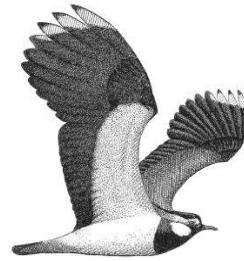


# March Newsletter 2017

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**Fylde  
Bird Club**  
LANCASHIRE

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Spring is here again bringing the joys of the dawn chorus. I must try to remember the warbler songs. I just seem to have learnt the songs when they migrate and I have to start all over again. It is wonderful though to hear Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, Robins and all the warblers singing their hearts out. The stuttering Chaffinch, the whispering Willow Warbler and the strident Wren. A joy to listen to.

There are changes in the reporting of sightings in the Newsletter. In this issue Ellen Pemberton reports on Marton Mere for the last time (thanks for all your help over the last few years)

Stephen Dunstan is now writing the recent sightings item (and very good it is too). Also new for 2017 are Fylde Bird Club Facebook and Twitter accounts run by Jonny Scragg and Ash Baines, Search on the internet for **@fyldebirdclub** and both accounts will be listed.

I am looking at the black crows, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Rook and Raven.

Andy Senior has a finder article on the Great Grey Shrike in Nateby. I don't think I am the only jealous birder who missed it.

Maurice Jones writes about a visit he made to Libya pre Gaddafi.

Barry Dyson has an article on Fylde birds, 1876!! A good read.

Finally a review of the 2016 Yearlist challenge with an invitation to enter the 2017 competition and don't forget entries for the **Photographic Competition need to be with me by March 20<sup>th</sup>**. Thanks, that really will help me.

## RECENT SIGHTINGS DECEMBER - FEBRUARY

The start of the period generally offered typical Fylde winter fare. The New Year however began with some of the best winter birding in living memory, unless you happen not to be a fan of wild (and maybe not so wild) geese. What follows is a more selective summary than in past newsletters, hopefully this will be a welcome change but all feedback is gratefully received.

### ***A Gaggle of Rare Geese***

When a Red-breasted Goose in Norfolk joined up with Pinkfeet flocks there was hope that it would migrate to Lancs with them. It duly obliged, and on 4 January was found at Marshside by Pete Kinsella. It was then more a case of when rather than if it would be seen on the Fylde, and it was found near Braides, Cockerham on the 8<sup>th</sup> before beginning a protracted stay Over Wyre to at least 18<sup>th</sup> February.

As such Pink-footed Geese are not the obvious carrier species for Red-breasted Geese. The argument in favour of it being a wild bird relies on it having come into Britain with a different carrier species before taking up with Pinkies. The argument against understandably often makes reference to the high escape risk. We will of course never know, it was interesting to note that it spent much of its time with the Whitefronts also around Pilling in the goose flocks.



**Red-breasted Goose with Russian White-fronted Goose - Sand Villa (Paul Ellis)**

It is a bit arbitrary ranking the goose highlights when provenance and even identification was an issue in some cases, but the silver medal place on the podium probably goes to the Todd's Canada Goose. First seen at Moss Edge on 20<sup>th</sup> January before spending a month in the Fylde goose flocks. Again this bird has been in the Norfolk Pinkfoot flocks and when the Red-breasted turned up here the Canada was almost expected.

Some observers felt that the putative Todd's did not show all the required suite of features for this form, in particular darker breast colourations. The same bird had been reported as a Todd's in Norfolk, and some photographs show the relatively long 'snakelike' neck of this form. Some observers nevertheless fell back on the maxim that Todd's are only identifiable by being alone or in pairs in a Pinkfoot flock.

Returning to the medal podium analogy it was arguably a tie for bronze. A Taiga Bean Goose at Cockerham on 19<sup>th</sup> January was seen on and off Over Wyre for the following month. Nothing was entirely simple with the geese this winter and some visiting birders felt that this bird was actually more likely to be a Tundra Bean Goose. Locals were generally unconvinced by this assertion.

