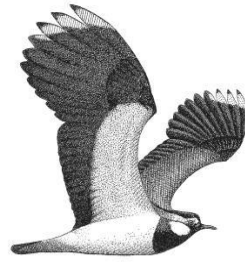


December Newsletter 2016

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**Fylde
Bird Club**
LANCASHIRE

Editor

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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



Winter is with us complete with dark nights and here, on Pilling Lane, with the chatting, gossiping sound of Pink Footed Geese and the haunting bubbling call of Curlew going too and from their roost on Preesall Sands and Fluke Hall. Isn't life wonderful.

The highlight of the season has surely been the Autumn influx of Yellow Browed Warblers appearing all over the Fylde.

In this Newsletter Ellen Pemberton reports on birds at Marton Mere, Stuart has an article on

the American Golden Plover and how to separate it from the European version and I write about those winter beauties, Woodcock, Snipe and Jack Snipe. Peter Guy has an article on the Desert Warbler.

You will notice a change in the Fylde sightings article. Hope you like it.

Paul Slade writes about his recent visit to Hungary and I will look at the Yellow Browed Warbler and the recent invasion.

Also March 2017 and the Fylde Bird Club annual photographic competition. The rules are attached. Sort out your entries and let me have them, as many as possible. I'd love to include more members and their favourite photos. Don't forget the Underexposed for members who have never won before. There will be prizes and fame!!

Marton Mere Report

July – September 2016

A Fox was seen on 1st July and a Curlew flew west on the 2nd. There were several sightings of Common Terns during July, with 2 being seen from the 4th up to the 18th and 4 on the 19th. A Peregrine flew north on the 5th, while on the 6th, a Sparrowhawk was observed attacking a Grey Heron! It is likely that a pair of Kestrels bred in or near the old barn, as on the 7th, there were 6 in the area, including 4 juveniles. A Red-legged Partridge was by the barn on the 8th and a Greenshank flew west on the 9th. On the 10th an Arctic Tern and a Curlew graced the reserve. A Barn Owl was present on the 11th and there was a butterfly-fest on the 12th, with Comma, Small Skipper and Gatekeeper. The 13th brought 17 Black-tailed Godwits and a Grasshopper Warbler was heard singing on the 14th and 17th. A Little Egret put in an appearance on the 16th, while a male Common Scoter visited on the 19th. A male Shelduck flew north on the 20th. On the 22nd there was a high count of 9 Stock Doves and following on from the belligerent Sparrowhawk on the 6th, a Swallow was seen chasing a Great Spotted Woodpecker. Unusually, a Bittern has been present at the reserve during the summer; the first sightings were on the 23rd and 27th July. A Goosander was seen on the 30th and again on 4th August.

Further sightings of the Bittern occurred in August, namely on the 2nd, 13th, 25th and 30th. On the 6th a Little Ringed Plover was present and on the 10th 2 Ravens flew over. A scarce bird in the Fylde, Garden Warbler, came to the Mere this month. Individuals were seen on the 14th and 17th, with 2 birds present on the 24th. On the 16th there were 5 Sand Martins and a Greenshank. The 18th was a busy day, with 400+ Swallows arriving in the evening, Green Sandpiper and Greenshank flying over and Ring-necked Parakeet and Weasel also being seen. From 21st August to the end of September, at least one Garganey was present, though sometimes elusive. At least 3 Tree Sparrows were present on the 24th, with a Peregrine and a Green Sandpiper on the 27th. The 28th saw another Ring-necked Parakeet and at least 10 Blackcaps, which included a male feeding a juvenile. A Spotted Flycatcher and a Wheatear were seen together on the 29th; other sightings that day included a Ruff, a Jay and a southbound Osprey.

Another Jay was seen on 1st September and a Wheatear flew over on the 5th. Grey Wagtails were seen flying over on the 6th and 7th and a Black-tailed Godwit was present on the 10th. On the 11th there was another sighting of the Bittern, while Peregrine, Redshank and a Fox were also seen. Another Garden Warbler was seen on the 14th and a Spotted Flycatcher and 2 Goosanders were seen on the 15th. There were further sightings of Peregrine and Wheatear on the 16th and 2 Ravens flew east on the 18th. On the 20th, some 450 Pink-footed Geese flew south, the first for this autumn, while a Jay flew north-east. 8 Pintail were observed flying west on the 21st and 2 Skylarks were in the south-east field on the 23rd. On the 29th there was a Comma butterfly and a Peregrine was seen again and on the 30th 200 more Pink-footed Geese flew south over Chain Lane.

