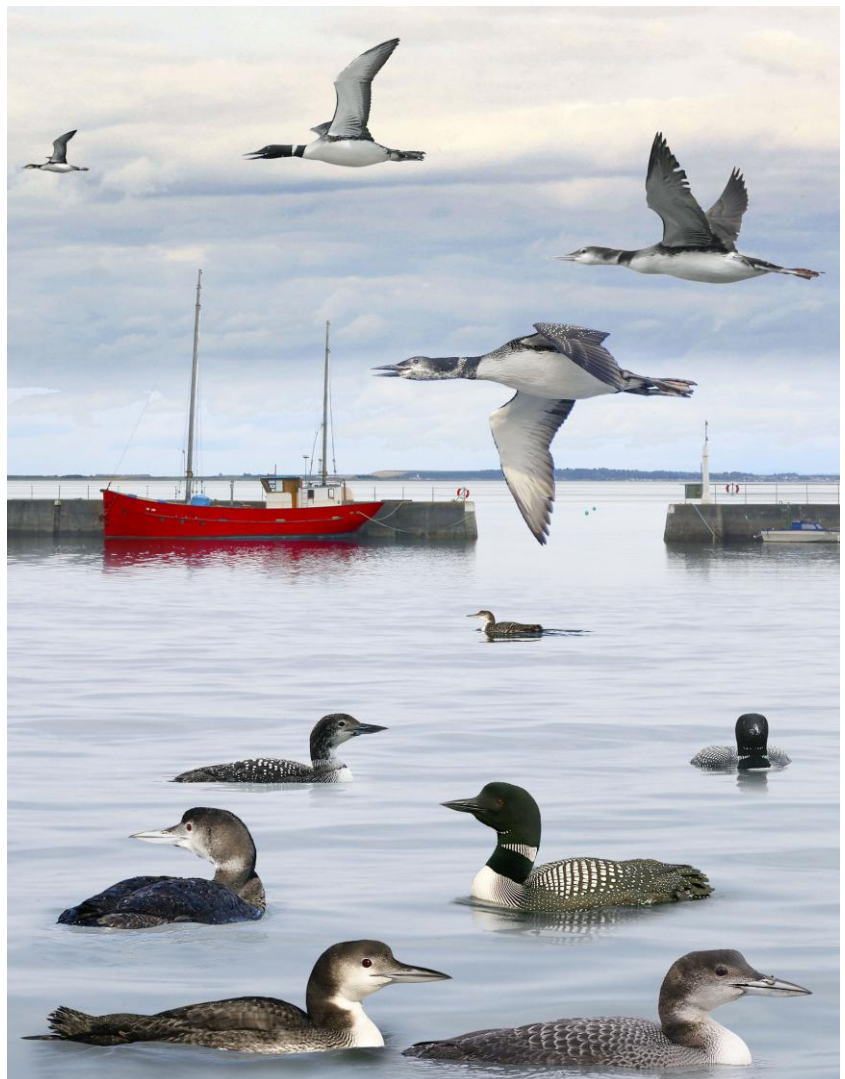
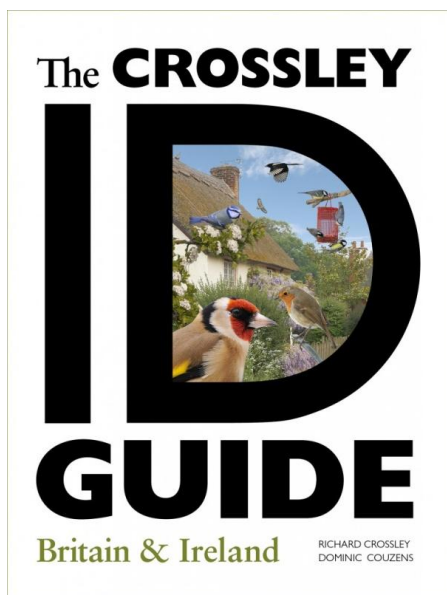
Thanks to everyone who entered, the standard was as high as ever and I really enjoyed seeing all the photos many times over, get your cameras out for next year and share your best with us.

It's not the winning that matters, it's the taking part!

Peter Rhind

Fylde Bird Club
presents
'Past, Present and Future'
by **Richard Crossley**
on **Tuesday 4th November 2014**
at **The River Wyre Hotel, Poulton**

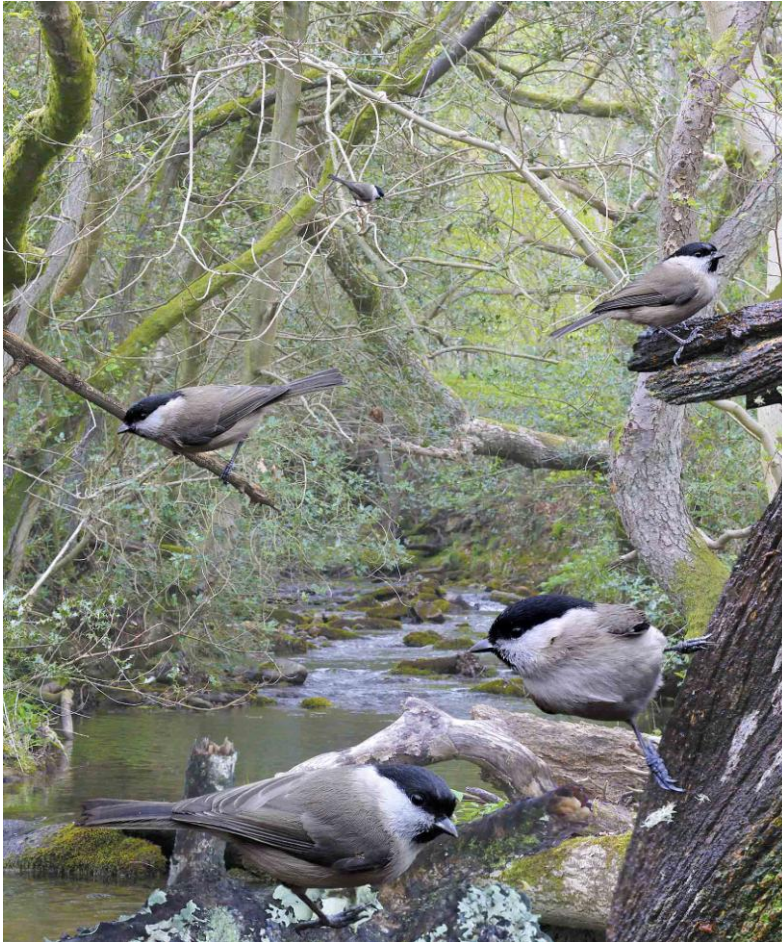
Richard Crossley
is the author of
*The
Crossley
ID Guides*



Tuesday November 4th 2014 7.45pm
Members Free Non-members £5.00

This is a special additional meeting presented by Richard Crossley

Contact Paul Slade for tickets e mail: sladey67@yahoo.com



Richard Crossley
will tell stories from
growing up in the British
birding scene, travels
around the world & living
today in Cape May, USA

It will be a fast-paced
illustrated story told with
humour and depth

Forthcoming Regular Club Meetings

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|-------|--|
| March | A talk by Bryan Yorke on “ Mipits “ and Migrations |
| April | A Brit abroad, birds of British Columbia. The closest I will get to Canada with Jon Carter |
| May | Another great talk by our own Paul Ellis on the birds and mammals of Brazil |

Thanks again to John Jenkins for his help with the Newsletter

Peter Rhind