A Lesser Snow Goose was found by Graham Hulme on 28<sup>th</sup> January at Woods Lane, Copthorne with the feral Greylags. This wasn't the most auspicious of company, especially as it was even photographed on the small pool at the entrance to the adjoining caravan park. However comparison of photos showed it to be the one that had been at Marshside before Christmas, when it had interestingly been associating with Pinkfeet initially. What in other years would have been a headline feature, a very marked arrival of Russian White-fronted Geese, was reduced to a

footnote. Several counts of 20+ birds were noted Over Wyre, whilst smaller numbers appeared wherever there were Pinkfeet feeding. Tundra Bean Geese were also more pronounced than usual, with a peak count of five at a couple of Over Wyre sites. By contrast there was probably just one Greenland Whitefront seen.

### *The Marsh Tit Mystery*

There used to be a reliable Marsh Tit population in the north of the bird club recording area, around Ellel and Thurnham. Since these sadly disappeared the species has become very much less than annual on the Fylde, so the one located by Ian Walker at Warton Bank in early December was notable.

What is interesting is that in the last decade or so Warton Bank has been an unlikely hotspot for Marsh Tits. One was found by Dave Satterthwaite in the orchard area near the end of Bank Lane in September 2005, reappearing there in December then also February-March 2006. Another was found there by Geoff Wilby on 26 October 2011.

So where are these birds originating? The most obvious and yet tantalizing conclusion is that there is still a nest site somewhere in southern Fylde but it hasn't been discovered.

### *Pochard Enigma*

Late on 2<sup>nd</sup> January news broke that Peter and Maureen Shakeshaft had seen a drake Red-Crested Pochard on Newton Marsh entrance pool. Unfortunately it wasn't present the next day. There hasn't been a twitchable bird of this species in the Fylde for several years, occurrences aren't even annual and many newer local listers still need one for their Fylde list.

There is no doubt with this species that the same circular arguments as with some of the geese mentioned above come into play. Origin is at best unproven, and a captive origin cannot be ruled out. Having said that mid winter is not the worst time for one to turn up, it is unfortunate that it didn't stay around to be admired as it is many years since the last widely admired drake on the Fylde.

### *Continuing Bearded Tits*

Whilst the Marton Mere group didn't linger all that long the birds at Fleetwood Nature Park mentioned in the last newsletter were still being seen in the early part of the period covered in this piece. The last sighting, after a gap of a few days, related to five (including two males) on 4 December.

Clearly there has been a decent irruption away from at least some nesting grounds, so when you are reading this there is a better than usual chance of picking some up as they make their way back. The Mere and the Nature Park are clearly the most likely sites, but if birding any site with phragmites reeds keep one ear open for their distinctive pinging calls.



**Male Bearded Tit – Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park (Len Poxon)**

### ***Shorelark Surprise***

Maybe it was something to do with Storm Doris, but it was an unexpected surprise when Andrew Cornall found two Shorelarks at Bank End, Cockerham on 24<sup>th</sup> February. Whilst they were always rather distant on the saltmarsh they did linger to allow admirers to catch up with them.

Other than the late Jim Sheldon's very popular Rossall bird in the 2014/15 winter there are no other records in the last decade. Perhaps because of global warming they have become less regular nationally, and disturbance of some of their favoured habitat (e.g. Fairhaven and St Annes beaches) may also be a factor in their increasing scarcity locally.

### ***Shrike Ranges Widely***

A Great Grey Shrike was seen briefly near Nateby on 14<sup>th</sup> January, apparently hunting Reed Buntings. The following weekend on 22<sup>nd</sup> it was not too far away loitering with intent at one of the Eagland Hill feeding stations. Within half an hour it flew off strongly east and to date has never been seen again, but could conceivably still be in the area with plenty of private habitat available.



**Great Grey Shrike – Eagland Hill (Paul Ellis)**

### ***Back In Black***

There is no shortage of potential Black Redstart habitat around the outer edges of the Wyre Estuary, the problems however are that there is so much of it and also a lot of it is private. The Knott End – Cockers Dyke area is the most easy to work, and a female was found here on 28 December, remaining for the period.

At the eastern edge of the recording area an equally obliging bird was seen from early 2017 at St Walburga's Church, Preston. This individual was of the 'pardoxus' form, i.e. a first winter male that had undergone a partial moult into adult plumage. Excellent photos of both birds can be seen on the club's photo page.

