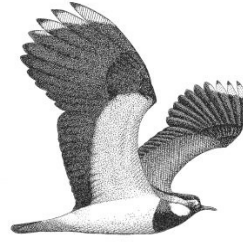


September Newsletter 2015

Charity Number. 1102961



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Bird Club**
LANCASHIRE

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Another sun packed Summer and an exciting Autumn full of birding promise. My highlight was a Humming Bird in the garden (hawkmoth of course)

In this issue we have updates on Marton Mere from Ellen Pemberton, Stuart Piner writes about finding 5 Dotterel, Ian Jackson with the Red Necked Phalarope and Paul Slade about exciting Gulls.

We have two items about the joys of birding on the Outer Hebrides from Glen Jackson and Maurice Jones. Having been there with beautiful white sand beaches and challenging temperatures and amazing birds it is somewhere to go if you haven't already enjoyed it.

We have a little culture in the form of two poems submitted by Maurice Jones and Dorothy Una Ratcliffe.

Submitted not written by.

I have a guide for newer birders on separating Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits. Hope it's useful.

Finally, Forthcoming Events, The British Birds Journal, The plight of the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of birds and the self publication of a book on Myths and the naming of Birds are all highlighted in this newsletter.

Paul Ellis includes an update of the work of the Fylde Bird Club.

Marton Mere Report – April – June 2015

April was a very busy month at Marton Mere, starting off with a Peregrine and a Raven on the 1st and 45 Meadow Pipits and 2 Whooper Swans on the 2nd. On the 4th there were 42 Tufted Ducks and a Weasel. Unlike the picture circulating online at this time, the latter wasn't hitching a lift on a Green Woodpecker! On the 5th, a Peregrine flew north, whilst a Curlew was seen over the east fields. 2 Swallows, 8 Sand Martins and a Redshank were also present. Sand Martin numbers rose to 84 on the 6th and the Iceland Gull visited on the 6th and 7th. There were 2 Wheatears and the first Willow Warbler on the 9th, while the first Reed Warbler and Blackcap arrived on the 10th. Stock Dove numbers peaked on these 2 dates (8 on the 9th and 12 on the 10th.) 2 House Martins were seen on the 11th. 2 Common Scoters were at the Mere in mid-April, with a female sighted on the 12th and 15th and a male on the 14th. 26 Golden Plovers flew north on the 13th and the first Sedge Warbler of the spring appeared on the 14th.

The 15th was a hectic day; as well as the Scoter there was a Redstart and 2 Common Sandpipers, while 47 Carrion Crows and 2 Rooks graced the east field. On the 16th there were 2 Jays seen and a Little Ringed Plover was on the scrape briefly on the 17th. The first Grasshopper Warbler was heard on the 18th, while on the 22nd the reserve hosted 2 Little Ringed Plovers and 5 Common Sandpipers. Sightings for the end of April included a Curlew on the 25th, Lesser Whitethroat on the 26th, Little Egret on the 28th and another Little Ringed Plover and 4 Swifts on the 29th.

May and June were quieter, however a Wood Warbler was present on 2nd May and a Green Sandpiper and a Whinchat were present on the 3rd. 3 Common Terns flew over on the 17th. Unfortunately a Mink was also spotted the same day. On 11th June a Skylark was heard singing in the east field, while a Grasshopper Warbler was heard on several dates from the 13th onwards (2 were recorded on 29th June). Swifts were out in force, with approximately 200 on the 21st and 100 on the 25th. 2 Stock Doves were seen on the 27th. At the end of June there were 2 sightings which were unusual for this time of year, a Water Rail on the 25th and a Common Scoter on the 29th. I should also mention that the Friends Of Marton Mere group, which ran in the late 1990s and 2000s is starting up again and has been organising events on the reserve. Hopefully they will produce some interesting sightings.

