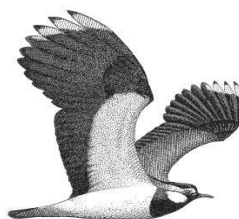


June Newsletter 2015

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**Fylde
Bird Club**
LANCASHIRE

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Welcome to the June Newsletter. I hope Spring brought all you wished for; if not there is always next year.



We have the final instalment of Maurice Jones' "Then and Now, The Changed Status of some Lancashire Birds". I have really enjoyed it and thanks to Maurice for all his work.

Ellen Pemberton has a report on birds at Marton Mere and Stuart Piner on sightings on the Fylde.

Pete Woodruff has written on his discovery of the Wryneck at Cockersand.

I have an article for newer birders on the differences between Common Whitethroats and Lesser

Whitethroats. Hope it helps.

Charlotte Fryer has written an inspiring article on her families introduction to birdwatching and Stephen Fryer has an article on birdwatching in Ireland.

We have a new item which will appear in every issue in which Paul Ellis will give an update on work being carried out on the clubs behalf.

Thanks to all for your contributions to the newsletter in the past and PLEASE keep them coming. I am looking for a volunteer to write a series of articles on identifying the rarer Gulls (birds I for one struggle with) Please contact me if you are willing.

Peter Rhind

Marton Mere Report

January – March 2015

Anyone who has visited the reserve in the first quarter of 2015 will be aware of the work being carried out with the Heritage Lottery Fund grant. Tasks have included clearing a lot of vegetation and building a nesting bank for Sand Martins. In the meantime, the site has been a land of fire and ice – well, Firecrest and Iceland Gull. The former was found near the north-west viewing platform on 4th January and was present till at least 12th March. The latter continued to commute between the Mere and Sita Waste Disposal up until 15th March.

14 Gadwall were present on 1st January and a Treecreeper was seen on several dates from 5th January to 4th March. A Chiffchaff was present on the 8th, followed by a Goldcrest on the 9th. On 10th January two Woodcocks were seen and a Jay was at the site on the 14th. The reserve had a new bird briefly on the 16th, in the form of a Dusky Warbler, spotted in the north-east corner at about 10.30 a.m.

Coot numbers peaked at 280 on 17th January and 300 on the 18th. On the former date there were also 27 Long-tailed Tits and on the latter date, a Little Owl, Barn Owl, two Woodcocks and four Skylarks. A difficult bird to see in the Fylde, Bullfinch, graced the reserve this quarter, with three seen on 21st January and a female seen on several dates through to 18th February. two Stock Doves were present on 22nd and 25th January, while on the former date a Jay and a Fox were on the reserve.

two more Woodcock were seen on 2nd February, while a Little Egret visited on the 3rd and 5th. Stock Dove numbers peaked at six on both the 4th and 26^h. On the 6th there were four Goldcrests and on the 7th, four Long-eared Owls. A Shelduck was present on the 12th and 15th, while on the 14th a Jay was seen behind the feeding station. Also seen on the 15th was a Mediterranean Gull. On the 25th a Raven was on the pylons in the east fields and a Barn Owl was seen on the 26th. There were six Cetti's Warblers noted on the 27th and two Skylarks on the 28th. The Barn Owl put in several more appearances up to 25th March.

On 15th March eight Cetti's Warblers were noted; an unwelcome visitor, a Mink, was also seen on this date. Chiffchaffs returned to the site this month, with birds singing by the 17th. On the 22nd another Jay was seen and 21 Whooper Swans flew north. A Common Scoter was seen on the 23rd and 24th, with 30 Fieldfares also present on the latter date. Twelve Meadow Pipits and four Sand Martins passed through on the 27th. Hopefully the latter will be attracted to the nesting bank in due course.

