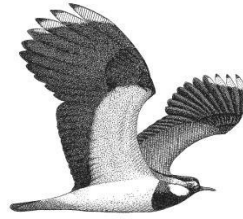


March Newsletter 2015

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Bird Club**
LANCASHIRE

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Spring has sprung and cold dark winter nights are gone. The Great Grey Shrike and the Shorelark are now just memories (apart from the hundreds of photos !).



Now is the time to start storing up this Spring's memories, good luck.

In this issue Ellen Pemberton reports on Marton Mere and Stuart Piner on birds seen on the Fylde. Jim Sheldon writes about finding the aforesaid Shorelark and I write about re-finding the Pomarine Skua. Steve Beastall has contributed with his article on finding the Great Grey Shrike and David McGrath on the Dusky Warbler.

Maurice Jones has prepared the next instalment of "Now and Then, The Birds of the Fylde" and I have included a beginners guide to separating Willow Warblers and Chiff Chaffs. Good luck.

Barry Dyson has kindly written an item on butterflies on the Fylde.

There are also the results of this years Photographic Competition.

Peter Rhind

Marton Mere Report

October – December 2014

Movement was underway at the Mere on 2nd October, with at least 5 Swallows, 5 Jays and 369 Meadow Pipits seen. The following day there were 2 Jays, a Swallow, a Kingfisher and a Skylark present. 2 Grey Wagtails were at the overflow on the 5th and a Peregrine was present on the 7th. A record 8 Cetti's Warblers and 4 Water Rails were located on the 8th, with 2 Whooper Swans and the first Long-eared Owl sighting of the winter on the 12th. The first Redwings of the winter soon followed, with 25 on the 13th and over 100 on the 14th. A Stonechat was seen on the 14th and 15th. Although Britain received the remnants of a hurricane which devastated Bermuda (no American rarities locally, sadly!), October was relatively mild, with a Red Admiral being seen on the 24th and a Chiffchaff on the 26th. In between these 2 dates the sightings included 4 Water Rails, 5 Cetti's Warblers, 3 Goldcrests, 2 Grey Wagtails and 6000 Starlings. Jays were once again present in late October, with 4 on the 24th and 1 on the 29th.

Starling numbers peaked at 20000 on 2nd November; on the same day 2 Whooper Swans flew south and 2 Stonechats and a Goldcrest were seen. On the 5th a further 17 Whooper Swans flew south and the first Fieldfares and Goldeneye arrived, 55 of the former and 2 of the latter. 3 Water Rails and 2 Peregrines were seen on the 12th, the latter flying over close to the Bird Club Hide. The previous record of 4 Water Rails was short-lived, as 6 were located on the 15th. In the latter half of November, sightings included a Black-tailed Godwit and a Blackcap on the 16th, a Little Owl and a Woodcock on the 22nd and a Grey Wagtail, 3 Goldcrests and a male Goosander on the 30th.

December was a relatively quiet month, with Pintail, Peregrine and Grey Wagtail seen on the 3rd. There was a high count of over 250 Coot on the 13th, whilst on the 28th a Woodcock, 2 Goldcrests and a Stonechat were located, the latter in the reeds. The following day the Iceland Gull which has visited the Marton area for the past 3 winters finally returned to the Mere – now in adult plumage. It was also present on the 31st, along with an Otter – 2 good sightings to end the year.

Ellen Pemberton

Sightings

November 2014

Highlight of the month was the discovery of a Great Grey Shrike at Lytham Moss on 1st, where it remained until the month end, whilst the white morph Lesser Snow Goose found on the final day of October lingered with Pink-footed Geese at Eagland Hill until 4th.

Elsewhere a Great White Egret was on Warton Marsh on 22nd, Bitterns were at Pilling Lane and Fleetwood, Black Guillemots were recorded past Starr Gate and Rossall Point, a Shag flew past Starr Gate, a Green Woodpecker was at St Annes Moss, a Barnacle Goose was with Pink-footed Geese at Pilling Lane Ends and Black Redstarts were in Fleetwood, between Knott End and Cocker's Dyke and Blackpool South shore. Dark-bellied Brent Geese were logged at Lytham St Annes Nature Reserve (2) and Rossall

Point, Pale-bellied Brent Geese were at Fleetwood (3) and Pilling Lane Ends (2) and three Purple Sandpipers were at Blackpool North Shore. Snow Buntings were at Cockersand, Rossall School and Barnaby's Sands and Water Pipits in Fleetwood and Burrow's Marsh. In addition to the aforementioned birds the Fleetwood area produced Greenland White-fronted Goose, Hooded Crow, Great Northern Diver and Scaup.

December 2014

A Shorelark at Rossall Point on 3rd was December's most significant discovery; the bird lingered until the month end. At Lytham Moss the Great Grey Shrike continued to show throughout December, a pair of Todd's Canada Geese visited Todderstaffe, Fleetwood Farm, Knott End and Cocker's Dyke and a Great White Egret was on the River Wyre at Out Rawcliffe.

In addition to the Todd's Canada Geese, scarce geese included Tundra Bean Geese at Fleetwood Farm (2), Barnacle Geese at Knott End/Cocker's Dyke (6), Pilling Lane Ends, Thurnham, Todderstaffe Hall and Blackpool North Shore, Eurasian White-fronted Goose at Fleetwood Farm, Greenland White-fronted Geese in Pilling and Fleetwood and Pale-bellied Brent Geese at Fleetwood Farm (2), Cocker's Dyke and Pilling Lane Ends.

The best of the rest included Shags off Starr Gate and Fleetwood, Glaucous Gull at Knott End and Fleetwood, Iceland Gull and up to three Long-eared Owls at Marton Mere, Purple Sandpipers at Fleetwood (4) and Blackpool North Shore (4), Scaup at Fairhaven Lake (3), Knott End (2) and Fleetwood, Snow Buntings at Starr Hills (2), Rossall Point and Bradshaw Lane Head and Water Pipits at The Heads and Fleetwood.

In addition to the aforementioned birds the Fleetwood area produced Grey Phalarope, Long-tailed Duck, Great Northern Diver and three Velvet Scoters.