Ellen Pemberton

Dotterel at Cockersand May 2015

A morning spent seeing very little in the way of migrants at Cockersand on 8th May 2015 didn't really inspire confidence that a repeat visit in the afternoon would write a different story. But the wind was in the east, and rain was forecast, so I couldn't resist putting the east winds + rain = migrants theory to the test.

I walked out to Plover Scar to coincide with high tide, but my wait to grip-back Broad-billed Sandpiper on the Fylde was destined to continue – there was nothing exciting amongst the roosting waders. The weather forecast was spot on, and heavy rain was now pelting down. As I walked back towards my car at Lighthouse Cottage I spotted a Ringed Plover flying across a tilled field adjacent to the coastal footpath. I raised my bins to check if it was a loner or whether it was flying in to join a flock, and I immediately panned onto a very wet Dotterel! Then another, and another. Five in total. The usual scramble to take a photograph to record a rare event ensued, but this time with the added complication of trying not to ruin expensive equipment in the rain.

I am certain the birds were not present in the tilled field during the morning of 8th May and it seems likely that they arrived during the heavy rain which commenced during my brief scan at Plover Scar. The Dotterel remained until the following day, and one was still



present on 10th May before it departed during the morning.

Cockersand last hosted a Dotterel in April 2013, and a trip of Dotterel last occurred on the Fylde as recently as spring 2014 (a group of six birds at Calcald's Farm, Stake Pool), but the latter birds were only seen by a local farmer. Before the 2015 Cockersand birds, the last flock available to birders made landfall in April 2000, when a flock of seven birds spent an evening at Eagland Hill.

Stuart Piner

Summer Gulling

Sunday 2nd August saw myself and Paul Ellis doing our weekly check of the tern colony at Preston Dock. Both of us had been smarting from missing (and not finding) the two Roseate terns seen last summer briefly one morning by John Wright, we were convinced this year would be our turn.

We had done our usual routine of slowly checking through each pontoon counting sitting birds and chicks between dodging the showers.

Every so often we would scan through the gulls hoping for a Caspian (more of that one shortly) the best we had found before was the odd Mediterranean Gull but today would be different....

Just as we were ready for leaving I thought I would have one last scan through the gulls and quickly noticed a distinctive one amongst them, I thought 'why isn't this a ring billed?' so grabbed Paul and made him look through my scope to which he replied 'what am I looking for.....oooh' We quickly tried to get some record shots before dashing back to the car and driving round to the Green Frog takeaway van. Jumping out of the car Paul quickly picked it up close below us on the water, I must admit I was probably a little over cautious as we discussed the id features but everything seemed to fit, we had found a

moulting first summer Ring Billed Gull, the second record for the site and about the twentieth Fylde record, the previous one being an adult I also found at Skippool in 2009.

As I write this the bird is still present and showing well on the pontoons from the Green Frog.



Ring Billed Gull, Preston Dock (Paul Slade)

Moving forward three weeks to 23rd August I was again out birding with Paul when we visited Cocker's Dyke and amazingly found a juvenile Caspian Gull, the same species we had hoped for at Preston Dock ! and only about the sixth Fylde record !

Brilliant photo's by Paul clinched the id of this difficult to identify species, especially considering it was blowing about 30mph at the time.



Juvenile Caspian Gull, Cocker's Dyke (Paul Ellis)

Paul Slade

7th June 2015. Red Necked Phalarope.

I had been asked if I would help with the Black Tailed Godwit watch at Newton Marsh. This worthwhile project is something I helped with last year and therefore I gladly volunteered to undertake a number of Sunday morning shifts.

I arrived at Newton Marsh just before 10am and scanned the channels looking for any obvious waders. It was a bright morning yet still cool following recent northerly winds.

I was soon joined by Paul Slade who was making his way over to Slaidburn in Bowland where he was helping out with the Hen Harrier project.

We both scanned the marsh whilst we discussed recent bird records and birding holidays. I told Paul about the Red Necked Phalarope which I had seen earlier through the week at Alston Wetland near Longridge (03.06.15). Paul half-jokingly commented '*it would have been nice to have got a RN Phalarope on Newton Marsh*'.