Ellen Pemberton

Sightings February- April 2015

February

Notable birds lingering into February included Shorelark at Rossall Point, Great Grey Shrike at Lytham Moss and Iceland Gull, Firecrest and four Long-eared Owls at Marton Mere, whilst the best new discovery was a Caspian Gull at Knott End. The Fleetwood area produced records of Iceland and Glaucous Gulls, two Waxwings, Black Redstart and Water Pipit. At least two Tundra Bean Geese, a Eurasian White-fronted Goose, Pale-bellied and Dark-bellied Brent Geese and two Barnacle Geese joined the Over Wyre Pink-footed Goose flocks and a Pale-bellied Brent Goose was at Lytham. A Great White Egret and three Water Pipits were at Warton Marsh, a Black Redstart visited Thornton; both a Scaup and Red-throated Diver frequented Fairhaven Lake.

March

The Shorelark at Rossall Point, Red-throated Diver and Scaup at Fairhaven Lake and Iceland Gull, Firecrest and Long-eared Owl at Marton Mere all lingered into March. A Blue Fulmar, at least two Velvet Scoters, Snow Bunting, Black Redstart, Water Pipit, Black-throated Diver and Osprey were all recorded in the Fleetwood area during the month, whilst an Osprey flew over Barton Grange, a Common Scoter visited Marton Mere, a Water Pipit was again logged on Warton Marsh, an Iceland Gull was at Wardley's Ferry and a Pale-bellied Brent Goose was in Pilling.

April

A typically scarcity-rich April on the Fylde was headlined by the finding of a Wryneck at Cockersand and a couple of Richard's Pipits in Fleetwood. The latter area also produced at least four Ring Ouzels, three Redstarts, two Ospreys, two Pied Flycatchers, Water Pipit, Glaucous and Iceland Gulls, two Garganey, four Velvet Scoters, Hooded Crow, Black-throated Diver and Little Tern. Stanley Park hosted Wood Warbler, Pied Flycatcher, Redstart and two flyover Ospreys, whilst nearby Marton Mere recorded Common Scoter, Osprey, Redstart, Iceland Gull and Long-eared Owl. Elsewhere, Ospreys flew over Carleton, Cleveleys, Forton (2) and Blackpool Zoo, two Velvet Scoters flew past Starr Gate, a Red-throated Diver and Scaup lingered at Fairhaven Lake, a Hobby flew over Stake Pool and three Curlew Sandpipers visited Cockersand. Away from the Ribble, Avocets were logged at Bank End (8), Little Singleton (2) and Arm Hill (2). In addition to those listed above, scarce migrant records included Pied Flycatchers at Freckleton Naze and Bispham Marsh, Ring Ouzels at Great Plumpton, Lytham and Treales and Redstarts at Carleton, Lytham, Anchorsholme and Gynn Gardens.

Stuart Piner

The Cockersands Wryneck 13 April 2015

I'd legged it to Bank End on Monday- the road to nowhere as it happened - and was on my way back to Cockersands. When I was 100m short of the entrance to the Caravan Park a bird I hadn't seen flew up off the ground ahead of me and on to the wall, with no time to think to myself 'it'll be a Meadow Pipit or something' bino's to my eyes....**it's a b****y Wryneck!**

I gave no thought of a problem at the time, but the bird promptly dropped off the wall and into the park, as it turns out I think it would have been much the better if it had stayed on the seaward side where it first was and out in the open for me to follow. I hot footed it to the reception, got the permission to enter, and soon found the Wryneck between two caravans, in amongst the pretty flowers and vegetation the residents plant by, and behind, these caravans. The bird moved between the vans below the wall and I saw it briefly twice more before it moved out of sight behind another van and unbelievably never saw the bird again, despite now being accompanied by another birder to cover almost the entire Caravan Park perimeter and drives. I did the same coverage for one hour yesterday not long after first light to no avail.

A little of the excitement of finding the Wryneck was eroded for me by the fact that none of the dozen or so birders - who had made the effort to come to see this bird whilst I was present - made the connection....a bitter disappointment for me too.