January 2015

January's star discovery was the Fylde's second Dusky Warbler at Marton Mere on 16th. Unfortunately the bird failed to reappear after the initial sighting. Marton Mere also hosted Firecrest, Iceland Gull and at least two Long-eared Owls.

Elsewhere a juvenile Pomarine Skua was off Knott End on 10th, before it relocated to Cocker's Dyke and eventually Fluke Hall, where it remained until 27th. The Shorelark at Rossall Point and the Great Grey Shrike at Lytham Moss both lingered throughout January, a Great Northern Diver and at least two Shag flew past Starr Gate, a Glaucous Gull visited Knott End and Fleetwood, Purple Sandpipers remained at Rossall Point (4) and Blackpool North Shore (4), Scaup were at Lytham/Fairhaven Lake and Glasson Basin, a Long-eared Owl was at Pilling Moss and a Snow Bunting remained at Rossall Point.

Scarce geese records comprised Tundra Bean Goose at Fleetwood Farm, Mythop, Thurnham, Shard Bridge, Weeton and Singleton, Barnacle Goose at Poulton Industrial Estate, Eurasian White-fronted Goose at Weeton, Fleetwood Farm, Poulton Industrial Estate and Singleton and Pale-bellied Brent Goose at Cockersand (4), Rossall Point (2) and Pilling Lane Ends.

The Fleetwood area produced Water Pipit, Great Northern Diver and three Shag.

Stuart Piner

Great Grey Shrike

On a chilly Saturday afternoon, the first of November 2014, my partner Jan and I decided to make our regular trip to Lytham Moss to collect dandelion leaves for our rabbits, as they eat them faster than we can supply them ! The journey normally produces good numbers of mixed tit and finch flocks at that time of year, so we always keep an eye out for anything different.

We turned from Heyhouses Lane into Wildings Lane as usual, but as we drove down the track I noticed a bird on the telephone wire to our left which was clearly not one of the 'usual suspects'. I slowed the car down to a crawl as the bird flew further down the wire.



Paul Ellis

Typically, I realised to my horror that I had left the house without my binoculars, but the bird then flew down on to a small bush in a more open area, still on the left side of the track, and it was close enough for me to immediately identify it as a Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius Exubitor*), having seen the species many times previously. Never having found a Great Grey in my own local area before, I excitedly rang Birdnet so the news could be paged out, and quickly returned home for my bins, no

doubt breaking a few road traffic laws on the way, and leaving Jan to monitor the bird and pick some dandelions.

When I got back to Wildings Lane a few minutes later, the shrike had flown to the trees at the far side of the open area, backing onto the scout hut. It spent some time hunting, then disappeared from view for around 20 minutes before returning to the small bush again and showing extremely well, periodically dropping into the scrub and returning with food items. A passing non-birder stopped to have a look at the bird, but it flew to the far trees again soon afterwards and we then lost sight of it. Several other Fylde Bird Club members started to arrive, and I was getting worried that the bird had gone and that everyone would miss out. We stayed for a while but the bird had still not reappeared, and we had to leave at around 3pm. I was delighted when Maurice rang me later that afternoon to confirm that the shrike had reappeared, and everyone present had seen it.

It has since relocated to the area opposite the Easterleigh Sanctuary, and from what I have heard on my travels, has proved very popular with birders from all over the North West.

Steve Beastall

Pomarine Skua.

Monday, Jan. 12th was as windy as usual but I decided to brave the elements and walk from Cocker's Dyke to Fluke Hall. Too windy for a scope so I left it at home. As I came up onto the seawall at Cocker's Dyke I met Alan Sutherland who had walked down from Knott End. The wind was lively and I felt leaving the scope was a wise move. We watched the Golden Plovers and Dunlin and Alan was talking about the Pomarine Skua he had fleetingly seen at the weekend, (Chris Batty had also reported a passing Pom at the weekend).



Then a long way out we saw a very dark bird hunkered down on the beach. We watched it for a few minutes and felt sure it was a Skua but the distance was too great for me to be certain. Why did I not bring my telescope!!!! I dashed home to collect it while Alan waited. Back with the scope it was easy. Alan pinned the scope down whilst I took Photos and studied the bird then I did the same for Alan. Teamwork. The two tone bill was robust but not as strong as a Great Skua. A very obliging

Juvenile Great Blacked Gull landed near and made it easy to compare size and build. It showed a heavily barred underside and undertail coverts and very faint white wing patches on the tips of the wings. Its heavy build and steady flight separated it from the much lighter Arctic Skua. My first Pomarine Skua.

We contacted Chris Batty to report that it had been refound and spent half an hour watching it as it performed. It fed on what appeared to be a Pink Foot, it raised its wings, It settled on the sand, it flew a few circuits and then returned to the carcass. The barred underside and tail showed it to be a juvenile.

The last reported Pomarine Skua which stayed around was in 1995 from March 21st till about April 26th. This one seems settled with an available food source so it may stay around. It did, being seen for the last time on Tuesday, January 27th.

Thank you Alan, my first Pomarine Skua, I have seen all four species of Skuas now and 2015 is starting well.

Peter Rhind

Dusky Warbler

On the morning of 16th January I'd been asked by the new Project Officers to join them for a walk around Marton Mere nature reserve so they could pick my brains about anything that came to mind. On a cold and blustery day we had a look at some of the projects that are coming up and I spoke about what had happened in the 'old days'. Our walk round took us from the new visitor centre & classroom across the bridge and along the embankment. We saw the usual waterfowl species on the mere as we walked down to the

duck feeding area and a sparrowhawk quartering the reedbed in a very harrier like manner. We had a look at the pond in the corner which was scraped out of a wet area a few years ago, there weren't any Jack Snipe there unfortunately. Re-joining the main path on the corner where the path cuts off to go to Staining Nook we stopped to let a group of walkers from Lytham St Annes University of the Third Age catch up with us and while Annie Heslop had a chat to them Graeme Nuttall and myself stood a few yards further on admiring the scenery.