There had recently been a number of RN Phalarope records in Britain, ranging from Norfolk on the east coast across to Newport in the West. Nearer to home birds had been recorded at Alston Wetland, Martin Mere and Burton Mere Wetlands.

Paul decided it was time to start making his way across to Bowland and drove down the lane to turn his car around. Meanwhile I continued scanning the main channel – Gadwall, Shoveler, Gadwall, Phalarope! There in front of me was the bird we had only just been discussing minutes ago. By now Paul had turned his car around and was driving back. I flagged him down and shouted through his window what I had just seen. Paul abandoned his car and immediately had the bird in his scope. This was the nearest the bird came all afternoon and it was clearly different from the Alston bird as the markings were far more sharp and bright thus suggesting a female. As Paul put the information out, the bird seemed anxious and nervous all the time. As birders started to arrive the phalarope flew high demonstrating a zig zagging flight pattern and looked to drop back down onto the marsh however now a lot further back and hidden from view.

I stayed until 2pm and never saw the bird again however I understand the bird was still reported later through the day. Yet by morning there was no sign of the bird.

The abundance of RN Phalarope records around this time was very interesting. One theory is that the recent strong southerly winds had caused birds to over shoot their Scottish breeding grounds and consequently they adjusted their flight only to be driven further south as the winds had swung more northerly.

Ian Walker

Confusion Species: Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits.

Godwits are large waders, around the size of a Whimbrel. They are both long legged and long billed birds. In flight they are easy to separate as the Black-tailed has a prominent white wing bar, a white rump and of course a black tail. The Bar-tailed has no wing bar, a white wedge and of course a barred tail.

In summer plumage they are beautifully rufous/red underneath with the Black-tailed being red on the chest and on the Bar-tailed the red extends on to the belly. Most of the Godwits around here will be juvenile or winter plumaged though some will have vestiges of the summer markings.



Black-tailed Godwit (aka Blackwit) has a long bill, longer than the Bar-tailed (aka Barwit) and longer legs giving it a much taller and elegant appearance. Note in particular the length of the tibia (from the bend in the leg to the feathers) it is longer on the Black-tailed as opposed to the Bar-tailed.

Juvenile Black-tailed have a patterned back, a weak supercilium and a peachy chest and throat.

Winter adults are quite plain grey birds with a pale chest and belly.

The bill is yellow/orange going to pink in winter with an extensive black tip.

Bar-tailed Godwit has a bill which is not quite as long as the Black-tailed but it has a slight upturned appearance which is easily visible from distance. Its legs are shorter in particular from bend to the feathers and this gives it a stockier look.

Its bill is dark with a pink base.

Juveniles have upperparts marked somewhat like a curlew, warm upper chest and throat and a well-marked supercilium.



Winter adults have more patterned upperparts than the Black-tailed and a pale brownish breast.

For me the defining characteristics which separate the 2 species are the leg length and the bill shape.

Peter Rhind

Holiday to the Outer Hebrides May 2015.

On the 22nd of May Frank Walsh, Len Knowles, Andy Myerscough (driver) and I set off early for the long drive to Uig, Skye to catch the 6pm ferry to Lochmaddy, North Uist. It left over 1hr late!

On route on the ferry we had plenty of Puffin and other Auks, Artic Terns, Great Northern Divers, Manx Shearwaters and Black Guillemots. The others saw 2 Pomarine Skuas.

23rd. A very wet day as we took the North Coastal from Lochmaddy. We saw 2 Red Throated Divers, Short Eared Owl, Cuckoo and Artic Skua. There is a Golden Eagle watchpoint along this road and we saw the adult on the nest. At Balranald R.S.P.B.reserve we exceptional views of 4 Corncrakes. We also saw 2 Whooper Swans and an Iceland Gull, 2 Twite and Sanderlings, Ringed Plovers and Turnstones feeding on the sandy fields, plus Corn Buntings. No Skua passage due to the rain.