Any club members wanting a real challenge during those slow summer months could emulate the late Ed Stirling and try to unearth a nesting pair on the Fylde. Such was Ed's passion for working less conventional sites that he refound the pair when they attempted to raise a second brood at a different site!

### ***Snobs Come To Visit***

A couple of Snow Buntings (aka Snobs) were fairly reliable on St Annes North Beach during December and January. Although the high level of dog disturbance was an issue at times, most people were able to see them without too

much difficulty. One of these may have been the bird seen at Fairhaven previously, whilst one on the beach at Rossall in late December was presumably different.

Whilst Snow Buntings are annual in winter on the Fylde, numbers have however dwindled of late and we no longer seem to get groups of half a dozen plus. Global warming may be a factor in this, and they do seem to like the beaches people like so maybe some now prefer to winter on the hilltops instead.

### ***Great White Wanders***

If there is a species on the Fylde that is underappreciated these days given its national scarcity level, it has to be Great White Egret. The reason for this is the regularity with which at least one is seen on the Ribble Estuary each winter, often outside our recording area but also fairly frequently at Warton Bank or Lytham. Plus of course they were further 'devalued' by the remarkable flock of nine over Fairhaven this autumn.

That said, they remain rare 'inland' on the Fylde with perhaps just one previously, at Marton Mere in February (unless you count the Fairhaven flock going in-off of course). So one found by Tony Sharples on New Years Day vacating the main dyke at the Mere was notable, but perhaps it was a sign of things to come when he repeated the trick on 3 February.

Whilst Conder Green is a bit less inland, so to speak, than Marton Mere a Great White here offered prolonged close range viewing opportunities on several dates in January and February. As well as being seen on Conder Pool and in the reeds at Glasson Basin on several occasions it was hanging out with the Mute Swans in fields by the canal at the north end of Jeremy Lane.

### ***The White Winger Winter***

It was looking like a fairly typical winter for Iceland and Glaucous Gulls locally, i.e. not many records. By the turn of the year only brief singles of each at Fleetwood had troubled the scorer, then on 2<sup>nd</sup> January after keeping its many fans waiting the annually returning Iceland Gull (now an adult, but first seen as a juvenile) appeared at Marton Mere.

As a national influx of 'white wingers' kicked in during January things picked up pace. A juvenile Glauc was at Lytham Green on 17<sup>th</sup> January and another juvenile became a fairly predictable feature of the gull roost at Cocker's Dyke in late January and early February. Later in February a juvenile and a near adult Glauc were available at the same time in the Fleetwood area, feeding on the tip and roosting / bathing on the Wyre estuary.

The best gull of all in the period was however brief and news wasn't available at the time. A second winter Caspian Gull was photographed at Fleetwood Tip on 20<sup>th</sup> February. Whilst many people are still not confident with identification of this taxon, it clearly remains very scarce in Lancashire.

### ***Predictable Waxwings***

Given the numbers arriving into the country, and some advance parties mentioned in the last newsletter, it was inevitable that there would be some available flocks in the recording area and so it proved.

One of the dependables of any Waxwing invasion is that on the Fylde the greatest numbers will always be in Preston. So it proved this time with up to 90 lingering at Preston sites during the peak period in January before they exhausted the available berry stocks.

The showing in the rest of the Fylde was a lot more pronounced than usual, simply because so many birds had come into the country in the autumn. Totals during the period under review included up to 11 in Blackpool, 10 in St Annes and eight in Fleetwood.



**Waxwing – Preston (Howard Phillips)**

### ***Supporting Cast***

The Marton Mere Long-eared Owls were very difficult to connect with during the period, some observers blamed this on photographer disturbance during December. It is unfortunate that even though these birds can reliably be watched without upsetting them every year some always have to push the boundaries. For owl enthusiasts some compensation was provided by regular late afternoon performance from Short-eareds at Wesham Marsh.

Large gatherings of wild swans in North Fylde included up to 14 Bewick's Swans at Thurnham. The Scaup at Fairhaven disappeared, and there were very few reports from seawatching sites but a first winter lingered during January at Myerscough Quarry.

Harriers were in evidence at Warton Bank in particular, with a couple of Marsh Harriers and a ringtail Hen Harrier present for much of the period.