The Wryneck.

It's hard for Lancashire birders in the 21st century to comprehend that the Wryneck once bred in the county quite commonly, but breeding numbers began to decline before the mid-19th century. Today it is no more than a rare passage migrant, and birds like this one at Cockersands on Monday are rare in spring, but there is an old record of one at Yealand Conyers in March 1948; this record aside, there are only four other spring records in Lancashire, most arriving in September with the latest record being of a bird at Cockersands 20 years ago in October 1995.



Photo Peter Rhind

Pete Woodruff

Then and Now, The changed status of some Lancashire Birds

Spotted Flycatcher

Oakes (1953) described this species as well distributed and fairly common in Summer. He recorded as many as 60 birds in Towneley woods in August 1933 and about 30 at the same site in August 1939.



Photo Daniel Fryer

He looked upon parties of 10 or 15 as more normal. By the time of Spencers "Status and Distribution 1973" the species showed no decline in numbers but there has been a decline of over 90% in recent decades. In the 1970's breeding was still fairly common in the Fylde and, although small numbers still breed in Bowland, nesting has virtually ceased in the Fylde.

Raven

My list of Fylde birds in 1975 (The Fylde Naturalist. No 4.) had no record of this species. One at Eaves on the 4th of December 1976 seen by Bill Fidler was the first Fylde record. It was not until the 1st of January 1993 that I saw the species in Lancashire (three at Leighton Moss) and 2002 before I saw any in Fylde (two near Fluke Hall on the 7th of September). The reduction in persecution by farmers and gamekeepers has led to a remarkable increase of records in Lancashire and nationally. They have bred as near as Penwortham on an electricity pylon and in a quarry at Ellel and further afield on cathedrals at Chester and Liverpool and on a large gasometer at Southport. In recent years we see Ravens with some regularity in Fylde and there has even been tree nesting at Singleton.



Photo

Peter Rhind

Twite

Spencer (1973) noted a disparity between numbers breeding and wintering in Lancashire.



Photo Peter Rhind

At that period breeders in East Lancashire outnumbered winters, a situation that has since been reversed. Up to 25 were on Lytham shore in 1967-1969 and 52 were there in February-March 1972 when I saw my first Lancashire coastal flock. There seems to have been a genuine increase in the last 30 years with Winter flocks at Heysham, Over Wyre and around Southport. Ringing has shown that Fylde birds are predominantly Hebridean breeders but some Pennine breeders move West whilst most go to the East coast. Lancashire Pennine breeders

are very much reduced in recent year yet Mitchell (1884) stated that Twite bred as commonly on the South Lancashire mosses as in more elevated districts. They bred on Formby moss in 1917 and possibly as late as 1930, and on Chat moss in 1940. The only indication that Twite may once have nested in Fylde is the sighting of a pair on Cockerham/Winmarleigh moss on the 13th of May 1973 (Mike Ainscough and Phillip Thompson)

Yellowhammer

As with many farmland birds the Yellowhammer has suffered severe decreases in population. I commented that it was a fairly common Fylde breeder in a notebook of 1954.



Photo Peter Rhind

In that year I found a nest at Hardhorn and another with four eggs in fields which are now the centre of the Marton Mere caravan site! It is now a rather scarce breeding bird and just “hanging on” in South Fylde. Numbers of Wintering birds at the feeding stations Over Wyre seem to have dropped over the last few years. In the last decade most of my peak counts have been less than 20 except for 2003 when Bob Danson had 73 in February.

Snow Bunting

Numbers of this species have been fewer in recent years than formerly. This is probably due to the spread of housing and increased disturbances (particularly dogwalkers) along the strandline. The Lancashire record flock is of 200 at Hundred End, Ribble estuary on the 8th of February 1929. In severe cold in February 1963 60 to 70 were on fields North of



Photo Peter Rhind

Rossall School (Larkhome housing estate) and over 80 were on Lytham Moss. A big influx in 1984 recorded counts of 60 at Carnforth, 73 at Rossall, 60 at Crossens and 60 at Clougha Fell, Bowland. Also that year Frank Bird saw 13 at Marton Mere on the 25th of January. Most records seem to be of one to five birds nowadays on the Fylde coast but I have had 22 at Fairhaven on December 16th 1996 and 16 on St. Annes Beach, February 22nd 2004.