Ellen Pemberton

Sightings, September – November 21st

Autumn brought the usual but nevertheless exciting range of migratory birds. A brief Red-throated Pipit in Fleetwood and a lingering American Golden Plover on the Lune Estuary were the pick of the rarities. I saw my first Short-eared Owl at Cocker's Dyke on October 3rd, three weeks earlier than last year and in the same place. A mini invasion of 7 Bearded Tits at Marton Mere certainly brightened up any Autumn day when they arrived on October 20th. Halloween brought a Hooded Crow to Cocker's Dyke!! And November 8th 18 Waxwings appeared briefly at Marton Mere. Can this be a taster for the winter ahead? November 19th, a Desert Wheatear was found on St. Annes beach, a beautiful end to Autumn.

I am sure that most will agree that the highlight of the autumn was the amazing number of that Asian Sprite, the Yellow-browed Warbler. It has a strong migratory instinct breeding in Siberia, Northern Asia and wintering in South East Asia. There is a small population West of the Urals which migrates through Europe. However, in recent years, the species has evolved a migratory strategy which involves thousands of birds migrating through Britain, presumably to winter in Western Europe.



The bird itself is a little gem. A leaf warbler, a little bigger than a Goldcrest, it has a moss green back, a prominent yellow eye stripe, 2 wing bars and a pure white underneath. Like many warblers it is a restless feeder constantly on the move. It is best located by its distinctive high pitched and penetrating **sweet** call. The call is reminiscent a Coat Tit but higher and more consistent. My first sighting was in Hong Kong where it was labelled an

Inornate Warbler and then at Spurn with a fall of Goldcrests.

This year the story started on September 23rd when 139 Yellow-browed Warblers were counted on Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire) funnelled there by a narrow band of North-easterly winds across the North Sea. We arrived on the 24th and the birds were spreading to Bempton and the ravines of Fyly. They seemed to be everywhere. From there they have spread south and west.



The first report on the Fylde was on October 3rd and every day till the last sighting on October 16th. There were a total of 22 sightings during that time. Numbers are always difficult to calculate, were the 22 sightings on the Fylde the result of a few supercharged individuals or are the numbers deflated as only birds seen and identified are counted. It is generally accepted that the number of actual birds passing through will be higher than the reported

sightings.

The Yellow-browed Warbler is not rare but it is uncommon enough to brighten up most birders' autumn and it is more of an East coast bird. They appear in ones or twos in most years on the Fylde, but are increasing year on year, as the autumn 2016 total illustrates.

Peter Rhind

Desert Wheatear 19th November 2016

At 12.00, two hours before High Water, fifteen of us set off from The Ribble Discovery Centre at Fairhaven Lake, on the monthly RSPB Guided Walk. The walk is just a leisurely stroll, lasting about two hours, along the promenade and around the Lake, to see the birds being moved inshore to roost by the rising tide.

During the walk, thunder and lightning were the order over Southport and Formby Point, but we had seen plenty of Oystercatchers, a few Black and Bar Tailed Godwits, Redshanks, Sanderlings, Grey Plovers and Knot, being pushed closer inshore as the tide came in. Way out over the mouth of the Estuary there had been some impressive flocks of Knot heading away towards Southport.

By the time we had arrived at the Beacon end of the Promenade, our number was down to half a dozen, the biting cold wind having taken its toll on several of our group who had decided to retreat to warmer places.

Those of us who had persevered with the cold wind were busy watching a flock of about 50 Linnets flying in and out of the saltmarsh grasses, when a brightly coloured bird, obviously a wheatear species from its actions, flight and posture, suddenly appeared below us on the beach. My first and only thought was for a male Desert Wheatear. A warm sandy coloured wheatear, with black on the face and cheeks extending down across the shoulder to black primaries and secondaries. The completely black tail feathers appeared clipped off in the centre, giving the tail a slightly forked appearance. White patches on the outer rump contrasting strongly with the black of the tail feathers.

Following first impressions, closer examination showed the black ear coverts, throat and wing feathers to have lighter fringing. Black secondaries had whitish edgings. Lesser coverts showed black with whitish edgings, as did greater coverts and primaries.

The bird was watched on the beach for a few minutes, before it was flushed by a walker and flew up into the dunes near the steps at the North end of the Promenade. The bird then dropped onto the path in front of us near the car park, but was flushed again by walkers and flew off in the direction of the United Utilities pumping station compound. Not seen again during our walk.

My previous experience of the species was a bird on Fleetwood Golf Course (Not sure of the year) which was seen by many observers and I was lucky enough to have the bird fly close around my feet as I walked across the Golf Course.

Thankfully, one of our Group, Brian Kille, managed to get some pics of the bird to confirm the initial ID (see attached image from Brian).

A very special Guided Walk, just a pity not everyone who started the walk could finish, thus missing out on a very special bird. Really pleased that the bird stayed around for a few more days to allow others to see it.