Storms that were experienced were generally sharp but short, so there wasn't much in the way of storm blown waifs though up to 15 Little Gulls and 14 Kittiwakes passed Starr Gate. A Great Northern Diver passed Starr Gate on a couple of occasions, one was off St Annes and there were a couple of reports from Fleetwood.

A couple of Bitterns continued to show reasonably well at Marton Mere throughout. The peak Water Pipit count was three at The Heads on 15<sup>th</sup> January. Up to three Purple Sandpipers were seen at Rossall and Blackpool North Shore.

***Stephen Dunstan***

## Yearlist Challenge 2016

Last year's competition was a nail biter to the finish with Ashley Baines winning with 180 species to Paul Slades 178. Paul has had to surrender the title he so narrowly won last year.

The wooden spoon was no less exciting with Kinta Beaver defending the position of last that she had held for many years. This year I, Peter Rhind, won the wooden spoon, where is the trophy??? With Stuart Piner finishing next to bottom. Stuart has an excuse, the birth of little George, I have none.

Seriously though the competition is a lot of fun and takes you to places on the Fylde you may not usually visit. It certainly made me explore more. If you want to enter e-mail Ashley Baines for an entry before the end of March. Please do it, I am sure you will enjoy it.

e-mail [ash.baines@btinternet.com](mailto:ash.baines@btinternet.com)

*Peter Rhind*

### Marton Mere Report

#### October 2016 – January 2017

There was definitely an air of autumn at the Mere on 1<sup>st</sup> October, as some 2000 Pink-footed Geese, 580 Meadow Pipits and 35 Skylarks all flew south. The 2<sup>nd</sup>, however, was a sunny day, which prompted a Chiffchaff to sing. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> 2 Jays flew north, 11 Redwings flew south and there were over 200 each of Feral and Woodpigeons; one of the former was taken by a Peregrine.

The Peregrine was seen again on several dates in early October. On the 4<sup>th</sup> there were over 20 Chaffinches at the feeding station, while on the 6<sup>th</sup> 35 Pintail flew north and on the 8<sup>th</sup> a Jay and a Wheatear were present. A Comma and a Barn Owl were seen on the 9<sup>th</sup>, while a Bittern was observed arriving at the reserve from the north. There were numerous sightings of Bittern throughout the last quarter of 2016, including 2 seen together on 24<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October. On the 10<sup>th</sup> a Black-tailed Godwit was present and 53 Jackdaws flew east. Sightings for the 12<sup>th</sup> included 2 Blackcaps, a Swallow and a Barn Owl, while 2000 Pink-footed Geese flew north.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October 109 Jackdaws flew south and on the 16<sup>th</sup> a Fox was observed in front of the Fylde Bird Club Hide. 18 Skylarks were in the east fields on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 9 Whooper Swans and a Stonechat were present on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The east fields boasted 32 Skylarks on the 20<sup>th</sup>, while there were arrivals and departures in the form of a Ring Ouzel, 87 Fieldfares and 50 Redwings.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> a Woodcock flew low over the island pools and on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 5 Bearded Tits put in a brief appearance. They flew north-west but there were subsequent sightings of between 1 and 4 individuals up to 29<sup>th</sup> October. On 23<sup>rd</sup> October there were 3 Whooper Swans, a Jack Snipe and another singing Chiffchaff. A Short-eared Owl, Goosander and some 4000 Starlings were seen on the 24<sup>th</sup>, while a Ring-necked Parakeet and 4 Grey Wagtails were present and a Brambling and 3 Little Egrets flew over on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A Stoat was seen on the 26<sup>th</sup> and there were 43 Skylarks, 125 Common Gulls and 2 Mediterranean Gulls (adult and 1<sup>st</sup> winter) on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A female Goosander flew west on the 28<sup>th</sup> and on the 31<sup>st</sup> there were 7 Whooper Swans present. Starling numbers had risen to 14500 on this date.