Out of the corner of my eye to the left right on the side of the path I noticed a movement which turned out to be a Chiffchaff. We lifted our binoculars and something didn't ring true. It's face was 'wrong', the rear flanks quite ochorous and although the low morning light was harsh and behind it a Chiffchaff wouldn't have such bright legs would it? Then it called several times like two stones being knocked together tchk tchk tchk – it was the call that got me thinking what kind of call is that for a Chiffchaff? It certainly nothing like I would expect a 'normal' Chiffchaff would make and neither should a '*tristis*' eastern one sound like that? The best way to describe it would be like a Blackcap with a bit of a sore throat. Our mind was racing now! Luckily we'd brought the camera along and were able take a few shots - but with it being bright sunny and the bird in the shadows we couldn't see it in the viewfinder – it was very much a case of point and click and hope. I doubted I'd been successful. I tried to get closer to make sure we did get a decent shot or two but it moved ahead of us through the dense vegetation still calling until it flew a good few yards and dropped out of view never to be seen again.

We were definitely unhappy about identifying it as a Chiffchaff and considered the options of what else it could be which really only left Dusky Warbler or Radde's Warbler neither of which I'm familiar with. We finished our circuit and Annie and Graeme left the site so I decided to have a very late lunch break and wandered back to the viewing platform for another try to see the Firecrest which had eluded me several times already. Maurice Jones and Frank Walsh were there and I told them about the warbler which Maurice immediately said sounded more like Dusky than Radde's or anything else for that matter. We then listened to the calls of Dusky Warbler on Xeno-canto on our phone and that WAS the call we'd heard earlier. The three of us then walked back to the reedbed for a look and listen! After more discussion with Maurice and Frank we spoke to Chris Batty on the phone and he said it sounded really good for one and put it out as a 'probable' on the pager network - we hoped it would reappear and that although late in the afternoon some others would be able to get down and confirm the identification.

Once home we downloaded the camera and there were a few poor pictures - we had got it after all - after a fashion at least ! We posted them on the North West Birding **Facebook Group** and within minutes Chris Batty phoned to confirm the identification – superb news, a self-found Lifer ! Although perhaps I wasn't the first to see it as young Preston-based birder Nick Patel had apparently seen it the previous week but not been able to put an ID to it.

David McGrath

Shorelark

On the morning of the 3rd of December, Val having gone out with some girlfriends, I decided to park at Rossall beach, Cleveleys and walk towards Fleetwood to see what was about. I was hoping to see the regular Little Owl at Rossall School. No luck but I met Frank Roe who lives in Cleveleys. He joined me and we walked towards Fleetwood along the edge of the golf course seeing Stonechat, Lark and Meadow Pipit. At the watchtower we



turned round to walk back along the promenade. About 200yds along we saw a movement on the beach and quickly identified it as a Shorelark. I rang Stuart Piner, no answer, Frank rang his birding friend Geoff who was also out so he left a message about the bird. We then proceeded back to my car where we parted company. I proceeded to Cleveleys to buy some Christmas cards and then rang Chris Batty on my return home. I hope Ian

Peter Rhind

Gardener can forgive me for finding such a bird on his patch! I'll soon know if he doesn't pop in to my house for a coffee this year.

I understand that it is over 40 years since a Shorelark has been seen in the Fleetwood area although 2 had been present on St Annes beach from late 2003 to March 15th 2004.

Jim Sheldon

Now and Then, The Birds of the Fylde

Yellowed Browed Warbler.

On the 21st of September 1962 I saw my first in the suda bushes on Blakeney Point. This species was rare, even in Norfolk. Richard Richardson, the great Norfolk birder of the East Bank fame came out in a failed attempt to mist net it.

In Autumn 1957 Victor Morley was recuperating from an operation and spent much time watching his St. Annes garden. On the 21st of October he found Lancashire's first Yellow Browed Warbler and on the 21st of November he found Lancashire's 2nd Firecrest. On the 16th of October 1984 Ed Stirling made his way to check for migrants in the bushes by the railway by Blackpool Pleasure Beach. A man in an adjacent property shouted Ed and



asked if he could help catch a bird in his front lounge. Mildly irritated and expecting a House Sparrow Ed was surprised to find Lancashire's 2nd Yellow Browed warbler. He photographed it in a large glass toffee jar and released it in Watson Road Park! From about this time the species became much more regular nationally and nowadays is searched for and found each Autumn in small numbers.

Stuart Piner

Yellow Wagtail

Oakes (1953) described this species as, "very common on the plains especially in the Fylde" and "abundant on many mosslands around the Ribble at Tarleton and Hesketh Bank." Flocks of brilliant yellow males were a wonderful sight. The North West population declined by 84% between 1984 and 2002.

In 1954 a roost gathering in the reeds at Marton Mere was of about 75 birds with the same number of White Wagtails. Sixty were roosting there in September 1955 and 70 the following year. Other larger counts were 40 on April 22nd 1959, 50 August 1963, over 100 in a sludge bed at Lea Marsh on August 21st 1964 and 117 at Freckleton sewage farm August 16th 1971, then 50 in August 1974.



Peter Rhind

With one exception (20 at Banks Marsh 3rd of September 1980) this was the last count of above 10 that I ever made in Lancashire though there is an Autumn count of 150 at Preesall on September 4th 1981.

For the best part of 30 years I have seen very few each year in the county and the Yellow Wagtail is on the verge of extinction as a county breeding bird.

Waxwing

Influxes vary widely between years due to population increases and food availability. It seems that in the last decade these influxes have become more frequent.

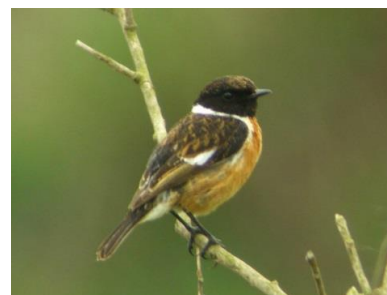


From 1952 until February 1959 I saw not a single bird until one at Scorton on that date. My next Lancashire records were not until 1965 and earlier influxes tended to be in North Lancashire at Warton and Carnforth. Only the recent big influxes have brought flocks to the coastal Fylde area.