Corn Bunting

When I began regular visits to Marton Mere in the 1950's I found large numbers roosting in beds of Reed Canary Grass on the north side. These assembled in willows before dropping into the roost, giving easy opportunities for counting. There were over 117 in

December 1965 and often an increase in Spring with 130 on the 22nd of April 1968. There was still 50 on the 2nd of April 1975 after which the willows were removed and tipping destroyed the adjacent area. There was a very high population on Lytham Moss in this period and breeders extended to Queensway, Blackpool Airport and even Lytham St. Annes Nature Reserve. This population has now virtually gone.

Numbers in the whole of South Fylde are now at a low ebb. Over Wyre feeding stations set up by Bob Danson have helped maintain numbers in that area with counts of 194 in 2002 and 294 in 2004 but with lower numbers in recent years. South West Lancashire still holds a breeding population but there have been reductions and extinctions around its core mosslands (e.g. 20 pairs gone from the Banks marsh area)



One thing is certain. We will never again have a roost which reached 1000 birds at Mere Brow in February 1980 (Lancashire Bird Report).

Photo Peter Rhind

Maurice Jones

Confusion Species: Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat



Both these warblers are summer migrants arriving in Mid April. The Common Whitethroat is, as its name suggests, very common. The Lesser is less common and more difficult to see due to its warbler habit of skulking in deep cover.

The Common Whitethroat is a joy, singing loudly from the top of bushes or flying up from hedge tops for an exuberant short song flight. The song is hard to describe, short, jerky, high energy and scratchy and delivered with maximum animation. The great thing for a new birder is that the Common Whitethroat is easy to see and so to tie the song to. Warblers are not usually so helpful.

Common Whitethroats are very attractive birds with a grey cap and warm brown backs on which the wing feathers and coverts have dark rusty edges. Underneath they are buff coloured with pure white throats which are puffed out like cotton wool when in full song. Females are a little more subdued plumage wise but are essentially the same as the males. Spring males have a pink flush to the buff coloured underparts. The legs are pale, almost sandy and the bill is pale. Both sexes have a narrow white eye ring and white outer tail feathers.



The Lesser Whitethroat is a smaller, shorter tailed and more compact warbler. It is more unobtrusive and its presence is usually revealed by song delivered from dense bushes. It is much less common. It has grey brown upper parts with darker grey ear coverts and plain back, no dark rusty

tertials as on the Common Whitethroat. No white eye ring and no white outer tail feathers, dark legs and dark bill all separate the Lesser from the Common. It sounds like a dull boring bird but if seen well it is a smart and dapper bird.

The song is a distinctive rattle on one note often preceded by what I could describe as a short, scratchy “chuntering”.



Stuart Piner

Peter Rhind

Wanted - Something For All The Family To Enjoy

Here's a challenge: what activity is low cost, can be done anywhere (ideally locally and on your doorstep), can be done for as little or as long as you want, at any time, and would appeal to a 10 year old boy, his 44 year old mum and 62 year old dad? Tough ask hey?

12 months ago, as the family unit described above, we asked ourselves that very same question. What could we ALL do together, that was not too expensive to get involved with, that we could do either for a full day, ½ day or even an hour, that didn't mean hours in the car with the inevitable 'are we there yet?' every 10 mins or, "I'm bored, can we go now" and something that we would all enjoy?

The answer was staring at us all, right in our own back garden. Bird watching of course! All three of us love to be outdoors and are not put off by a bit of wind, rain or mud. Weekend family time is precious, what with under 10's football and cricket matches, visiting family, chores around the house etc etc, so time is often at a premium. We all like nature and Daniel and I love taking photos so getting into bird watching was the obvious solution to our conundrum.