24th. A day of strong N.W winds but rain had stopped. We had found it difficult to find accommodation and our self catering at Lochmaddy was very good but 15miles or so from the sea watching site of Aird-An-Runair. We should have driven non stop to this vantage point, the most Westerly site on the Uists. We drove over Committee Road, which crosses moorland, seeing several Short Eared Owls. We then obtained better views of the pair of Golden Eagles. Later Corncrakes and Twite, and then onto the sea watch. We were informed that we had missed about 260 Long Tailed Skuas that morning.(hundreds had passed before our visit) However all was not lost and about 20 parties of Pomarine Skua passed us at close range totalling 224 birds. We also had 5 Long Tailed Skua, Bonxie (Great Skua) and Arctic Skua, Light Bellied Brent, Little Tern and 2 Great Northern Divers.

25th. Six Short Eared Owls on the way to Aird-An-Runair. Alas no Skua passage but 2 Great Northern and 1 Black Throated Diver gave great views on the sea. Then onto Benbecula where we found 4 Red Necked Phalaropes on Loch Faddy across the road from their normal haunt on Lochmore. Later we saw a summer plumaged Black Throated Diver from Aird Mhor on South Uist. At Loch Eynort we had 3 Red Throated Divers, 1 pair plus an immature Golden Eagle, a distant White Tailed Eagle, Hen Harrier, Common Seals and we heard a cuckoo.

26th. About 7 Short Eared Owls en route and beyond Committee Road plus a lovely male Hen Harrier, Lovely views of 3 summer plumaged Great Northern Divers at Aird-An-Runair but no Skuas except the resident Artic. A second view of a male Hen Harrier later on Committee Road-a regular nest site though we did not a female.

27th. Again no Skua passage but commoner seabirds, 2 Great Northern Divers, Iceland Gull and Corncrake at Balranald. At the Langass Hotel woodland we had 1 or 2 Cuckoos and Willow Warbler and a drive(in heavy rain) along the cul de sac by Loch Euphort produced a Greenshank, Teal, a Wigeon with 2 young, Red Throated Diver and a Black Guillemot.

28th. Our ferry sailed at 7.30 from Lochmaddy and we obtained distant views of a White Tailed Sea Eagle as it returned to its nest to the right of the harbour. If you want to see Eagles you are probably better to go to Mull. The return to Uig produced about 50 Manx Shearwaters, 50 Artic Tern, Puffin, Kittiwake and Gannet. In the 5 days on the islands, 2 of which were very wet, we saw about 84 species. No Otters were seen despite much scanning.

WEST TO THE UISTS 2015

Extract from daily log for Thursday 28th May:

To nearby Loch Mor (on Benbecula) for 0800..... 3 **Ravens** terrorising Lapwing colony and stealing eggs. Pair of **Red-necked Phalarope** (out of 7 on site!) observed displaying and mating. On to "Committee Road" on North Uists – splendid close up view of **Golden Plover** in full summer plumage, and pair of **Stonechats** by the roadside. After 1 mile catch pair of **Hen Harriers** doing food pass over nest site, and within 400 yards pair of **Short-eared Owls** doing similar. Within 5 miles on north coast road, female **Golden Eagle** on nest with 3 week old chick, and male on duty nearby. "Comfort break" at RSPB Balranald, with immediate sighting of two **Corncrakes** on either side of the road. On to the headland at Aird an Rhunair for sea watch and immediate sightings of 6 x **Arctic Skuas** and then 5 x **Pomarine Skuas** offshore heading northwards. A pair of **Great Northern Divers** in the bay, and a flash of a **Fulmar** playing on the 40mph breeze. Just time to observe a flock (22) **Long tailed Skuas** passing through – before it is time for a late lunch! Just a normal trip out then for the Uists.

