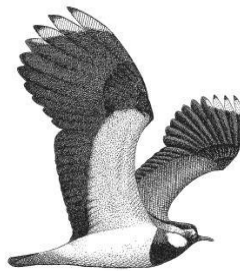


June Newsletter 2016

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**Fylde
Bird Club
LANCASHIRE**

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Welcome to another British Summer. The first migrants will be well established and my special spring bird, the Wheatear, will now be on its territory.

In this issue Ellen Pemberton catches up on the birds seen at Marton Mere and Stuart Piner on any unusual sightings on the Fylde.

John Jenkins writes about his first visit to the island of Mull and I attempt to help separate Reed Bed Warblers i.e. Cetti's, Sedge, Reed and Grasshopper Warblers.

Also included are the results of the 2016 Photographic Competition, thanks and congratulations to all who entered.

There is information on the protest meeting in support of the Hen Harriers for those who wish to attend.

Finally, the new issue of "The Birds of Marton Mere" is now available. The cost is £7 and they will be available at the Bird Club meetings. Postal deliveries are £8.50. See page 12 for details on how to order your copy. The book includes all birds seen at the Mere up to the end of 2015 and is worth every penny.

Results of the Fylde Bird Club Photographic Competition 2016

The Fylde



1st Jackie Morton. Common Tern



2nd Mike Foy. Red Throated Diver

Equal 3rd Howard Phillips (Cuckoo), Paul Ellis (Dotterel), Jackie Morton (Kestrel) and Barry Dyson (Turnstone).

UK



1st Howard Phillips. Red Kite



2nd Mike Foy. Greenshank



3rd Jackie Morton. Puffins

World



1st Paul Ellis. Grey Phalarope



Equal 2nd Barry Dyson. Green Heron



Equal 2nd Kinta Beaver. Little Auks

The Under Exposed



1st. Barry Dyson

Tree Pipit



2nd. Mike Foy

Red Throated Diver



3rd. Paul Noblet

Barn Owl

Thanks to all the members who entered and made the competition so enjoyable and **light hearted**. It is made so by more and more entries so get ready for next year.

Peter Rhind

Marton Mere Report

January-March 2016

The first quarter of 2016 has seen many of the usual visitors and some less familiar ones. Jack Snipe were present on 1st, 3rd and 9th January, with 7 Tree Sparrows at Mere View on the 1st. At dusk on the 2nd a Little Owl and 2 Woodcocks were present; 82 Tufted Ducks, 6 Cetti's Warblers and 250 Teal were also recorded. On the 4th there were 7 Cetti's Warblers and 6 Grey Herons. A Kingfisher and a Chiffchaff were seen on the 5th. Wigeon numbers peaked at 175 on the 6th, while there was a count of 400 Teal on the 7th. A Peregrine was present on several dates between 9th January and 22nd February, with counts of 34 and 14 Snipe on 9th and 10th January respectively. On the 15th there were 97 Tufted Ducks and on the 17th 39 Gadwall were counted. A Treecreeper was also present on the latter date. On the 19th there was a Little Owl, a Woodcock and a Barn Owl. The latter was present on several dates in February, with 2 over Lawsons Wetland on 11th March. 200 Rooks were seen on the 20th. Long-eared Owls were present throughout the period, with 4 recorded on 23rd January. 23 Snipe and 8 Pintail also flew over on that date and a female Siskin was on the reserve. A Mediterranean Gull and a Lesser Redpoll were seen on the 24th and 25th respectively. There was a count of 90 Common Gulls on 29th January and 11 Great Tits on the feeders on the 30th. On the 31st, there were 400 Teal and a Little Gull, also a Bearded Tit was heard in the north-west corner; it was reported on several dates in February and March but has proved elusive.