Peter Rhind

Stonechat

A few Stonechats are present in Winter, then usually a number of passage birds pass through in March. Seven males and 12 females were present on the Lytham St Annes N.R. March 14th-15th 2000, 10 on the 16th and none the next day. In 2001 7 males and 7 females were there on the 7th of March but none the next day.



Stonechat breeding numbers in Lancashire vary enormously between years with big drops in population after severe Winters.

Peter Rhind

Sand dunes have had most of the coastal breeding birds in Fylde and Merseyside with a few pairs in rough waste ground. In the higher ground of East Lancashire a few pairs have been present after a run of mild Winters. However from 1999 there was a large increase in pairs. On United Utilities land in Bowland 10 pairs bred in 1999; 24 in 2000; 39 in 2002

and 46 in 2005.(The Birds of Lancashire 2008 White et al.) The cold weather early and late in 2010 caused a drop in breeding numbers with some recovery since.

Whinchat

Oake's (1953) opening statement was “ a Summer resident, much commoner than the Stonechat and more widely distributed “ In the higher land of East Lancashire it was still described as numerous. This area, especially Bowland, is still occupied but United Utilities land held 71 pairs in 1982 reduced to 19 pairs in 2005 (Birds of Lancashire 2008). Although Whinchats bred on Sefton dunes – 22 pairs in 1970 – they last bred in 1980 and at Marshside 2 years later. I never saw Whinchats breeding in the Fylde. Stanley Clarke recorded up to 6 pairs in one area of older dunes and the last nesting was in 1950. Encroachment by building and increased disturbance are probably reasons for its demise.



Peter Rhind

Nuthatch

Oakes (1953) reported attempted nesting at Wennington Hall but could list fewer than 10 county records., some outside the present county recording area. I had no records at all in Lancashire from 1952 till 1980 when a pair were nesting at Higher Hodder Bridge, then 3 birds at Woodwell, Silverdale in 1988.



The first record for the Fylde was at Lytham 21st, 22nd of April 1962 and the first breeding at Weeton in 1987. It seems that Lancashire has been colonised by birds spreading South from Cumbria, West from West Yorkshire and North from Cheshire. This increase mirrors a national spread. Lancashire had breeding in one 10 klm square in 1968-1972: 20 in 1988-1991: 37 squares in 1997-2000 and an estimated 500 breeding pairs.

Peter Rhind

Maurice Jones

Confusion Species. Willow Warbler and Chiff Chaff

Two of our most common warblers. The Willow Warbler arrives around April and the Chiff Chaff in March, although some Chiff Chaffs do overwinter, I found one in early January at Ridge Farm. They are easy to separate by song but can cause problems for newer birders if for some reason they become “strong silent types!” The simplest distinction is song.



Willow Warbler

In April the Willow Warblers soft tinkling song descending to a gentle seep seep can be heard all over. It also is one of the few times they cease their constant search for food. Like all warblers they are very difficult to get a good look at as they flick through the bushes.

The Chiff Chaffs monotonous ditty as it repeats its name is about as exciting as it gets, unless you are another Chiff Chaff. Physical differences are comparative, always hard unless they stand next to each other! The Willow Warbler is sleeker and longer winged than the rounder headed and body of the Chiff Chaff. The Willow Warbler has a longer more distinct supercilium and slightly blotchy cheeks when compared to the Chiff Chaff.



The constant movement of both makes all this difficult but experience does make it easier.

For me as a novice the leg colour separates, pale in the Willow Warbler, black in the Chiff Chaff. Though some of the former show darker legs but never black. Generally I find the Chiff Chaff to be a duller bird, sorry.

The other distinction is the Chiff Chaffs habit of robotic tail dipping which accompany many of its actions not something the Willow Warbler indulges in.

Chiff Chaff Paul Slade

To explore further;
Helm Guide to Bird Identification. Alan Harris et al.
Collins Bird Guide. Killian Mullarney et al.

Peter Rhind

Butterflies of the Fylde

“Is there anything more uplifting than being landed on by a butterfly while relaxing in the garden on a warm summer’s day”. This was the experience in 1971 that triggered my interest in butterflies. A Small Tortoiseshell descended on to my arm and immediately started to recoil and uncoil its proboscis. I was hooked.

Butterfly recording in the Fylde lags a long way behind bird recording so our knowledge is largely confined to records submitted to Laura Sivell, the butterfly recorder for Lancashire. For distribution and population data for the period 2007-2011 I can do no better than refer you to the British Butterfly Conservation Society’s website where records for Lancashire from 2007-2011 are held at tetrad level. From there you will be able to see from the maps, records received for the Fylde. To get there:

- 1) Google ‘British Butterfly Conservation Society’
- 2) Left click on ‘In your area’
- 3) Left click on ‘Lancashire branch’
- 4) On right hand side of page left click on ‘Branch website’
- 5) On left hand side of page left click on eighth heading ‘Distribution maps’
- 6) Left click on first ‘HERE’ to take you to the maps
- 7) Left click on required species

To add to our knowledge I would urge you to send in your records by going to stage 5 above and click on the seventh heading 'New reports' and complete accordingly.

Annual Butterfly and Moth recording reports are also available to read. Return to stage 5 above and click on the fourteenth heading 'Annual Reports' where you will find the last six annual reports for the years 2008-2013. Updated distribution and population maps are included for selected species. The 2014 annual report should soon be available, if indeed it is not already there.

There are currently 35 species regularly seen in Lancashire and 27 can be seen in the Fylde, although migrants Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow do not occur every year. The vagrant Dark Green Fritillary is even less reliable with occasional records no doubt emanating from either Silverdale or Ainsdale/Formby. Interestingly it used to occur on the Lytham/St Annes sandhills until 1912 when no doubt reclamation for house building sealed the butterfly's fate.