12 Whooper Swans flew over on 1<sup>st</sup> November, while a Blackcap was also present on this date. There was a late Reed Warbler on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the first Goldeneyes of the winter, 2 females, arrived on the 4<sup>th</sup>. There were 5 Water Rails, a Chiffchaff, a Weasel and a Red Admiral on the 7<sup>th</sup>. On the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> there was a report of 18 Waxwings; they sadly didn't stick around. A

Barn Owl was seen again on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, while on the former date 6 Water Rails were heard and 200 Rooks were in the east fields. A Mediterranean Gull was present on the 14<sup>th</sup>, while on the 15<sup>th</sup> there was a Redshank, 100 Common Gulls, 30 Skylarks and 21 Rabbits!

A female Goosander was present on 16<sup>th</sup> November, while 18 Snipe circled on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Wildfowl numbers began to build this month, with 37 Gadwall on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 100 Wigeon on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. On the 26<sup>th</sup> there were 200 Teal, 15 Stock Doves and 24 Rabbits. There were 12 Tree Sparrows recorded on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 86 Greylag Geese, 75 Wigeon and 40 Skylarks on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

The first Long-eared Owl sighting of the winter comprised 2 birds on 1<sup>st</sup> December, with 75 Skylarks also present on this date. 2 Chiffchaffs were recorded on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, while a Jay and a female Pintail were seen on the 5<sup>th</sup>. A Jack Snipe was on the reserve on the 6<sup>th</sup> while on the same date the east field held 75 Rooks and 150 Jackdaws. A Ring-necked Parakeet was seen on the 9<sup>th</sup>. On the 11<sup>th</sup> a pair of Otters put in an appearance and a count of 380 Coot was recorded. 12 Black-tailed Godwits flew south on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 300 Teal were recorded on the 15<sup>th</sup>. On the 18<sup>th</sup> a Fox was on the island and a Shelduck flew north-west. The east field had 250 Rooks and 100 Jackdaws on the 19<sup>th</sup>, whilst there were 115 Greylag Geese and 150 Wigeon on the reserve on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> respectively. A Peregrine was seen on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January a Great White Egret flew north-west; Chiffchaff and Woodcock were seen on both January 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, while on the latter date there was a Red-breasted Merganser and the returning Iceland Gull also put in an appearance. The gull continued to visit the reserve throughout January. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> there were 150 Lapwings over the east fields and the first of several large flocks of Greenfinches in the caravan park poplars, this time 42. There was a count of 125 Greenfinches on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 75 on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. January 4<sup>th</sup> was a busy day, with at least 5 Water Rails, a Barn Owl, a Jay, a Shelduck and in the east fields 130 Rooks and 40 Jackdaws. Bittern sightings in January included 2 birds seen on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 2 separate views of single birds on the 18<sup>th</sup>. On the former date a Redshank flew east. There were also sightings of Otter during January, the first one seen feeding east of the viewing platform on the 12<sup>th</sup>, with subsequent appearances on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

On 15<sup>th</sup> January a Raven flew north and a Peregrine was spotted on the dyke pylon. The following day there were 83 Linnets in the north-west scrub and 200 Woodpigeons in the south-east field. There were 2 large counts of waders on the 18<sup>th</sup>, when 33 Oystercatchers and 27 Snipe circled. 11 Stock Doves were on the barn roof the same day. Cetti's Warblers peaked with 5 birds recorded on the 19<sup>th</sup>, while on the 20<sup>th</sup> there were 2 Siskins present and 1250 Pink-footed Geese flew north. On the 21<sup>st</sup> there were 125 Common Gulls in the south-east field, while a Barn Owl and 2 Woodcocks were present on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A single Woodcock was recorded on the 27<sup>th</sup>; however on the same day, 17 of its relations (16 Snipe and a Jack Snipe) were seen at nearby Lawson Marsh. 23 Blackbirds were present on the 29<sup>th</sup> and on the 30<sup>th</sup> there were 125 Wigeon, 65 Fieldfares and 3 Shelducks flew south-east.

***Ellen Pemberton***



## Great Grey Shrike

On Saturday 14 January, my friend, Mrs. Sue Sayers, and myself were year listing around the Lancaster/North Fylde coast area. We'd had a good morning – Spotted Redshank at Condor Green, Twite and Barn Owl at Cockersands. Our next target was Corn Bunting, and since I'd previously seen these along the wires and hedges of Bradshaw Lane, we decided to try there.