On 1st February a Little Gull and 2 Siskins were present, while 30 Black-tailed Godwits flew west. The following day there were 9 Chaffinches and a Treecreeper, with sightings of Woodcock on the 3rd, 4th and 15th. The returning Iceland Gull made its first visit of the year on 3rd February and at the time of writing was last seen on 28th March. On 5th February 75 Black-tailed Godwits flew south and there were further sightings of Mediterranean Gull on the 6th, 7th and 13th. 175 Lapwings flew south on the 9th and on the 13th 2 Siskins and a Bittern were seen. Bittern sightings continued to 19th March, with 2 seen on 14th February. A Goosander was also present on the latter date. On the 15th a Chiffchaff was present, with numbers of Water Rail and Stock Dove peaking at 7 and 12 respectively. 6 Siskins and 9 Goldeneyes were seen on the 17th and a Goldcrest was present on the 21st. 2000 Skylarks were observed on the 22nd and a Jay was present on the 23rd. There was a rare visitor to the reserve from the 24th to the 26th, in the form of a Tawny Owl. A count of 7 Water Rails was also observed on the former date. 2 Shelduck and 2 Curlew were present on the 29th.

On 5th March there was a sighting of a Todd's or Lesser Canada Goose flying west. The following day there were counts of 300 Lapwings and 150 Golden Plovers over Gipsy Hole Wood, while a Stoat was seen from the Bird Club Hide. There were 3 Pintail present on the 9th and 10 Goldeneyes on the 10th. A Skylark was heard singing on the 11th, with 43 Black-tailed Godwits and 31 Whooper Swans flying over. 11 Stock Doves were also seen on this date. A Black-necked Grebe arrived on the 12th, staying into the 13th but was not

seen again until the 27th; it remained until the 28th. The 13th was a sunny and very busy day – there were 10 Cetti's Warblers, 3 Skylarks and 2 groups of 3 Curlew on the reserve. Birds flying over included 2000 Pink-footed Geese, 20 Whooper Swans and 4 Siskins. That morning I observed a large bat flying over the trees near the Southwest Planting Hide; not being a bat expert I posted a tweet to the effect of “Any suggestions what species?” to which a reply came back that it was probably a Noctule. There were once again sightings of Skylarks, 3 on the 19th and 2 on the 21st. A pair of Grey Wagtails were also present on the latter date. On the 22nd 60 Fieldfares were seen, while on Good Friday there was the bad news of a Mink running in front of the Bird Club Hide. Rain on Easter Sunday didn't dampen the spirit of summer, in the form of 2 Sand Martins and a Swallow. Another summer migrant was recorded on 29th (2 Wheatears), while 2 Goosanders graced the reserve on the 30th. 8 Meadow Pipits and 9 Cetti's Warblers were observed on the 31st.

Ellen Pemberton

Sightings February – April 2016

The headline rarity during a quiet late winter and early spring period was a Bearded Tit at Marton Mere; having originally been located on 31st January, it lingered into March, but was encountered infrequently during its stay at the site. During February a Bean Goose in Cockerham, Black Redstart at Starr Gate and Blue Fulmar at Cockersand were the pick of the sightings, whilst an Iceland Gull lingered at Marton Mere into March. A Black-necked Grebe visited Marton Mere in March and a Siberian Chiffchaff at Glasson, Water Pipits on the Wyre Estuary (2) and Conder Green and Ring Ouzel at Marton Mere were the best April could offer. Seawatching off Blackpool produced records of Long-tailed Duck, Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver and Black Guillemot.

The Fleetwood area was typically well watched, and sightings included Glaucous and Iceland Gulls, Pomarine Skua, Hooded Crow, Ring Ouzel, Black-throated Diver, Black Guillemots, Water Pipit, Velvet Scoter, Pied Flycatcher and Snow Bunting.

Stuart Piner

Confusion Species - Reed Bed Dwellers



Sedge Warblers, Reed Warblers, Cetti's Warblers and Grasshopper Warblers all favour reed beds or damp tangled environments. On the Fylde, Marton Mere is the best place to see or hear all four.

Cetti's Warbler

I can still remember the first time I encountered a Cetti's. We were in Nerja, Southern Spain, heading for a Paella and an ice cold beer by the beach. Our walk down was interrupted by an explosion of bird song and then a small brown bird flew across the path, perched in full view and repeated this amazingly loud song. This still remains the best view I have ever had of this

visually elusive bird. Guide books tell you about the call but when you hear it, it truly is remarkable, a wren on steroids?