So, armed with our cameras, a pair of dodgy binoculars, a bird book and of course to a 10 year old, the all important picnic, we headed off up the M6 to RSPB Leighton Moss. Little did we know then, that this would turn out to be one of our favourite haunts and in fact, we would be back there the following weekend!

The staff on-site were very friendly and even loaned Daniel a young birdspotters back pack containing binoculars, id books, a quiz etc etc, and off we went to see what we could spot. Five hours later, when the light started to fade, we reluctantly left and headed home

with Daniel in the back of the car saying “PLEASE can we come back again next weekend as today has been ace”.

At home, we reviewed our pictures of the usual birds such as robins, goldfinch, blue tits and great tits, pheasants, chaffinch, blackbirds and others, but delighted in our somewhat blurry images of nuthatch, teal, snipe, golden eye, tufted duck and even a woodpecker. The challenge for our next visit was to get clearer images, which we did!

We were all well and truly bitten by the bird watching bug and duly joined the RSPB and have spent countless days up at Leighton Moss. We have also made it part of our holiday destination criteria, to choose somewhere that we can use as a base to go birding.

Over the past 12 months, our holidays have taken us to the Isle of Mull where we saw White Tailed Eagles, The Farne Islands to see the Puffins, County Wexford in southern Ireland to get up close and personal with Razorbills and Guillemots on the Saltee Islands, RSPB Minsmere to see Avocets and even a day trip to Dublin ended up with us spending the entire day, on a remote un-inhabited island, surrounded by nesting birds such as Cormorants, Gannets and Gulls. That’s a long story, for another time maybe!

Even the school run has turned into a mini bird spotting trip and regularly we hear “mum, there’s a buzzard”, or “dad, there’s a kestrel”. In fact, everywhere we go now, we are all on the look out for feathered friends.



Apart from our holiday highlights, other such memorable bird watching related events this year for us have included Daniel getting to meet and greet the entire BBC Autumnwatch team (presenters and crew) at Leighton Moss, where he not only collected the whole crews autographs but also got some great individual photos and had chats with Chris Packham, Michaela Strachan, Nick Baker, Iolo Williams and Martin Hughes-Games.

Daniel also decided that one Sunday, we would go for a drive (with him directing us) and see how many different types of birds we could spot. Starting in Wesham and going to places like Treales, Inskip, Barton, Cockerham, Glasson Dock, Pilling and ending up at Wesham Marsh, we spotted 50 different types of bird. The highlight of that particular trip was Daniel nonchalantly saying “I think I have just seen an owl”, us reversing back slightly and no kidding, he’d spotted a Little Owl resting inside the workings of an old concrete mixing lorry! Even a coffee break at Barton Grange didn’t stop him when he shouted out “there’s a kingfisher” and sure enough, there was.



Over the year, our ability to ID birds has got better (although we still ask Peter to ID some for us!) and our photography has improved, so much so

that we both entered some of our shots into the Fylde Bird Club Photography competition and Daniel was joint winner in one of the categories.

As a result of Daniel's enthusiasm for bird watching, his school took part in the RSPB Big Bird Watching Weekend and his class made bird feeders out of recycled materials to hang up outside their classroom. Fylde Bird Club have also very kindly agreed to supply the school (Weeton Primary on Weeton Army Barracks) with some bird boxes for their woodland walk area.

So, 12 months after getting started, what's next for us? A trip to Iceland (to see family primarily) in the summer and a week in North West Scotland where we have been assured we will see an abundance of bird and wildlife. Can't wait!

Charlotte Fryer

Birding in Ireland May and July 2014

Our birding adventures in Ireland, started from a wish to fulfil a strange notion of our son Daniel, aged 10 at the time.