Desert Wheatear



Peter Guy

Hungary in Autumn: 31st October – 6th November 2016

There are not many places in the world where you can see both Red-breasted Goose and Lesser White-fronted Goose on a short birding break, but Hungary in early winter provides both. With this in mind I put together a trip with the help of Janos Olah of Sakertours (<http://www.sakertour.com/>) Janos came up with a suggested itinerary which involved staying at the Bibic Nature Lodge (<http://www.bibiclodge.com/>) for the first four nights, ideally situated for goose watching within the Hortobagy National Park. Hortobagy is an 800 km² park in eastern Hungary, it became the country's first national park in 1973 and is Hungary's largest protected area, and is also the largest semi-natural grassland in Europe.

Our last two nights would be at the Solyomvar Guest House (<http://www.solyomvar.hu/about-us/>) in the village of Komloska in the Zemplen Hills. Komlóska is a village in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County in north-eastern Hungary.

I booked our flights through Jet2 from Manchester to Budapest at about £180 each after bags and a seat were added on! Flights both ways were bang on time with very efficient check in and all our bags arrived in Hungary and back in Manchester without any problems.

Our team for the trip was myself, Kinta Beaver, Len Blacow, Barry Dyson, Paul Ellis, Bob Stinger, Tony Myerscough and Andrew Tweed a London based birding friend who met up with us at Budapest airport having flown with BA from Heathrow a couple of hours before us.

On arrival at Budapest airport we were met by our guide for the trip Tamas Zalai, who was an excellent birder, good company and tried really hard to make sure we saw everything possible during our short trip.

After a two hour drive we arrived at the Bibic Nature Lodge in the dark but could still hear lots of geese calling close by, we quickly dumped our bags in our very impressive rooms and wandered over to the lodge for a late meal washed down with a couple of local beers.



Bibic Nature Lodge



Bibic Watering Hole

After a very poor night's sleep listening to AT's snoring my alarm went off at 05.30, a quick peer out of our room door revealed a stunning backdrop of calling geese on the wetland only metres from our door, a clear bright sky looked promising for the day ahead. After a quick shower we all met up on the terrace for a scan through the geese before breakfast. Amongst the thousands of Russian White-fronts and Greylags we managed to find three stunning Red breasted Geese and two Lesser White-fronts. Other birds on or around the wetland included 200+ Common Cranes (more about these later) a massive, perched, distant Goshawk, Great white Egrets, Hooded Crows and a showy Syrian Woodpecker.



Red-breasted & Russian White-fronted Geese, Bibic Lodge

Leaving the lodge we headed out for the day to look around parts of the vast national park, a roadside stop revealed some great birds, Buzzards were everywhere, two massive White-tailed eagles, hundreds of Common Cranes scattered widely in small feeding flocks, Roe Deer were incredibly common, probably over 100 on our first day alone, two Great Grey Shrikes on roadside wires, a Black Redstart, several Crested Larks, at least two of each Hen and Marsh Harriers and several Little Owls. Our main aim in this area though was Great Bustard which we eventually saw in the heat haze, the day was quickly warming up by this time so our only chance of better views was a stomp across the grasslands, eventually we climbed up on some hay bales for a better look, unfortunately they were still a long way off but we managed to see about 18 males and a lone female. Walking back to the minibus it was warm enough for several Red Admirals and a Clouded Yellow butterfly to be on the wing, three or four quick dragonflies were probably Common darters but didn't hang around long enough for a decent look. Leaving

the bustard site we headed for a nearby area where Tamas told us a Long legged Buzzard was occasionally seen and sure enough there it was sat in its favourite tree before taking wing and giving fantastic views, thermaling over us. Leaving the buzzard we headed for Andahaze wetland for a fantastic packed lunch of spicy meatballs and sweetcorn dressing, followed by some delicious cakes and washed down with coffee and fruit juice. The pools here were stacked with birds, 10000+ White-fronts, 1000+ Greylags at least nine Red breasted Geese and a single Tundra Bean, the local White-tailed Eagles caused havoc every time they took off, scattering birds everywhere, we saw at least five here alone. Two overhead eagles were the highlight of this stop though as they turned out to be Eastern Imperials, an adult and a juvenile, high overhead but in stunning light. As the light was now beginning to fade we headed towards a regular Saker falcon site on some roadside pylons, sure enough two birds were sat there close to a nestbox which must have taken a serious head for heights to install, what a fantastic end to the day and a new bird for several of the group.



White Tailed Eagle



Eastern Imperial Eagle

Wednesday 2nd November: after a pre-breakfast look through the geese we headed off to the other side of Balmazujaros town to look at a long eared owl roost, what seemed like an unlikely site quickly revealed at least twenty six owls roosting in several trees,



Long Eared Owls

Moving on we headed for some more wetlands when Tamas received a call about a Saker falcon close to the road, after a short diversion we pulled up and scanned the pylons only to find a Peregrine but no Saker. Scanning around though we started picking up other birds, at least 5 Hen and 2 Marsh Harriers hunting close together was nice. A flock of lapwing were worth a look through nearby as a Sociable Plover had been present a couple of weeks before but alas no sign.