It is a robust Warbler with a beautiful chestnut brown back and a pale grey breast. Its tail is rounded and often held cocked like a Wren. It has short, rounded wings. A pale supercilium, dark eye stripe and dark lores complete the appearance. Some guidebooks describe it as nondescript but when seen well I think it is a beautiful bird, all be it in an understated way. It used to be a rare find in Britain but now if you walk round Marton Mere you would be unlucky not to hear its song, seeing it is another matter.

PS. The Paella and ice cold beer were perfect as well.

Photo. Phil Tomkinson

Sedge Warbler

Again, the song is distinctive. It is found in tangled bushy vegetation and near water. From its arrival in mid April it sings its heart out, from deep cover, on branches in the open or clinging to reeds like a circus performer.



It is the most visible of these 4 warblers. They are inquisitive little birds and will climb up the reed stems to investigate intruders on their patch. They are also to be seen making brief flights then fluttering down singing away. The song is a scratchy, jazzy jumble of notes mixed with random notes delivered from the perch or in the tumbling flights. I have heard it described as syncopated whilst the Reed Warbler song is rhythmic. As a non musician I struggle with that!!!

To look at it has a dark crown with paler striations and a creamy supercilium visible from miles away. There is a dark line through the eye. The back is dark streaked but in some lights can appear just dark brown, the rump is a warm yellowy/cinnamon brown and the underparts are cream or tan depending on the light. The throat of adults is plain and pale although juveniles and Autumn birds may show faint streaking. Its appearance is completed with a bright orange gape shown as it sings.

Photo – Jackie Moreton

Reed Warbler



The Reed Warbler is one of the main soundtracks of Spring and Summer reed beds. They are tied to reeds for breeding as their nest is a deep woven cup suspended over water to provide maximum security. The song, which is the best way of finding and identifying this unobtrusive bird, is a scratchy series of phrases and notes, some grating and nasal delivered in a monotonous and grumpy voice. More rhythmic but lacking the variation of the Sedge Warbler. Reed Warblers seldom sing in the open and never perform song flights. The song is normally delivered whilst clinging onto a reed stem.

When seen, Reed Warblers are a warm buff brown above and pale buff underneath with a rusty toned rump and dark legs. It has a pale eye ring and a short indistinct supercilium. Its most distinguishing characteristic is its shape. A long thin bill, flat elongated head and a narrow tail give it the appearance of a bobbin or reel as it moves quietly through the reeds.

Photo – Paul Slade

Grasshopper Warbler



I have a problem with Grasshopper Warblers. At my advanced years!!! The song is out of my hearing range. I can't enjoy the song which is an insect like dry reeling sound which may go on for minutes at a time. Neither can I take pleasure, nor become frustrated trying to locate the bird as it turns its head whilst singing so that, like a ventriloquist, the direction of the voice changes. Such pleasures are denied me. It is however strange to watch it sing silently!! Singing birds perch low and usually from deep cover but

sometimes in the open and can be quite approachable. When disturbed they creep away mouse-like back into deep cover.

The upperparts are olive brown with dark brown streaks arranged in lines down the back. The underparts are a yellowish/dirty brown colour. There is quite often a band of faint streaks on the upper breast. When flushed it will fly a short distance showing a distinctly rounded tail before it vanishes into the undergrowth. Streaks on the under tail and flanks and a very faint supercilium complete its appearance. Sometimes described as a grey brown bird with no real distinguishing features when seen well it is anything but.

Photo – Paul Slade

All 4 of these Warblers are both best found and separated by song, all can be found around Marton Mere and the way they move and behave are the easiest ways of identifying them. Then just enjoy their understated beauty.