He had always been away at some time or another and invariably we had flown to many of our holiday destinations. It was rather strange that he mentioned that he didn't feel as though he had been on a holiday unless he had flown. At this time Charlotte, his mum, and I had decided that we preferred to holiday in the UK for various reasons. So, when the opportunity came to take a day return flight to Dublin at a very reasonable price, we decided to seize the chance and have a day out in Dublin whilst satisfying the wishes of Daniel at the same time.

So, off we trotted (drove) to Manchester airport at some unearthly hour on a fair Bank Holiday Monday morning in May 2014. We enjoyed the usual airport check-in fiasco including Charlotte losing her boarding card whilst going through that cattle run otherwise known as Security....this time, my trousers retained their rested position on my ample midriff, when I took my belt off, as is usually required at this time.

The flight went surprisingly well, and we were looking forward to our day trip in Dublin with the usual sightseeing and odd pint of the black stuff.

It was a pleasant day and we took advantage of the Dublin Bus Day Ticket, purchased at a very reasonable cost in the airport Spar shop. We waited on the bus a while and after chatting up the driver for "local" information, we set off, bound for Dublin City Centre and O'Connell Street. We had already decided, with the help of Google, that we would head out to North Bull Island to watch some waders and seabirds in the morning. So as we had a while to wait for our bus we took advantage of a McDonalds and returned to the bus queue.

This is where we had a very large slice of good luck and met a couple who were dressed head to toe in very smart made to measure camo-gear. Quite ironic that their clothing

made them stand out like sore thumbs!! Charlotte figured out they were birders and we struck up a conversation that changed our plans for the better. It turned out, they were going to a place called Irelands Eye, via Howth, and our original destination of North Bull Island, whilst being OK for watching seabirds, was not deemed by these 'local experts', as good as Irelands Eye



Guillemot and Razorbill



Fulmar and chick

Before we knew it, the bus arrived and we'd been invited to join them on their birding expedition. We had our bus pass and we went all the way to the pretty port town of Howth, at the end of the No 31 service. The couple we met were most friendly and had already organised a ferry (diddy boat to be fair), to take us all from the harbour, the short 15 minute boat ride to Irelands Eye. Turns out that Diana and Richard are Romanian, living and working in Dublin, and of interest, is that he had done some journalism, wildlife photography and made bespoke camo gear for birders, wildlife enthusiasts and all outdoor pursuits. No surprise then, them being dressed head to toe in perfectly fitting camo-gear. He also makes fashion accessories and ladies and gents bespoke clothing and some of his original work can be appreciated at Camouflage Forever on Facebook.

Irelands Eye is stunning, tranquil and uninhabited except for large colonies of Gannets, Guillemots, Cormorants, Razorbills and a beautiful place where you can get up close to the cliff edges and ledges, and, on the surrounding paths and open land get near to nesting Gulls. We also saw Kittiwakes, Fulmars and there were even Puffins and Seals in the sea below.

Irelands Eye is hilly, but not so much as to make it difficult to walk around, even for those like myself. There were thousands of breeding seabirds on this island and we spent all day there, before catching our return 'ferry' back to Howth. There is a fascinating market here and we had a brief look around before returning by bus to Dublin and our onward return to Dublin Airport for our 21.30 return flight to Manchester and home.

We had been overwhelmed by the friendliness of our new Romanian friends and exchanged contacts.

By coincidence, we had earlier in the year booked a week's holiday in County Wexford at a place called Tomhaggard. We invited Richard, Diana and her son Brendan to catch up with us and spend some time at our cottage at Butlerstown Castle in Tomhaggard. So at the end of the school year in July, having sought the necessary approval of the property owners, they met us at Wexford Bus Station as we had travelled by car ferry from Holyhead to Dublin the night before.

The 'Boxwell Cottage' at Butlerstown Castle, Tomhaggard near Wexford, was in the grounds of an old grand farmhouse complete with clock tower and on first impressions we thought we had picked a rather dilapidated cottageno shower ... old glass windows, shonky furniture and mix 'n match crockery etc. However, how wrong we were.