When I first became interested in butterflies in 1971 at least eight species present today were not around then. Five have since colonised the Fylde. In no particular order they are the Comma, Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Small Skipper and Holly Blue. With regard to the Purple Hairstreak and White-letter Hairstreak it is difficult to say whether they were around at that time and had gone unnoticed owing to their preference to spend most of their lives perched on the tree canopy. This leaves the Brimstone which is irregular in its appearances and I do not know of any guaranteed site where you can go and see this wonderful butterfly. Maybe someone does?

Species distribution relies heavily on suitable habitats and available larval food plants. Another consideration for seeing butterflies is to know when they will be on the wing. Some species like the Gatekeeper, Green Hairstreak, Large Heath and the Skippers are single brooded while others such as the Common Blue, Holly Blue and the Small Heath are double brooded. The Wall Brown, Small Copper and the Whites can all be triple brooded if conditions are right.

If you would like to read comprehensive accounts of all our butterflies I would refer you to the second edition of 'The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland' superbly illustrated by Ian Lewington and wonderfully written by Jeremy Thomas. If I were to recommend just one butterfly book this would be the one. However it is not a pocket guide. For this you may well prefer the 'Pocket guide to the Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland' illustrated and written by Ian Lewington.

A resume of Fylde butterflies follows: **(Tetrad references refer to period 2007-11)**



Winmarleigh Mosses.

The **Large Skipper** is on the wing in June/July and is fairly widespread in the Fylde having been recorded from 44 tetrads. It prefers rank grassland, fields and meadows, and along hedgerows and road verges. It is a feisty butterfly always engaging with rivals that trespass on their territories. Regular sites are the northwest edge of Fleetwood Golf course perimeter, Fleetwood disused railway line, Starr Hills, Preesall, Carleton, Stalmine and

The **Small Skipper** is more a July/August flier favouring the same habitat as its larger cousin. It has been recorded from 22 tetrads and although a fairly recent coloniser, late 1990's, it is undoubtedly under recorded. Regular sites include Marton Mere/Herons Reach complex, Starr Hills, Hambleton fisheries and Pilling Lane Ends.

The **Clouded Yellow** is more a late summer visitor and is absent more than present in most years. As far as I know none were seen from the Fylde last year but there were records from nearby Brockholes Quarry and Middleton Nature Reserve near Heysham. They are likely to turn up anywhere but coastal records usually predominate.

The **Brimstone** caterpillar needs Buckthorn species to feed on, a seemingly rare plant in the Fylde. I can only recall seeing two Brimstones over the years, my first being at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on the 16/7/2006 and the other at Fluke Hall on the 16/10/2009. It is a nomadic species, likely to turn up anywhere. For instance there were no records in 2010 but there were four in 2011 with one apparently reaching double figures in the Lytham Hall tetrad. Just rejoice when you see one and remember to report it.

The **Large White, Small White and Green-veined White** can be seen between April and October and all appear in excess of 60 tetrads. The Large and Small Whites are famous for visiting allotments and are referred to as Cabbage Whites while the Green-veined White prefers damp places such as boggy meadows, marshland, ditches and hedgerows where the caterpillar feeds on Ladies Smock, Cresses, Rape and Garlic Mustard. The crucifers at Rossall Point can be a good place to see all three species where on the 20/7/2009 I counted 521 Large White chrysalises attached to the sea wall.

The **Orange Tip** is found in 58 tetrads with SD43 having a full house. Is this down to you (Malcolm Evans) as I have noticed a recurring theme with regard to coverage from this 10km square. So anyone wanting to see this butterfly between April and June would be well advised to visit east Fylde and specifically SD43. Catforth and Woodplumpton areas are good bets, as are Churchtown and St Michael's in the adjacent SD44 hectad. Country lane verges, margins of fields surrounded by hedges and marshy meadows are favoured habitats. The larva feed on Ladies Smock and Garlic mustard.

In the Fylde the **Green Hairstreak** can only be found on the eastern side of Winmarleigh Moss. They appear to be just hanging on in there. I saw two there on the 19/5/2013 and 11 on the 17/5/04. Presumably it feeds on Bilberry there. It is on the wing from Mid April to early July so visits at other times to mine may well be rewarded. If anyone is keen to see this species then I can recommend Docker Moor (SD574757) in the north of the county where Mike Sutcliffe and I counted 463 there on the 4/5/2011 and 651 on the 7/5/2003. Look around the many gorse bushes which they seem to favour at this site.

The **Purple Hairstreak** is on the wing from July to early September and is only known from 2 sites in the Fylde. They are Hackensall woods and one was found on the banks of the River Wyre at Little Singleton on the 4/8/11. Well established oak trees on which the caterpillars feed on the oak buds, line the embankment there. There must be other sites waiting to be discovered as the Fylde is not short of oak trees. Discrete colonies can be confined to just one tree. It can however be a frustrating butterfly to find as they are hard to see from the ground, for most of their time is spent basking on leaves in the canopy.

The **White-Letter Hairstreak** is an elm tree dweller that is equally as difficult to observe, although it can be seen at times coming down from the canopy to nectar on brambles. I know it from Lytham crematorium, Devonshire road rock gardens, Stanley Park and Singleton although the distribution map shows two other sites that I am not familiar with.

As elm is the sole food plant it suffered greatly in the 70's and 80's from the spread of Dutch elm disease but appears to be hanging on in the Fylde. It's very likely that like the previous species, other sites for this delightful butterfly are waiting to be discovered. It should be looked for from the beginning of July to the middle of August.

Found in 40 tetrads the **Small Copper** is frequently triple brooded and can be found from late April to the end of October. This gem of a butterfly can be seen in small numbers wherever its food plants sorrel and dock are present. It can be found regularly at Rossall Point and nearby Fleetwood dunes where I saw 17 on the 20/8/2012. I have a record of between 15 and 20 at Rossall Point on the 24/8 1979. Look for them at these two sites nectaring on Ragwort, Tansy and Sea Holly. They can also be found in small numbers at Starr Hills, Fluke Hall, Fairhaven and St Michael's on Wyre. I once saw 14 nectaring on Sea aster and Sea lavender on the salt marsh east of Shard bridge.