Peter Rhind

A Typical Scotch-Mist Day

April 2013. Leaving our caravan at Resipole campsite on the mainland of Ardnamurchan near Fort William in North West of Scotland on a damp dull morning (three out of three so far) to cross by ferry from Lochaline to



Fishnish on the Isle of Mull, a short crossing of 2.25 miles. After landing we headed west to a small hamlet called Knock, from here we travelled west along the edge of Loch na Keal. After about 8 miles just before the road turns further inland away from the loch, a rather large flying object coming towards us darkened our panoramic sunroof. Stopping on the narrow road for a few seconds we were overjoyed in the murky gloom to

discover it was a White Tailed Sea Eagle - which is what we hoped to see but didn't think it would be likely. Turning round a little further along the road we headed back along the Loch looking to find a small area off the road to park up for lunch. Sitting under the tailgate wrapped up in woollies out of the drizzle I looked around in the murk and spotted a strange object about 200 feet to the side of us on the hillside. Grabbing my binoculars I was amazed to see a WTSE sitting motionless. Immediately I set up tripod and scope - what a magnificent sight! Countless digiscoped pictures later I began to wonder if it was a stuffed bird! it wasn't long before a car stopped and the driver got out and enquired "have you spotted one?" to which we replied yes. He turned out to be a regular visitor to the area and was pleased to look



through the scope at it. He then told us we had parked near a Golden Eagle nest high up on the craggy cliff edge. Sure enough after a little while 3 goldies started to circle around the ledge. The weather at this time was beginning to improve a little i.e. it stopped raining.



I tried a few photographs with my compact camera, catching a raven diving at one of the eagles. A couple of further cars stopped on seeing the scopes set up and each time the adults were thrilled to see the WTSE. Then a convoy of three cars arrived with at least 6 adults and several children, all eager to have a look through the scope at what we could see. With hindsight we could have

raised our ferry fare charging for views through our scope. Still the eagle sat motionless and as we were lifting the children up to the eyepiece, Cor! Wow! Brill! was heard from both children and adults. I have no idea how long they stayed but it was quite an exciting time. Just before leaving, one of the mothers came back to us and handed us a torn piece off a cereal box with a child's drawing of the eagle and a thank you note - hopefully we have set them birding for life.



Eventually the eagle got bored and took to the skies back up the loch. We set off soon after and shortly we were driving alongside it trying to take even more pictures. After a short time we headed back to Knock to take a stroll round Loch Ba, the only birds of note here were two Slavonian Grebes on a silky smooth and calm water. On the following short journey back to the ferry we stopped briefly to spot another Golden Eagle a Marsh Harrier and a stoat at the ferry terminal. As you will no doubt gather it was anything but -

A Typical Scotch-Mist Day!

Many thanks to Pete & Sue Rhind for suggesting the route

John Jenkins



Harry Andrew

Harry Andrew sadly passed away in Blackpool Victoria Hospital on 25th March 2016, aged 90. Harry was one of the original founding members of the Fylde Bird Club back in 1982 and continued to attend club meetings for many years before failing health slowed him down somewhat. I first met Harry in the late 1970's and spent many hours wandering around Marton Mere with him over the next few years or so. From memory, my first 'twitch' out of the Fylde was with Harry (along with my dad, Len Blacow and Maurice Jones) for a Cattle Egret at Llanfairfechan.

It was a pleasure to have known Harry and his encouragement during my early birding years helped me hugely, he was always extremely friendly and I never remember him having a bad word for anyone. Harry was a true gentleman and will be sadly missed by all who knew him, I only regret not seeing him more often in his later years.

Paul Slade

Blackpool Evening Gazette 1991



WATCH THIS SPACE . . . some of the birdwatchers who flocked to Marton Mere from all over the country at the weekend.

Twitchers flock to strike gold

By KEN PRICE

IT seemed like the California Gold Rush. As I arrived in Lawson Road, I did not have to be Sherlock Holmes to deduct something special was happening.

Hordes of people, binoculars around their necks and many lugging telescopes and tripods, made their way purposefully across the snow-covered open space towards Marton Mere.

The bush telegraph, as it always does on these occasions, had spread the word quickly that Marton Mere had a special visitor — an American bittern.

Waters

On we trudged along snow-packed paths. Like those prospectors converging on the Californian goldfields 140 years ago, we were, in our own way, hoping for a virtual once-in-a-lifetime "strike".

At the stile into the nature reserve area, I was told: "Just follow the crowd!"

I followed the crowd. To my right, the broad waters of the mere sported gulls and waterfowl that help make it a magnet to bird watchers and an official site of special scientific interest.