We drove slowly along the lane, stopping at the feeding stations near Eagland Hill, but to no avail. As we drove out of Eagland Hill and turned onto Woods Lane, we noticed large flocks of finches (and buntings?) rising from the fields to our left. We pulled into the road to South Woods Hill farm in order to set up our scopes. With our backs to South Woods Hill, we were looking roughly north east towards the fields around Fowler's farm. The flocks were quite mobile, but lots of birds were sitting distantly in the hedgerows. We found Yellowhammer, Tree Sparrows, Chaffinch, but nothing that we could confidently identify as a Corn Bunting.

As I continued scanning the top of a distant hedge, my scope picked up a Great Grey Shrike. I immediately called it to Sue's attention, but before she could get on it, the bird dropped off behind the hedge, and out of view. We continued scanning the area, but with no further sighting, I began to doubt myself. It wasn't the sort of habitat where I've seen G G Shrikes previously, and there were a lot of Woodpigeons about. Had I turned an odd brief view of a pigeon into a shrike? We discussed it, and I decided that I wouldn't claim it for my year list on such a brief and inconclusive view.

After a few more minutes of failing to find a Corn Bunting, the bird once again appeared in my scope, sat boldly on top of the hedge. This time, there was no doubt. Sue got onto the bird very quickly, and we both watched it until, once again, it dropped behind the hedge. We noted the time as 13:15.

A car then pulled up, and a guy informed us that some birders were watching the Eurasian Whitefronts back towards Eagland Hill. I lent the guy my bins, and the shrike obligingly showed again, so that he saw it. It was a brief view though – the shrike really did seem to prefer the far side of the hedge.

We then drove back towards Eagland Hill, where we saw birders watching a flock of geese. We informed them of the shrike. Luckily, we had an Explorer map of the area with us, and Sue was able to give a very accurate description of where the bird was. Three of the lads set off almost immediately.

I did eventually fumble with my phone in order to report the find to the RBA, but I'm not a lot of good with mobile phones. By the time I managed to get my message sent, the bird had already been announced on the pager!

**Andy Senior**

## Confusion Species

### The Black Crows, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Rook and Raven

I feel for this family of birds. In literature and folk lore they seemed to be blamed for so much. Harbingers of ill fortune, predictors of death and generally anything that goes wrong country folk blame the **black** birds. Could Brexit be their fault?

#### Jackdaw



The cheeky chappie of the group, the Jackdaw is the friendly and sociable Jack the Lad. Smaller than the other crows it is crow black with a pale grey neck and the most piercing pale eyes. The bill is short and stubby. Unlike other crows the wings are not fingered but are tapered. The wing action is fast and when they are in a group (which they frequently are) they wheel and turn as a group seemingly just for the fun of it. The call is a constant, “jack jack jack”

They quite often pair for life and are unusually loyal. Nesting is in holes in quarry faces, abandoned buildings and old trees. They quite often nest in colonies. Their love of nesting in chimneys can cause problems!! They often re-use old nest sites returning to repair them over a number of years. They are not averse to “borrowing” nesting materials from neighbours nests which enlivens life in the colony. They have also learnt the art of taking shells into the air and dropping them till the food is accessible.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century they were seen as vermin and villages were encouraged to trap them. I suspect the cunning of all the crow family made this not an easy task.

Finally there is a Nordic sub species of the Jackdaw which is separated by the whitish collar it has, although variability amongst British Jackdaws makes racial identification difficult.

#### Carrion Crow



The Glossy Black Carrion Crow is sleek and beautiful and when the sun illuminates its plumage, it shines with a metallic green/blue tinge.

The Carrion Crow can be confused with a young Rook and care needs to be taken when separating them. Crows are more solitary than Rooks but do gather in groups so the old adage of “ it’s on its own so it is a Crow and it’s in a flock so it must be a Rook “ is not always accurate.

Carrion Crows are jet black with beaks that are slightly more robust than that of the Rook. The bill base and gape is blacker on the Crow. There is no bump on the head so the outline is a smooth curve. In flight its wings are fingered and broad, its tail is rounded and its wingbeats are shallow and lazy. Its call is a hoarse croaking caw.