It had been beautifully restored and furnished with genuine antique furniture, Farrow and Ball colours, the windows had hand made leaded lights by Jim the owner who also was a true gentleman. The cottage even had en suite bathrooms with hot and cold water, the cold coming from an underground spring. Jim was a character, a specialist salvage man and professional property restorer and was married to Anna whose family had owned the property for many generations.

Please check out <http://www.sawdays.co.uk/ireland/leinster/co.-wexford/butlerstown-castle-cottages> for further information. Also we had a tour of the clock tower which had been restored by Jim...absolutely amazing and full of interesting historical fact.

As for birding, there were regular visits by Goldfinch, Wrens and Spotted Flycatchers to the lavender filled gardens. Daniel enjoyed feeding the chickens, sheep and donkeys, whilst also helping the family with their farming activity

The highlight of our reunion with our Romanian Friends was a trip to the Saltee Islands again by ferry from Kilmore Quay, where incidentally, we had the best Dublin Bay Prawns ever, freshly caught and served a la prawn cocktail. The visit to Saltee island, owned by an English family I recollect, was as memorable as Irelands Eye. We were able to get up close to nesting Puffins, Cormorants, Black Shags, Razorbills, Fulmars, Kittewakes, Gannets and Guillemots, on another stunning birding day.



We had really enjoyed our times in Ireland and will return when the time is right. It certainly gave a boost to our birding activity as a family and we put it up there with our best birding experience ever. Our thanks go to Richard, Diana and Brendan for being our guides, new friends and birding mentors. Not to mention, the comfortable and practical camo clothing which we all enjoy now (Charlotte having a full suit measured when on our Ireland's Eye visit and delivered and worn on our Saltee Island trip) and Richards

tips on photography and general all round wildlife knowledge.

Who would have thought that an interest in birds would develop into an Irish Safari, where we would make new friends, whilst exploring Dublin Bay and its wildlife!

Looking forward to meeting up again...here's to new friends and birding buddies !

Steve Fryer

Migration On Mallorca, Early Or Not?

We have just returned from our annual Spring visit to Porto Polenca, Majorca, for the migration watch having noticed that over the last five years evidence of serious migration has not been evident. Our visit was from the 26th April to 7th May. The temperature was very warm but fly life appeared sparse and all appeared dry. Is there any evidence that migration is now a little later, say, mid May?

Views from club members would be appreciated.

Best Regards

David Wells

Where Exactly Is That?

Since joining the FBC some two years ago I would like to think that I have progressed from the category of “novice” to “reasonably competent” – thanks to the assistance given by those expert members who seem to have an uncanny knowledge of where to be and when and are out on an almost daily basis. Maurice, Len, Ashley, Paul(s) Frank(s) have all been helpful and friendly in helping me convert those little brown jobs into a wood warbler and the earliest sedge warbler in the Fylde at the end of March into a singing wren (!). The next stage will be to recognise the calls, a skill I simply do not have – yet. In addition, the invaluable information published on the club website has proved an excellent source for planning a visit, such as the recent arrival of a troop of dotterels at Cockerham and the Pied Flycatcher at Bispham, and those stars of the winter the Great Grey Shrike and Shorelark.

However, I write to suggest that the information for locations could be vastly improved by the publication of a more accurate six figure grid reference, and even time of day that the observations have been made. Particular examples are “Blackpool North Shore”, a length of promenade stretching some 2 miles and inland, and given as 310370 could be more accurate for Uncle Toms at 316385, “Knott End” at 350490 is somewhere out at sea, “Out Rawcliffe” is 410430 (some 8 square miles) and “Stalmine Moss” at 410450 (Union Lane is 1.5 miles long when it could be located at 404455) for those elusive Little Owls.