Such can be a normal morning on The Uists at the end of May. From Blackpool to Lochmaddy, via the Uig CalMac ferry from Skye it is a mere 450 miles, but the rewards are well worth the effort. At £42 each way for car and passenger for the 1 hour 45 minutes, and the chance to observe a myriad of sea birds on the crossing (too early for the dolphins), it has to be excellent value. Accommodation on The Uists is limited with an average price for single occupancy B & B at around £50, and evening eateries few and far between. Maurice Jones and 3 companions hired a self-catering cottage in Lochmaddy to share for a few days, and it was good to compare notes, observations and locations with them one night.

For the whole trip of 5 days I noted 82 species, compared with my list of a mere 66 for 2014 when doing a daily dash from Bara in the south to Point of Lewis in the north. This clearly shows the advantage of remaining in one general location – The Uists being approximately twice the size in area of our Fylde observation range. Noteworthy observations included 5 Golden Eagles, those 7 Red-necked Phalarope, Great Northern, Black Throated and Red Throated Divers, Hen Harriers and Short-Eared Owls, Corncrakes (of course), Cuckoos, and, unusually for Britain, a pair of breeding Whooper Swans with young. The ultimate must be in stormy conditions on the headland when, within a 25 minute period all four types of Skuas were seen – including a flock of 18 Long Tails heading for somewhere north of Spitzbergen.

After travelling 376 miles on The Uists I chose to spend a couple of days on Harris (big mistake except for the spectacular mountain terrain), and come home via Loch Garten and Aberdeen (another mistake). After scanning no less than 600 Eiders on the Ythan peninsula I concluded that the King Eider had gone, and as for the Harlequin Duck in the Park in the City Centre- I couldn't even find the park! Typically the day after I left a Black-winged Pratincole was seen! My list for the week totalled 111 with just one "lifer" for me, and travelled 1585 miles, but when told that the weather was the worst May for 30 years it

is testament to the enjoyment that I hardly noticed it! Anyone able to offer advice to me on the Orkneys and Shetland for next year????

Glen Jackson

Barn Owls. South Fylde Breeding Report. 2015.

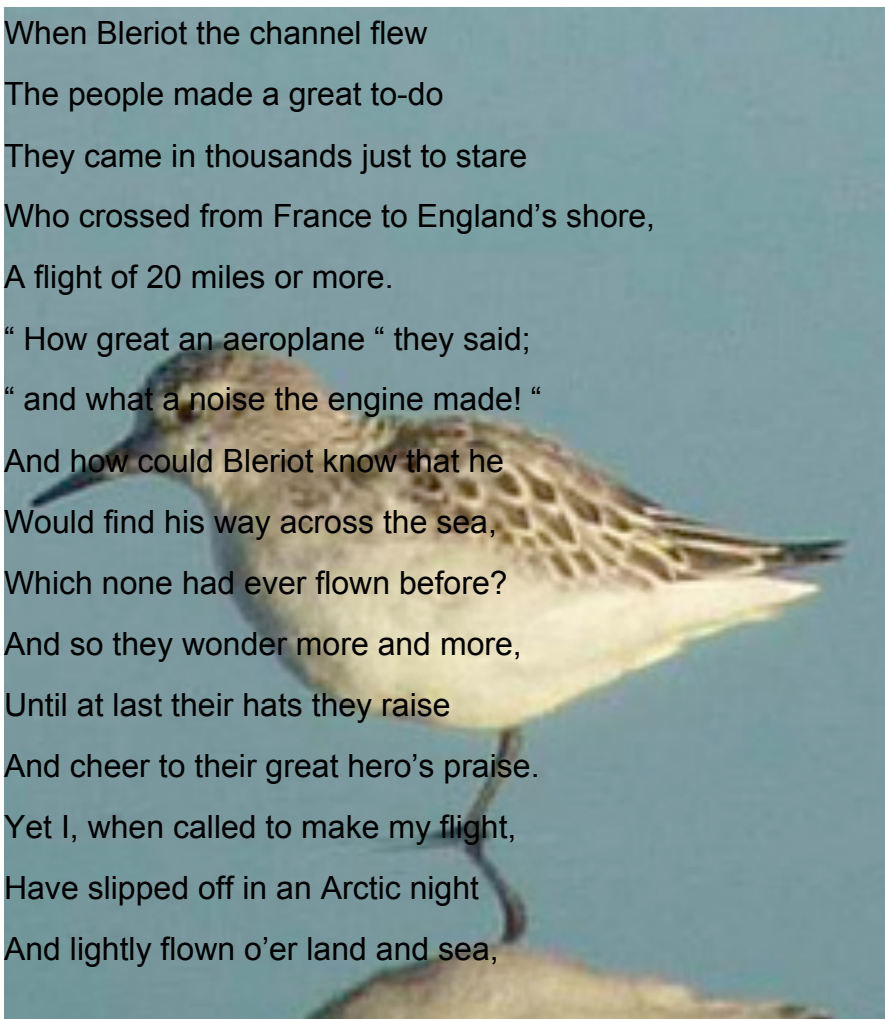
After a bumper breeding season in 2014 with at least 32 pairs producing record numbers of young, 2015 looks like being the exact opposite. Many of the “banker” sites showed no signs of any breeding attempts and after checking about 20 nest boxes of which only 3 had any chicks or eggs we decided not to check any more, at least not for a month or two. The only positive thing that I can say so far is that one box we put up only a few months ago already attracted a pair of Barn Owls. In fact they had already fledged which must be some kind of record.