Our next stop was another huge wet area full of birds, 3 Bearded Tit showed very well close to the track. On the water over 3000 Mallard was an impressive sight with a single

Black necked Grebe the only other waterbird of note. A calling Black Woodpecker could not be pinned down but we did see Green and Great spotted Pecker's in the scope. Moving on then to a large Carp fishery/farm (not that the fish looked very appealing, thrashing about in thick muddy cloudy water, we joked about Carp being on the menu that evening). This site proved a little disappointing as most things were very distant out on the huge ponds, but we still managed some impressive birds, 3 White-tailed eagles, 200+ Caspian and 2 Yellow-legged Gulls, 40 Spotted Redshank, 5 Ruff, 86 Grey heron and a single Spoonbill. Looking around the surrounding trees Tamas picked out a distant perched eagle which he said looked good for Spotted Eagle, sure enough we drove about a mile closer and he was right, unfortunately it quickly took off so we only had brief views. Leaving the fishponds we headed for a roadside tower to watch the Cranes flying in to roost (Click link to view <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3q0IIUeITU> , what an amazing sight, calling flocks right overhead, streaming in, we estimated about 25000 flew by us. A roost count by the locals the following morning totalled 47000 which sounds impressive but is a fraction of the 130000 peak in September and early October.

Thursday 3rd November dawned clear and frosty, I had a quick look through the geese from our terrace before breakfast and managed to pick out an odd looking hybrid goose which had been around a couple of days earlier, Barnacle x White-front seemed the obvious conclusion, 6+ Red breasted Geese were far more appealing amongst at least 10000 White-fronts. A few Chaffinch were moving over amongst which Bob heard a Brambling and a small flock of Fieldfare passed the lodge with Redwing calling amongst them.

Leaving the lodge we headed for another new wetland area, parking up the first bird we saw was an obliging Great Grey Shrike on roadside wires. After a short walk down a dirt track the reeds opened up to reveal a large lake full of birds, thousands of Mallard and remarkably five species of grebe, single Red necked and Slavonian, several Little and Black necked and a pair of Great Crested with a couple of half grown young. Passerines were frustrating as it was now quite windy, several brief views of Bearded Tit and a calling Penduline Tit were the only birds of note. We quickly moved on as our next site involved catching a small train at 10am from one of the visitor centres, parking up we had about half an hour to spare so had a quick look around the windswept trees and reeds, a few Bearded Tits showed well by the car park but little else. Jumping on the train we trundled out amongst reedbeds and marshes past several viewing towers before Bob shouted 'Bittern' just in time as the train passed within 6 feet of it on the side of the waterway by the tracks, only Kinta was quick enough to get a picture before it flew in to the main reedbed.

Arriving at the end of the track we were told we had about 3 hours before our return journey, plenty of time to look from the boardwalks and hides. Again the lakes were full of birds, 2000+ Gadwall on one alone was an impressive sight, I never realised they could occur in such large numbers. Scanning around we managed to find 5 Ferruginous Ducks which was one of the target birds of the day and at least ten Pygmy Cormorants which as the name suggests are dwarfed by the regular Cormorants we are used to seeing. Entering one of the hides overlooking water there were large numbers of geese dropping in so we scanned through hoping to pick out a Lesser-white front or two, we were not disappointed as the flock contained at least four, though surprisingly difficult to pick out at

range. Five White-tailed Eagles sat at the water's edge on one of the small islands were clearly going to cause havoc at some point, it was not long before they did, geese and ducks in their thousands and smaller numbers of waders were a spectacular sight. Leaving the hide a White Pelican overhead was an unexpected bonus but a calling Penduline Tit at the train station again frustrated us, it would just not show. Boarding the train we set off back to the car park, amazingly the bittern was again at the water's edge by the track but seen too late to get the camera's out. We got off the train about 1km before the station to walk back, a good decision as Len and Bob found a Siberian Chiffchaff (a rarity in Hungary) and we picked out a family party of Lesser White-fronts with the geese, the best views of the trip. As the light began to fade the White Pelican re-appeared circling overhead, a nice end to a cracking day.



White Pelican



Penduline Tit

Our last evening at the Bibic Nature Lodge resulted in lot's of beer, wine and banter before Zoly got the palinka out, (local fire water), some seriously strong locally brewed spirits, the apple one was quickly polished off before the quince one went the same way, luckily by the time the plum one appeared most of us had sampled enough, except Bob who was on a mission to sabotage both Zoly and our early breakfast the following day!

Friday 4th November saw us bidding farewell to the Bibic and a rather bleary eyed Zoly, a great place to stay in a wonderful setting. I wish I had the space to write about the amazing project they have undertaken there for the geese and cranes. We decided to have another try for Penduline Tit back at the train line as it would be a new bird for Bob, eventually one showed really well down to a few feet as did several Bearded Tits.