The **Common Blue** is seen in 44 tetrads and is only one of 2 'blues' to be found in the Fylde, the other being the Holly Blue. It can be found *flying low* over the ground wherever Bird's foot trefoil, its usual food plant, can be found growing. A good place to see this double brooded species in late May/June and again in August is Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park where I have seen in excess of 200 in each of the last 4 years. Other good sites are Starr Hills, Fleetwood dunes, Pilling Lane Ends, Fairhaven dunes, Hambleton fisheries, Windy harbour and Stanah.

The **Holly Blue** in my experience is rarely seen in any numbers, indeed one or two is usual. It is highly mobile and unlike the Common Blue is hardly, if ever, found flying at ground level. It is double brooded laying its eggs on Holly in the spring and Ivy in the autumn. Although only recorded from 29 tetrads it is likely to turn up anywhere where its foodplants are found. I have seen it in my back garden in Poulton and places such as Devonshire road rock gardens where it appears to be regular, Lytham Hall, Little Singleton, Cockerham, Stanley Park, Hackensall woods, Stanah and so on.

The **Red Admiral** is one of those butterflies that most people know, although it is frequently mistaken for the Small Tortoiseshell and vice versa. It is widespread in the Fylde and can be found in every month in the year. It peaks in autumn when it can be seen in good numbers nectaring on buddleia, and later on Ivy blossom. On the 6/9/2003 while out with Bob Danson I counted 153 at Newars Wood, Pilling, sucking sap from a mature willow tree, a truly unforgettable sight. In autumn during suitable weather conditions they can be seen coming in off the sea at Rossall Point and Pilling Lane Ends and no doubt at all points in between, migrating southwards.

The **Painted Lady** is another migrant, but some years is absent from the Fylde. Who though could forget the year 2009 when it was estimated 11 million entered the UK in spring and 26 million departed in the autumn. I and many other enthusiasts undertook the 2 hour Painted Lady coordinated national count from my home where I recorded 209 mainly heading north. I visited Fleetwood Nature Park the following day and counted 249 there with no doubt 171 of their progeny counted there later in the year on the 6/8/2009. But even that number was eclipsed when on the 23/6/1996 I along with Bob Danson counted no less than 546 in a 20 acre field at Pasture House farm laying eggs on creeping thistles. Recent science from traditional monitoring by butterfly enthusiasts and new radar techniques has revealed that unlike the Red Admiral this species is a high altitude migrant which is why migration southwards largely goes undetected.

The **Small Tortoiseshell** has been recorded from approximately 90% of all the Fylde tetrads and since 2010 seems to be making a gradual comeback to its former numbers. I counted 52 on my buddleia on the 22/8/1997. It is vivid orange-red, with yellow and black splotches on the forewing and may be seen anywhere but especially where there are common nettles, the food plant of the caterpillar. It basks and feeds on a wide variety of plants and anyone with a buddleia in their garden must surely have seen one. It is one of three Fylde butterflies that regularly hibernate in the winter months, the other two being the Comma and Peacock. Red Admirals and Brimstones also hibernate but early year records for these species are uncommon and could have arrived from elsewhere and in the case of the Red Admiral be an early migrant.



The spectacular **Peacock** is now well established in the Fylde but only found in SD33 back in the 1970's. Like the previous species it too feeds on common nettle and hibernates in the winter months. It is a strong flier turning up in most habitats and like the Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Painted Lady can be found in good numbers on buddleia. I saw 48 in a nettle infested field at Mythop on 7/8/2006 and outside the Fylde I frequently come across it when

walking the Bowland fells in the summertime.

The **Comma** a fairly recent colonist is seen in 44 tetrads and usually best looked for in woods, mature gardens, country lanes and tall hedges. It is never seen in great numbers borne out by the fact that in the last 6 years 15 was the highest count submitted to the Lancashire recorder. From what I remember I have found it at Fluke Hall, Pilling Lane Ends, Hackensall woods, Singleton, Little Singleton, Lytham Hall and undoubtedly in ones and twos on my travels in the Fylde at many other locations, not forgetting on buddleia in my back garden. Like the previous two species it lays its eggs on common nettles and hibernates over the winter months.

The **Dark Green Fritillary** is a vagrant to the Fylde with only singles ever seen in either July or August. The last three records I know of are one probable seen in Great Eccleston by Jack Benson in 2008, one at Pilling Moss on the 8/7/2009 seen by Anne Smith/Mike Broomfield nectaring on thistle, and one at Lytham Hall on the 7/8/2013 seen by Maurice Jones.

The **Speckled Wood** arrived in the Fylde in the early 1990's and is now widespread and probably present in every wood, where it prefers shady conditions where dappled light is the order of the day. It likes basking on leaves with wings wide open, alighting only when disturbed by passing males or to pursue females. Woodland glades and pathways within woodland are preferred habitats as are shaded country lanes. Try the footpaths that go round Bispham marsh and Devonshire road rock gardens. The caterpillar feeds on grasses such as Yorkshire Fog and Cocksfoot and the butterfly can be seen from April to late October or even later in some years. Wanderers can be seen in gardens and brighten up anyone's day.

The **Wall Brown** is no longer seen in any great numbers in the Fylde, being present in only 28 tetrads. I remember once in the 1970's counting over 150 on the disused railway track at Preesall. If you see double figures nowadays, it is a Red-letter day. My last decent count was 20 at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on the 25/5/2009 but I haven't seen any there in the last 4 years. Last year it was present in small numbers at Pilling Lane Ends

amenity area and I also saw one at Stanley farm, south of St Michaels. It is another butterfly that feeds on grasses and can be seen from early May to late October. It can easily be mistaken from a distance for a fritillary by people new to butterfly watching. Rough grassland, brownfield sites and country lanes are likely areas to find them. In the past I have seen them at Marton Mere, Rossall Point, Fleetwood sand dunes, Fleetwood disused railway line, Fluke Hall, Stanah, Singleton and Churchtown.