But today, though attracting plenty of interest, they were temporarily ignored in favour of the special visitor.

Now we did not have to look hard to realise where that celebrated bittern was. Two crowds of watchers beheld the transatlantic bittern, a brown bird, about two feet tall, its colours a superb camouflage against the sides of the ditch.

Everyone was good na-



The American bittern



Tony Myerscough (left), of Salmesbury Avenue, Bispham, and Harry Andrew, of Exchange Street, Blackpool, join the search.



Bar Tailed Godwit

I was interested to read Ian Walkers account of the summer plumage Bar Tailed Godwit at Lytham on the 16th January 2016 in the March newsletter. I saw such a bird with 2000 in Winter plumage on the 20th November 1983, 18th December 1983 with 2800 Winter birds, 19th February 1984 with 2000 Winter birds- all on St Annes North Beach. Also one off South Prom Blackpool, 13th February 1988 and at Marshside 10th February 1997. Finally one at Cockersands, River Lune on 20th February 1988.

Could this have involved just one bird?

Regards

Maurice Jones

Hen Harrier Day Peaceful Protest Sunday 7 August 2016 Dunsop Bridge in the Forest of Bowland



This year's Hen Harrier Day, organised for a third consecutive year by the North West Raptor Group, is being held on the green in the village of Dunsop Bridge in the Forest of Bowland on **SUNDAY 7th** August beginning at 10.30. This years event will culminate in a visit to grouse butts on a nearby grouse moor located on public access land where we will sit together around the butts to hold a silent memorial for the continued loss of England's Hen Harriers on moorland where red grouse are shot for sport.

Forthcoming Meetings

- June 28th The Marton Mere Project Annie Heslop
Where the project is now and the future plans.
- July 21st The South Atlantic Paul Ellis
It should be a fascinating look at birds of the area.
- Aug 23rd Wild Flowers in Lancashire John Ball
An interesting departure from the norm. I for one am really looking forward to it.

Car Stickers

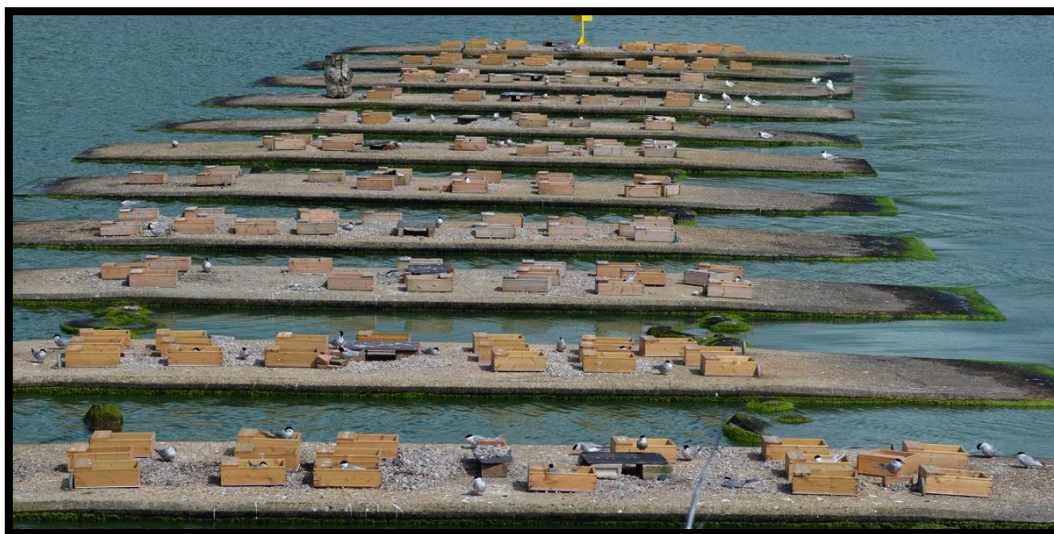
We have a new batch of Fylde Bird Club car stickers available. Free to members. Collect at a Bird Club meeting or send me an e-mail and I will post one out to you.