Male Bearded Tit



Female Bearded Tit

Leaving the Hortobagy we drove to Debrecen City, a bit of a shock to the system after four days of peace and quiet! Quickly passing through the city we stopped in some woodland by the roadside quickly seeing Short Toed Treecreeper, several Marsh Tits, Long tailed Tits including a couple of white headed birds and a Middle spotted Woodpecker.



Middle spotted Woodpecker Short toed Treecreeper Eagle Owl (A. Tweed)

Next stop was Tokaj Hill in the Zemplen Hills which was virtually birdless but for a single Lesser spotted Woodpecker in trees near the summit by the ski lift. Our final destination was a quarry for Eagle Owl which showed briefly at dusk and allowed Tweedy his best photo of the trip!

Saturday 5th November: we met outside the hotel for a pre-breakfast walk around the village of Komloska, Hawfinch seemed to be the commonest bird with birds calling overhead and landing in trees on the hillside giving reasonable scope views, other birds seen included 2 Grey headed and 2 Great spotted Woodpeckers, several Ravens, Brambling, Jays, Siskin, small flocks of Chaffinch and Fieldfare. After breakfast we drove a short distance to the village of Korephula and walked up hill through some fantastic looking woodland, unfortunately I held back just long enough to miss a Wild Boar crossing the track ahead of the group, we continued uphill searching for White backed Woodpecker which eventually gave itself up high in the tree tops. We also saw Black Woodpecker, lots of Hawfinch, Nuthatch, Jays and Marsh Tits. Leaving here Tamas received a phone call telling him of an Eagle Owl roosting in a quarry, so given the poor views the previous evening we headed for Bodrogheresztur and met up with the observer who led us up to the quarry and duly showed us the roosting bird, unfortunately they are incredibly wary so it soon flew and landed out of sight, even though we were a good 150 metres away. During our evening meal the previous night, a couple on the next table told Tamas about an owl they had seen and photographed on a telegraph pole, at about 4pm on both of the previous two days. From the photo, it was clearly a Ural Owl, which was high on our wanted list for this trip. 15.45 pm saw us sat nervously in the van silently watching the spot, the minutes ticked to 4.05 when Tamas suddenly shouted 'it's there' and sure enough it was sat on a fence post right next to the road, it appeared to be using the clearing for hunting and remained on view until we could no longer see it in the dark and rain, a great end to the day, all we could do was going celebrate in the local pub, the 'Mushroom Bar'.



The Ural Owl

Sunday 6th November was our final day and it was pouring down so leaving Komloska we called briefly at the village of Torcal where a Spanish ringed White Stork stood motionless looking totally drenched. A perched Merlin was the only bird on the long drive towards the airport before stopping off at Golem Lake where 4 Black throated Divers and a single Little Gull were the only birds of note in the driving rain. Our final stop meant a drive through the city of Budapest, passing some amazing looking buildings and driving over a bridge over the Danube before stopping at Budaors, a known site for Rock Bunting on the outskirts of the city. Leaving the van for a short walk quickly produced 5 or 6 of the striking looking birds feeding in the grass and low bushes on the hillside, a few Long tailed Tits again including a couple of white headed birds which would turn out to be the last birds seen on the trip.



The 'Mushroom' Bar in Komloska

I think a thoroughly enjoyable trip was had by all, good accommodation, good food, beer and wine, great guide. If you like geese then this is an ideal trip for you, even just doing. Hortobagy for a few days with a few bottles of the local 'Figula' wine would tempt me back sometime.

Paul Slade

Confusion Species

These 3 birds are real masters in the art of camouflage. Both Woodcock and Snipe are resident breeders NOT ON THE FYLDE but the Jack Snipe is a passage migrant and winter visitor. They are easy to separate both by plumage and by behaviour as long as you can see the birds!!! The Woodcock in particular is an expert at the game of hide and seek.

Snipe (aka - little goat of the frost, Ireland)

The Snipe is the most easily found of the three species. It spends daylight in vegetation



that most matches its plumage making a feeding Snipe hard to see. Heaven for this bird is muddy ground just awaiting its probing bill as it seeks out worms deep in the mud. When disturbed it freezes or flies. When seen in the open the first thing to get attention is the over long straight bill. The cryptic plumage is a mottled brown with strong stripes along the head. The sides are barred and it is pale underneath. In good light it is a really beautiful, all be it, understated bird.

In spring it displays from a prominent perch with a call that can be transcribed as “chip ah,chi ah”. Its most exciting display is when it towers above the ground then dives making a noise that vibrates and trembles in the air. This drumming noise is made by the bird spreading its two outer feathers as it dives.

When flushed it zig zags high into the air making a harsh “scaap” noise as it disappears into the distance or drops to cover again.



In winter I usually see them as the tide covers the salt marsh at Cocker’s Dyke and they rise up in wisps with in excess of 50 birds sometimes.