The **Grayling** only occurs in three tetrads and can be found on the sand dunes at Starr Hills and Lytham St Annes. Like most butterflies its numbers fluctuate from year to year and I have counted in excess of 200 at Starr Hills. The best place to see them is at the foot and slopes of the landward side of the dunes. They are often disturbed from their resting positions on the sand before quickly landing again in another sun-spot. This large butterfly also seems to appear from nowhere ambush style and see off anything that isn't a female Grayling. Their flight is so different, the way they move sideways as well as forwards, bobbing about in leaps and bounds and capable of great acceleration when required. When flying their wings are held in a 'V' shape and often they will leap, then glide for short distances. When on the ground they regulate their body temperature by leaning at varying angles to the sun, sometimes practically lying on their sides. With their marbled dull 'plumage' they camouflage well while at rest, but their jerky walking movement can betray their presence. They are on the wing in July through to September and are a fascinating butterfly to observe whilst whiling away a sunny afternoon. Strays are not unknown and I have seen singles at Rossall Point on the 31/7/1980 and again on the 9/8/1983.

The **Gatekeeper** is present in 51 tetrads but in the early 1970's was only found at an isolated colony near Peel, before spreading to the Lytham St Annes Nature Reserve at Starr Hills. It was not until 1994 that I found another colony at Todderstaffe Hall although I had heard of other sightings in the Kirkham, Warton, and Lytham St Annes areas. Since then it has become well established and can usually be found on the wing from late June to early September. Look for it in grassy places and hedgerows where its other name the Hedge Brown is probably more apt. More than 300 were recorded from Starr Hills on the 28/7/2013 and Great Plumpton railway sidings had 64 there on the 20/7/2004.

The **Meadow Brown** is present in 63 tetrads. It seems to prefer rank grassland where the grass is left to grow tall and can be found in large numbers on favoured sites. I have counted Meadow Browns at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park for the last 7 years where they



have been on the wing from as early as the 21/6 and as late as the 26/9. My largest count was last year when there were 474 on the 10/7/2014. It is probably the commonest butterfly to be seen in the countryside with small colonies being found wherever suitable grassland occurs. You really can't miss seeing one.

The **Small Heath** is a scarce butterfly in the Fylde only recorded from 7 tetrads. It can be seen between May to October in most years. This is another species I have monitored over the last 7 years at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park and is probably the best site in the Fylde to see it. However the best areas where they occur are subject to restricted access. My highest count was 89 on the 3/6/2011 and my lowest was zero for the second brood in 2012 having seen 36 there on the 4/6. This however is not altogether unusual as this butterfly often hibernates as a caterpillar, and 2012 being such a dreadful summer probably decided to do so en masse. I have seen it near to where I live on a

railway embankment and must remember to check this year if it is still there. I have also seen it at Starr Hills, Fairhaven dunes, Fleetwood disused railway line, and at the back of the old ICI works north of Stanah. It used to be at Marton Mere and Rossall School fields but there are no recent records from there that I am aware of.

The **Large Heath** shares Winmarleigh Moss SSSI with the Green Hairstreak as the only site to see these two species in the Fylde. It can be seen on sunny days from mid June to the end of July. Efforts are being made by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust (LWT) to encourage it to cross over Crawleys Dyke and colonise Cockerham Moss. It is an important Lancashire site as it is only present at one other site in Lancashire, that at Goodber Common. Having said that I understand it was re-introduced to Heysham Moss last year under a project involving the LWT, Chester Zoo and the Lancashire Environmental Fund using females from the donor site at Winmarleigh. It is hoped to re-establish a sustainable population there. In the past I have seen in excess of 60 at Winmarleigh and 33 were seen there on the 20/6/2012.

Other butterflies that have occurred in the Fylde, some of dubious origin.

The **Dingy Skipper** is accepted to have occurred from an old railway cutting near Weeton/Great Plumpton where K Bevan recorded it during the 1960's.

In the 1900's the **Marbled White** was apparently seen out towards Great Marton where 'a whole fleet of them were seen loitering lovingly amid the various blooms'. I have to say it would be difficult to misidentify this species.

The **Bloxworth Blue** now known as the **Short-tailed Blue**, a vagrant, was taken at Blackpool in 1890.

The **Monarch** was seen by Arthur Watson at St Annes in 1968, although it was unfortunately run over by a bus soon after successfully completing its hazardous transatlantic crossing. This species is infrequently seen on our shores in autumn but in exceptional years as many as thirty sightings have been recorded. Another one was seen at Fleetwood docks on the 3/5/1999!

A **Swallowtail** was seen and photographed by Iain Barker at Fairhaven in October 2013. Bizarre as it was well outside its flight times and geographical range.

Turning to which species might next colonise the Fylde, the outstanding candidate must be the Ringlet where one has been recorded from Preston in tetrad SD53F. This tetrad has the A6 running through it, so it is possible that it may already have occurred if we follow the Fylde Bird Club boundaries. Other nearby records for this species are Heysham and tetrads SD62C,I,N which have Hoghton Towers and Witton Country Park within them. Keep a lookout for them in east Fylde as they are surely heading our way.

Well that's it. I hope you now know a little more about the Fylde's butterflies, although it's fair to say it is biased towards the places I visit. I hope you will also be encouraged to use the Lancashire branch website to send in your records. Alternatively send them by no later than January in the following year to laura.sivell@mypostoffice.co.uk or by post to Laura Sivell, 22 Beaumont Place, Lancaster LA1 2EY

REFERENCES

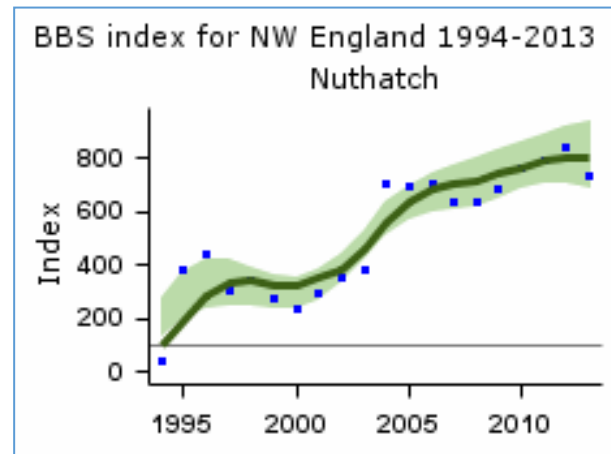
British Butterfly Conservation Society, Lancashire branch website
D and J Steeden : the fylde naturalist No.3

Barry Dyson

The Breeding Bird Survey in Lancashire

Last year 71 Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) squares were covered in Lancashire, a fantastic volunteer effort – thank you to all involved ! There are always more 1-km squares available to be surveyed, ideal for anyone who enjoys being out birding and knows their common birds by sight and sound. The BBS is a survey carried out with the aim of monitoring the population changes of the UK's widespread breeding birds and is run by the BTO, JNCC and RSPB.