kinta.beaver@btinternet.com

Business/News Update

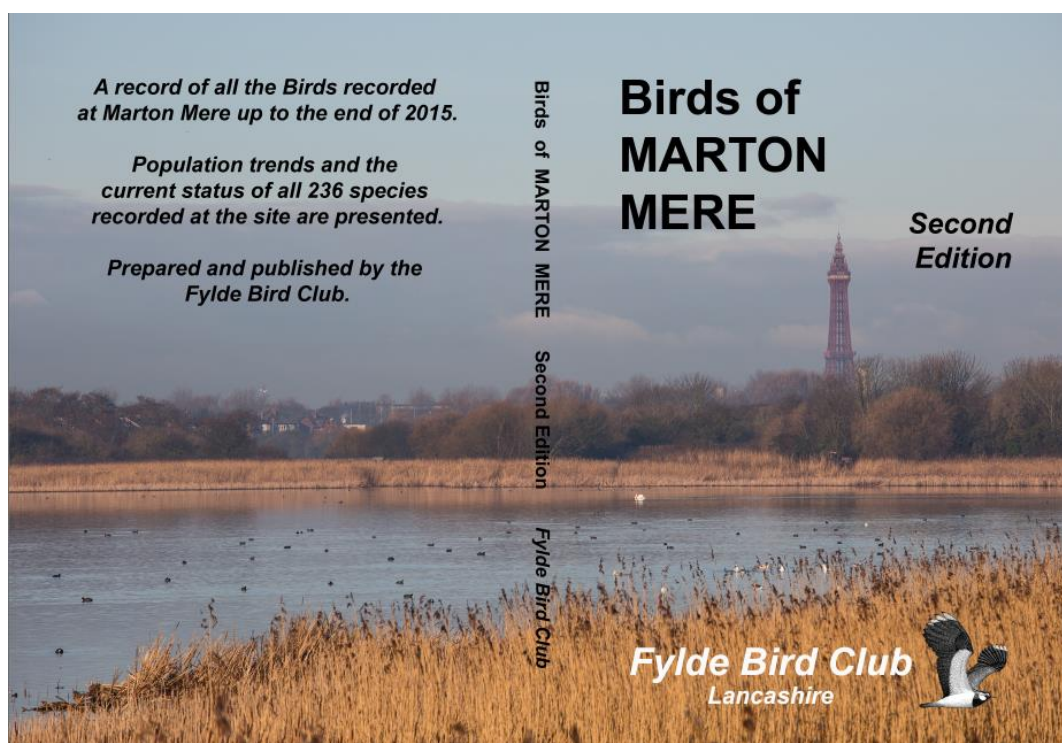
Common Terns at Preston Dock

On 28th April 182 Tern Trays and an extra 2 tonnes of gravel was set out at Preston Dock with the help of Club members. 129 pairs of Common Terns were nesting up to 19th June.



Birds of Marton Mere

The Birds of Marton Mere is now available. The cost is £7 or £8.50 for postal delivery. You can order online from the Bird Club website www.fyldebirdclub.org/noticeboard.html or send a cheque for £8.50 to Kinta Beaver, 18 Staining Rise, Staining, Blackpool FY3 0BU.



Rossall Point Display Panels

The Rossall Point Display Panels were delivered to Wyre Borough Council on 5th March and mounted on backing board.



Conder Pool Island works

On 16th April at Conder Pool three tonnes of gravel and impermeable sheeting were used to create nesting areas. On 23rd April a digger and driver were hired to create two new islands. Thanks to those who assisted.



Grant application

An application was made to the Orchard End Community Benefit Fund for £3375 to cover seed for winter farmland birds at Eagland Hill and to create two seed strips in the fields adjacent to the feeding stations. Grants are funded by REG Wind Power at Eagland Hill and applications are only eligible for projects within 3km of the wind turbines. A decision on whether the grant application has been successful should be received by mid-August 2016.

Fylde Bird Report 2014

The Bird Report is at the printers and copies will be available for members from the June meeting onwards. If you are not able to attend the June meeting to collect your copy, please let me know if you would like to collect at the July meeting or would prefer to have the report posted to your home address.

kinta.beaver@btinternet.com; T: 01253 891281 or 07900 276105 (mobile)