Jack Snipe (aka-Half Snipe)

The “Titch” Snipe is about two thirds the size of its big brother with a proportionally



shorter bill. It is a common Winter visitor although not always easy to see. The camouflage is perfect. Its back is a range of browns from dark through to pale and yellow with prominent yellow braces and the addition of green and purple tinges, a real habitat matching collage. Not for nothing does Anthony McGeehan refer to it as the Jewel Snipe. The head is strongly marked but lacks the pale crown stripe having a dark crown instead. It is pale underneath with dark streaking on the flanks unlike the barring of the Snipe.

When on the ground it sits tight trusting to its camouflage even to the point of allegedly being trodden on. When flushed it rises silently, flies straight and low before dropping into cover again and defying rediscovery. In flight the short bill, blunt rounded wings and shape mark it out as a game bird. Its natural habitat is wet and marshy fresh water with longish grass and small stretches of clear water.

Its most defining characteristic is the bounce, as if on springs, when feeding. It is a bizarre sight as it feeds constantly bouncing. I have read that the movement aids camouflage but I can't see that!!

Woodcock (aka-Muckle Snippeck, Shetland)

The third of this triumvirate of these beautifully camouflaged birds is the Woodcock. This



is a woodland bird and its plumage matches the leafy woodland floor perfectly. It lays there all day eyes closed and resembling a hump of leaves. At dusk it flies to forage on open pastures. When flushed it flies on broad rounded wings jinking away between the trees showing a rusty-brown rump and tail. It is a heavier, more solid bird than the Snipe. The best chance of seeing a Woodcock in flight is at dusk in spring at a "roding" site. The bird displays, flying low on rapidly flickering wings showing a fat

bodied long beaked outline. The beak is held pointing downwards. In flight it makes a number short snoring noises followed by an explosive sneeze. The eyes are set high on the head which means it has 360 degrees vision, it really can see behind. The head shows transverse dark stripes.

When disturbed at the nest it has been observed evacuating the young by carrying them off in the beak or clasped in the feet.



The Woodcock is another of the birds much favoured as a food but it has another much sought after body part. This is the pin-feather, the small plume at the base of the leading primary on each wing. It is so fine it was reputedly used for the fine line on the side of the Rolls Royce and on expensive bikes. They were also used as tiny painting brushes for painting miniatures on ivory and tiny model soldiers. It was also much prized by watercolourists as an implement fine enough to paint in minute details on birds.

Whilst on Flamborough Head last year there had been an influx of migratory Woodcock. We flushed 5 whilst walking round the headland. The attached photo shows one we did not flush. It does show how perfect the camouflage is. Just needs to work on the correct background to hide in!!!

Peter Rhind

Stuart Gibson

Stuart Gibson sadly passed away on 18th October aged just 63 after a long fight with illness.

Many members will not have known Stuart but he was one of the founding members of Fylde Bird Club and was in fact our first secretary back in 1982.

I first met him in the early 1980's at Marton Mere where many early Fylde birding friendship's were formed.

Although few of you will have known him, many of you will have seen him running for many years between his home at Highfurlong and along Garstang Road to Poulton.

I always had a little car envy with Stuart when he turned up birding in his Olympic blue mark one Ford Escort RS2000, a car that would be worth some serious money nowadays ! That envy was shortlived though when he changed to an infamous 'Alfasud' especially when one of the wheels fell off it sat at the Boundary Park traffic lights (I am sure Stuart would not mind me telling that tale, and it means I can sit here writing about his sad passing with a smile)

Stuart also enjoyed a pint and I would bump in to him occasionally in the Thatched House in Poulton, I will certainly have one for him next time I am in there.

Paul Slade



Stuart Gibson (with white hat) Alan Hinchliffe, Barry Dyson, Phil Slade, Frank Bird and Len Blacow on an inter-island boat on Isles of Scilly 1980s

Paul Slade

Jim Sheldon

I got to know Jim first at the RSPB Local Branch Meetings and Outings and then at the Fylde Bird Club. Whenever we met he was always so friendly and pleased to chat about where we had been and the birds we had seen.

I will remember Jim as the member who found the shore lark at Fleetwood – the most photographed shore lark there has ever been. It seemed like Jim, to be always there, but eventually had to depart.

He didn't always strike it lucky though. I met him on a circular around Cockersands and all he had recorded that morning was a robin.

I asked him once did he go out birding every day. Yes he said except when it's pouring then I stay in and clean "th'ouse".

Only this June, my wife and I planned a trip to Norfolk and asked Jim where to stay, to which he recommended Briarfields. On the last evening of our stay we came down to dinner to find Jim and Val tucking in to a huge evening meal. "Have you seen the Great Knott?" he enquired. Next morning at 7 a.m. I was on the reserve but the Great Knott had flown. That sums Jim up. He knew where to be and the right time to be there.

Jim was a great chap and we will all miss his cheery face at Bird Club Meetings and wherever we might meet up when out birding.