We’ll never know exactly how many pairs have bred successfully this year, but there is still plenty of time between now and the end of the year for them to make up for lost time. As long as they are catching plenty of prey and the weather is good i.e. not too much rain or wind then Barn Owls will breed in any month of the year. A couple of years ago a pair had two dependant young on a farm near Saltcoats in January, so there is still a chance they could make up for lost time. We’re are just going to let them get on with it.

Monty Myerscough

Flying Machines By “ The Little Stint “

When Bleriot the channel flew
The people made a great to-do
They came in thousands just to stare
Who crossed from France to England’s shore,
A flight of 20 miles or more.
“ How great an aeroplane “ they said;
“ and what a noise the engine made! “
And how could Bleriot know that he
Would find his way across the sea,
Which none had ever flown before?
And so they wonder more and more,
Until at last their hats they raise
And cheer to their great hero’s praise.
Yet I, when called to make my flight,
Have slipped off in an Arctic night
And lightly flown o’er land and sea,



The only engine carrying me
My heart, no bigger than a shilling
Which for 12,000 miles is willing.
Less than 2 ounces is my weight,
No petrol can increase my freight;
No chart nor compass 'neath my eyes
To mark the track through trackless skies-
And still untiring to the verge
Of Australasian ocean's surge
From North Siberia's coast I fly,
Spanning the globe unerringly.
No cheering thousands when I land,
No startling posters in the Strand;
No wondering word, no praise is heard,
But then- I am only a bird.

This is submitted by Maurice Jones and is taken from Cowards, "Birds of the British Isles" It is a recitation by an 8 year old Ian Appleyard by and it looks at the wonder and great mystery of migration and the magic of the world of birds.

from The Land of the Loom
By GK Yeats FRPS

The Loons are nesting on an isle
Close to the shore at Thingvellir
Their nests half hidden among reeds
Low Birchen scrub and tangled sedge
On seeing us they have no fear

No one has ever done them wrong
Here is many a lovely thing
But surely nothing lovelier
Than this loon-haunted lake at dawn
Just waking to the call of Spring

Submitted by Dorothy Una Ratcliffe.

Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds – BSPB-UK

At the last meeting on the 23rd of June Maurice Jones brought up the predicament of the above society. They are having financial problems. There are no EU funds to support the everyday running of the society and a cash flow problem has arisen. They are seeking financial support to enable them to continue their work.