Similarly, the Gazetteer list of locations gives only a rough guide line of the position for some of the less popular sites. For example, try finding “Cottam Brickworks” and “Savick Park” from the references given. Again, an accurate six figure reference and the assistance of a personal GPS would help with the location. I remember making four visits in February to finally locate those Bullfinches around the Ribble Link area! An update of the 400+ locations given in the list would be a big undertaking, but a task I would be happy to share with an experienced member to narrow down the sites for re-publication.

We have some incredibly experienced spotters in our Club, who manage to locate and identify species to look at and help us to add not only our year lists, but also, life lists.

Whilst appreciating part of this hobby is to put in the effort and to do much self-discovery, a little assistance and consequent time and fuel saving would also help.

By the time this article appears, I will have done a week on the Uists in the Outer Hebrides. Hopefully my confidence in identification will allow me to tick a Corncrake or two, perhaps a Kumlien's gull, but the Subalpine Warbler is perhaps a bird too far.

Glen Jackson
(*ex golfer turned birder*)

Forthcoming Events

- June 23rd. Conservation news update plus members photographs.
- July 28th. Birds of Gambia with Dennis Atherton. A chance to explore from your "armchair".
- August 6th. Pelagic 16.00-21.00 from Fleetwood. Please contact Paul Slade for more details. Book early as this will help Paul.
E Mail : paul@winclad.fsnet.co.uk Mobile **07970 986 904**
- August 25th. Island Adventures with Stephen Dunstan. Something to look forward to for those of us who "bird" closer to home.

Preston Dock Tern Colony

About 100 pairs of Common Terns and 7 pairs of Arctic Terns are back at the Dock.

RSPB are holding Public Engagement Events to show people the birds. Please feel free to attend either to be shown the birds or help the public see the birds. Take your scope if you have one.

Contact Calum on e-mail: Calum.Booth@rspb.org.uk

The events will be held in the parking area on the north side of Preston Dock from 10 am to 4 pm.

The dates are:

Saturday 6th June

Sunday 21st June

Wednesday 8th July

Wednesday 22nd July

Thursday 6th August

Friday 21st August



This year the Club have produced and supplied over 100 additional nest trays for the dock.



A further 13 have been deployed at Conder Pool with help from the RSPB.



Singleton Park

New permissive footpaths have been opened around Singleton. See noticeboard with map opposite St Annes Church in Singleton for details.

Marton Mere Project

Major works are now complete under the HLF funded project, which include a new Visitor Centre, Re profiled Island, Artificial Sand Martin Bank and a New Hide.

A Friends of Marton Mere Group has been launched and all are welcome to join.

A Volunteer Group has been established to conduct Habitat Management and maintain the site.

If you would like to get involved please contact

Graeme Nuttall on 07490 38521 / graeme.nuttall@blackpool.gov.uk

or Annie Heslop on 07469 038520 / annie.heslop@blackpool.gov.uk

Also see Facebook www.facebook.com/groups/343548299164728

Twitter @MartonMereLNR

Newton Marsh Black tailed Godwits

During May and June the RSPB suspected that godwits were once again attempting to nest on Newton Marsh. A nest watch wardening effort was organised with several members of the Club taking part. Unfortunately the birds stopped showing any signs that they had a nest and it assumed the attempt had failed.

April Meetings with other Bodies

14th Marton Mere Steering Group

16th BEAT

Enquires & Requests from other Bodies

Environment Agency: Starling count data

RSPB/LWT: Preston Terns breeding figures

NE: Copy of Disturbance log

May Meetings with other Bodies

21th Public meeting with developers proposing solar farm at Mythop

21th Public meeting with developers proposing solar farm at Todderstaffe

Enquires & Requests from other Bodies

Data Sold to TEP consultants on Lytham Moss wildfowl counts winter 2014/15 for £120.

Supporting letter supplied to RSPB for HLF bid for extension of Hesketh Out Marsh

Supporting letter supplied for HLF bid for extension to Singleton permissive pathways