Howard Phillips

Fylde Bird Club Annual Photographic Competition 28th March 2017

Each year the Fylde Bird Club holds a photographic competition. All members who paid their subscriptions for 2016 are invited to enter and may submit up to **TWO** photographs for each category:

- **Fylde**
- **British Isles** (does **NOT** include photographs taken in Fylde)
- **World** (does **NOT** include photographs taken in Fylde and British Isles)
- ***Underexposed** (person entering has not won before in a previous competition; photographs must be taken in the Fylde)

Digital photographs taken in the calendar year prior to the competition are acceptable. All entries to be submitted to Peter Rhind (by e-mail or by flash drive). It will help Peter enormously if all entries could reach him by 20th March. If you have any queries please contact Peter: Tel. 01253 812495

E-mail: rhind1003@btinternet.com

Competition rules

- Only **TWO** images **per category** per photographer
- All photographs must be taken during **2016**
- **No** photographs taken at the **nest**
- **No** photographs of **captive** or **trapped** birds
- Please submit **digital photographs** only; slides/hard copies/prints will not be accepted (but may be submitted as scanned images).
- Only photographers who have taken the top five photographs in each class (as voted by members) will be asked to elaborate on their entries (e.g. where the photograph was taken, type of equipment used etc).
- **Fylde, British Isles** and **World** categories are open to **ALL** members.
- **'Underexposed'** category:
 - **Optional** category that is only open to entrants who have **never won before** in any category (Fylde, British Isles or World).
 - Only photographs taken in the **Fylde** are eligible
 - The **same photographs** can also be **submitted** in the **Fylde** category

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

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Zeiss Conquest HD 8x32 Binoculars,

in excellent condition, with padded case, neck strap, rainguard, objective lens covers and original box £350



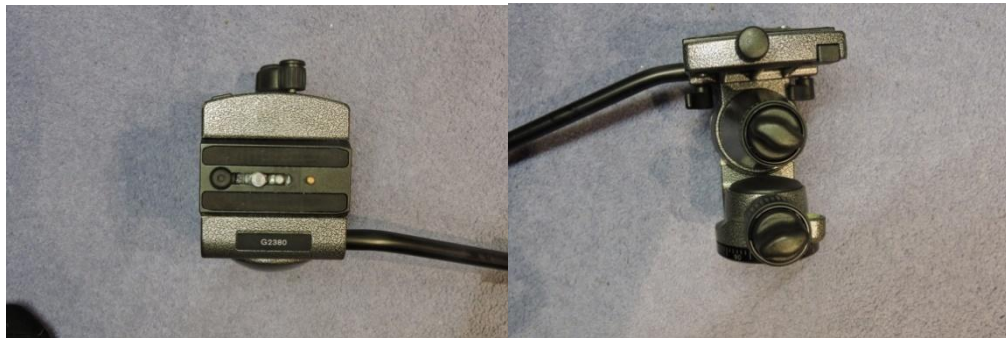
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Identifying American Golden Plovers

Following the arrival of an American Golden Plover at Cockersand on 28th September 2016, Peter Rhind asked me to provide a few pointers and tips for picking out an American Golden Plover (hereafter AGP) amongst the European Golden Plover (hereafter EGP) flocks which frequent the Fylde coast. Below I have annotated photographs which can be used as an identification guide. All birds were photographed on the Fylde.

Juvenile plumage

Smooth grey underparts, lacking contrast between dark breast and white belly of EGP. Underpart markings usually coarser in EGP.

Obvious white supercilium behind eye (usually less prominent in EGP).

Usually darker, more contrasting crown than EGP.

Long primary projection beyond tertails (shorter in EGP)

Toes often project beyond tail in flight (no projection in EGP)

Long, spindly legs (shorter in EGP)

Dark underwings (obviously white underwing in EGP).

Usually grey plumage, less golden and yellow than EGP. Beware of Grey Plover; smaller individuals can cause confusion when views are suboptimal, but Grey Plovers' heavy bill, thick, sturdy legs, heavily notched and patterned upperparts and, of course, the diagnostic black axillaries should give the game away.

AGP (top) with EGP (Gareth Hughes)

EGP usually larger than AGP

White supercilium (most prominent behind eye) contrasts with dark crown.

Less boldly marked head pattern in EGP

AGP (right) with EGP (Gareth Hughes)

Dusky flanks (usually paler in EGP).

White underwing in EGP

Adult breeding plumage



(Chris Batty)

Separating American Golden Plovers and Eurasian Golden Plovers in summer plumage is relatively straightforward. The real problem can be distinguishing American Golden Plovers from the even rarer Pacific Golden Plover. For the above bird (which was present on the Wyre Estuary in July 2011) the following features can be used to confirm the bird is an American, and not a Pacific Golden Plover.