Their recent work has centred on the Burgas Lakes and the conservation of species that depend on it. They are also working on protecting the Egyptian Vulture, Red Breasted Geese, the Saker Falcon and Lesser White Fronted Geese.

It was discussed at the meeting and it was decided that the committee would look further into the matter and bring some thoughts to the Annual General Meeting in January.

If individual members would like to make a donation please contact: Neville Jones e-mail : nevcho1939@talktalk.net or tel 01270 877318 the UK representative of the BSPB.

British Birds.

Members may be familiar with *British Birds*, the monthly journal that features in depth peer reviewed articles alongside detailed news and information about birds recorded in the Western Palearctic. It also includes the annual reports of the British Birds Rarities Committee and the UK Rare Breeding Birds Panel. The journal is owned by a charitable trust with all profits going to conservation and research projects.

British Birds has a great trial offer available to members of Fylde Bird Club. You can get six issues for just £13 PLUS a free three-month trial of Rare Bird Alert.

For more information and to sign-up, go to www.britishbirds.co.uk/trial/B0415/, or phone 01424 755155 and quote Fylde Bird Club when ordering.

Sue Gregory

British birds, names-tales-myths.

A new self-published book, entitled **British birds names~tales~myths** by Geoff Green explores the intriguing world of the names of 231 British birds. The book examines the wide range and meaning of local bird names, the derivation and meaning of the vernacular English name and also their scientific name. This gives a fascinating insight into our long and intimate relationship with birds. Many myths, tales and lore are recounted establishing the characteristics we attribute to birds often linked to their names. Collective nouns are given providing another useful insight into the nature of birds.

Alongside this the book adds many interesting facts and figures ranging across a bird's breeding behaviour, migratory feats, feeding habits, song, physiology and detail of their often extraordinary senses to our treatment of birds. Notes are given of the relative increase and decrease in some bird's numbers.

Enjoy this book as a serendipity of the fascinating meanings of the diverse names given to British birds, intriguing information on their lives and the many tales about them, true and otherwise.

The book can be found on the Amazon Bookstore - search for 'British bird names' and you can obtain the book as an e-book or paperback. Alternatively contact Geoff Green at gdgreen@talktalk.net or 'phone 01404 813127 and he'll send you a paperback copy (£9.50 incl. postage).

Stephen Dunstan will review the book in the December newsletter.

Forthcoming Events

September 22nd. Birds and Mammals of Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. Howard Phillips.

Knowing the quality of Howards photos I am looking forward to this. No pressure Howard!

October 27th. Costa Rica. Paul Ellis. Not to be missed talk by an old Favourite.

November 24th. Foulshaw Moss and Ospreys. John Dunbavin.

I am looking forward to finding out more about Foulshaw Moss.

Business Update

Terns

Over 120 pairs of Common Terns nested and at the Dock. 7 pairs of Arctic Terns arrived and about 3 pairs nested but all failed A pair of Common Terns used a Bird Club nest tray at Conder Pool. 50 nest trays have been produced by St Georges School, Marton.

Threats

Despite solid local opposition and repeated planning refusals, the Government has approved the scheme for gas storage in caverns beneath the River Wyre at Stalmine.

Wyre Barrage is still being proposed.

Fracking is still a real threat with government threatening to over rule local decisions

WeBS Counter Needed

A counter is needed for the important Pilling Lane Ends section. Millie Mottram has counted this section for many years and is retiring from the WeBS at the end of this year. To do it you need to visit just before high tide, once a month on the scheduled Sunday and count all the waders, wildfowl and gulls. Millie will advise and train anyone willing to take it on. More than one person can cover it, either together or on alternate visits. You will need a scope.

Requests for Disturbance Records

All significant records are still required. Log them at <http://www.fyldebirdclub.org/coastal-and-esturine-disturbance.html>

Last WeBS recorded disturbance by Jet Skis at Bank End and Microlights over Arm Hill.