Population trends in the North West



CHRIS BRADLEY/British Trust for Ornithology

Results from the latest BBS report show 22 species have increased and 10 are in decline in the North West between 1995 and 2012. Swifts have shown a 42% decrease in the North West whilst Nuthatch has increased by 335% and there is no indication of a halt to this trend! *BirdAtlas* data illustrated the expansion of the Nuthatch range into northern England. The Skylark declined rapidly from the mid-1970s until the mid-1980s, largely due to agricultural intensification, since then, BBS data has shown a continued decline by 33% between 1995 and 2012.

Taking part

To take part in the BBS you will first need to contact your local organiser to be allocated a 1-km square, make a reconnaissance visit to record the habitat details and check the planned route. Then an Early visit, during early April to mid-May, and a late visit, during mid-May to late June, is carried out in order to count the birds. The route will follow two parallel lines and you will be counting the birds either side of the transect as you walk along. Data can then be entered online or submitted using paper recording forms.

Taking part in the BBS is not only a nice way to get out and go birding; the birds you count are recorded for important information leading to a better understanding of our bird populations, influence policy and guide conservation action. Please visit www.bto.org/bbs to find out more or contact your local organiser via the red 'Sign up for BBS' tab on the BBS webpages.

Regional Representative Vacancy

Currently, there is a vacancy for a voluntary Regional Representatives in north-west Lancashire. Tony Cooper is the BTO Regional Representative for east Lancashire and Stuart Piner is the Regional Representative for south Lancashire. If you would like to find out more about the vacant role, or to get in touch with Tony or Stuart, please email at bbs@bto.org.

Evie Miller and Sarah Harris on behalf of the BBS team at the BTO

Stuart Piner

Fylde Bird Club Pelagics 2015

We have again arranged a couple of boat trips out of Fleetwood. The boat will pickup off the beach by Fleetwood Lifeboat Station, access to the boat is by either a ladder or steep plank, so please be aware of this before booking.

See dates below

Monday 27 April 1510 - 2010

Thursday 6 August 1600 - 2100

Please contact **Paul Slade** to book:

Email: paul@winclad.fsnet.co.uk

or

Mobile: 07970 986904

Places available on a **first come first paid** basis at £26 each.

If a trip has to be cancelled for any reason payment will be refunded in full.

Forthcoming Events

March 24th Extremadura, land of contrasts with Peter Wolstencroft.

(a must for lovers of Spain and birds. Ed.)

April 28th Highland Wildlife, Birds and Mammals with Roy Atkins.

May 26th Hen Harriers and the Skydance Project, with James Bray.

The Fylde Photographic Competition, February 24th 2015

All these photographs will be put on the Fylde Bird Club website

The Fylde



1st Paul Ellis



Equal 2nd Paul Slade



Equal 2nd Paul Slade

G.B.



Equal 1st

Daniel Fryer and Peter Rhind



Equal 3rd

David Moreton and Jackie Moreton

World



1st David Moreton



2nd Paul Ellis



3rd Paul Ellis

The Under Exposed



1st Howard Phillips



2nd Peter Rhind



3rd Mike Foy

.Peter Rhind

BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS

Fracking: On Monday 23rd February Ron Bedford gave a 15 minute presentation to councillors, providing information to oppose Cuadrilla's application for fracking in Singleton. This was followed by a council meeting 2 days later when representatives of Cuadrilla, supporters and opposers were invited to speak to the fracking application. 17 people spoke against the application, including FBC member Sue Bedford. Sue was allowed only 4 minutes to give a concise and focused objection. Councillors then discussed and debated the application. The outcome was that Lancashire County Council rejected Cuadrilla's application for fracking at Singleton.

Marton Mere HLF project. FBC provided detailed input to design of islands, bird hide and sand martin bank. In February work commenced on the island; site meetings were attended by FBC members. Four volunteer work party events were held supported by FBC members. Paul Slade & Paul Ellis carried out volunteer work; placing dead hedging around FBC hide, repairs to fence, removal of tree branches, fitting new latch to door.

Conder Pool: Paul Slade met with the RSPB in December to discuss habitat adjustment and tern trays. A further meeting is planned in early March with the RSPB to conduct habitat adjustment and deployment of tern nest trays.

St Aidens School: Jolyon Barlow met with the Head regarding construction of tern trays by pupils. Materials have been provided and 20 tern trays have been produced already.

Coastal disturbance. A meeting was attended on 18th February by Paul Slade and Paul Ellis in Morecambe with Morecambe Bay Partnership where follow-up data and proposals were provided. *Please report any disturbance/incidents to Paul Ellis (paul.ellis24@btopenworld.com) or record on FBC website: <http://www.fyldebirdclub.org/coastal-and-esturine-disturbance.html>*

St Thomas's Church. A peregrine box was installed by Andrew & Monty Myerscough, Frank Walsh, Dave Pitman. Thanks to others not mentioned who assisted with this project.

Lytham sea wall reconstruction. A meeting with Fylde Borough Council, RSPB and environmental consultants was held on 22nd January, attended by Paul Ellis, Frank Walsh and Maurice Jones. This was followed up with a letter from FBC proposing the creation of a wader roost island in Fairhaven Lake.

Rossall Point. The RSPB are planning to launch an initiative to reduce disturbance to wader roost. FBC have been requested to support the initiative.