- long primary projection beyond tertials, the primary tips project well beyond the tail tip and the tail projects beyond the end of the tertials; Pacific Golden Plovers tend to have longer tertials, resulting in the tertials falling almost level with the tail tip and a reduced primary projection beyond the tertials.
- entirely black flanks; usually black and white 'chequered' appearance on Pacific Golden Plover.
- underparts almost entirely black, with just a few scattered white feathers on undertail coverts and rear flanks; the undertail coverts are whiter in most Pacific Golden Plovers.
- relatively slight bill compared to many Pacific Golden Plovers.
- most of scapulars are black on visible portion of feather bases, with white or golden tips, creating impression of darker upperparts than in many Pacific Golden Plovers.



Birds moulting out of summer plumage will naturally have less black on their underparts than a full summer adult, but many of the other structural and plumage features are still relevant. American Golden Plovers tend to retain summer plumage until later in the season than EGP, so from early autumn, when most EGP have moulted their black underpart feathers, it is worth taking a close look at any birds still in mainly summer plumage.

Stuart Piner

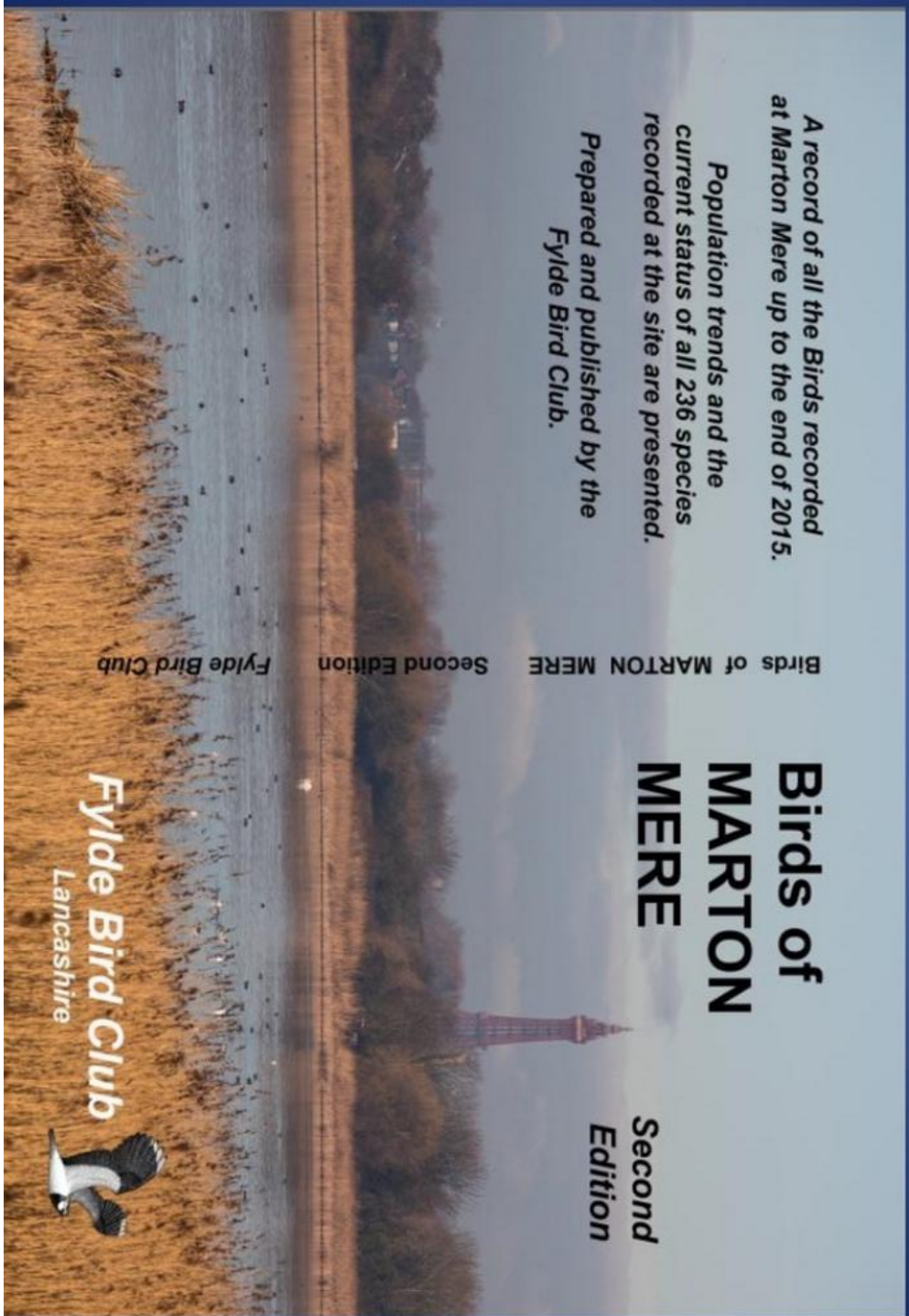


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