Its reputation is not good. A group of Crows is a murder of crows which demonstrates the esteem it is held in. It is the most unloved of birds and has been persecuted for hundreds of years, its

success still shows how resourceful it is in terms of survival. Egg stealing and the killing of lambs are 2 crimes laid at its door. In Lancashire folklore if a crow landed on your roof, a death would not be far behind.

Its close relative is the Hooded Crow or Hoodie. This is like a Carrion Crow but has a grey shawl and body with a black bib and wings. It used to be a common visitor to England, as the nickname of Royston Crow or the Dunstable Crow shows but it is now confined to the north of Scotland though they do grace the Fylde with their presence now and again.

## Rook



I have heard the Rook described as a Crow wearing an ill fitting suit, with its bushy legs, drooping wings and a waddling gait it seems to me to capture the essence of the bird. Adults are easy to separate from Crows. The Rook has a pale bill with a bare grey base making the bill seem even longer. It has a domed crown or peak and the head meets the bill at a sharp angle giving a distinctive silhouette. The Crow has a smoothly curved head. This is true even in young birds who do not have the paler bill and bare patch at the base. The call is similar to that of the crow

but more drawling. They are very sociable and nest in rookeries some of which are legendary in size. A rookery in Ireland was estimated at 10,000 nests and an Aberdeen one in 1957 numbered 6,700 nests. A typical colony however will number up to 50 nests. A group of rooks is a “clamour” perfectly describing their noisy rookeries or a “parliament” describing what old yarners called gatherings which seem to imitate meetings or courts. The worst of the Victorian slums where dwellings were packed together, horizontally and vertically were known as “rookeries”. This reflects the untidy cramming of the Rooks nest in ramshackle colonies.

And finally for the foodies the Rook pie is still on some British menus. The May cull of the Rooks provided the breasts for the pie. The meat is described as a little like rabbit. I don't really fancy it myself but it takes all kinds.

## Raven



The biggest of our Corvids, the size of a Buzzard, the Raven is a magnificent bird. Sheer black plumage like polished jet, enormous powerful bill and a throat patch of raised feathers, the head rises near vertically from the bill giving a characteristic bump and a fine wedge shaped tail. In flight it is unmistakable with its wedge shaped tail and heavy head and bill. Flight is slow and heavy with powerful and elastic wing beats and when it glides or soars it does so on flat wings. My first indication of a Raven is usually the deep croaking call.

A group of Ravens is an unkindness which I feel is an unkind way to describe this magnificent crow. Its diet is catholic, it will eat anything, but it does favour carrion and it will kill when needed hence the sheep farmer's distrust of the species. In the 19th century relentless hunting led to the Raven vanishing from many of its traditional haunts. It is now back and can be found over all the country although it does favour wilder areas and sheep farming areas.

I suppose the most famous Ravens are to be found at the Tower of London. They are well fed and are even given names!! The legend is that if they ever leave the Tower the Monarchy will fall.

Finally the black Crow I have left out is the Chough, red legs and red bill, the call is a piercing "chuff" and the flight is playfull and has been likened to that of a black butterfly.

*Peter Rhind*

## **Libya—Pre Gaddafi**

In the 1950's and 60's I bird watched the Fylde in the company of Graham Blackwell, Andrew Cadman and John Morgan. In 1967 Graham, Andrew and I got the chance to visit John Morgan who had taken a teaching post in Libya at Tripoli. Andrew and I managed 3 weeks and Graham was able to stay a further 2 weeks. We stayed with John and his wife Margaret in their villa at Al Fornaf, Tripoli. During the week we were able to use Johns Voltswagen Beetle and at weekends John joined us on camping trips. A big advantage was John's knowledge of sites to visit. Prior to our visit he had met Graham Bundy in the field and the 2 had collaborated in writing a British Ornithologists Club check list. Many of the references to Libyan birds in "Birds of the Western Palearctic" are from Graham and Johns observations.

The cheapest way to get to Libya at that time was to fly to Malta which had concessionary air fares. After a night there we sailed on an Italian vessel to Tripoli. Our only reference book was John's copy of "The Birds of North Africa" written in French.

3rd April. Our stay in Malta produced a few Spanish Sparrows, 3 Sardinian Warblers, 2 Wood Warblers and a Firecrest and as we sailed out of Valetta harbour 20 or more Cory's Shearwaters.

4<sup>th</sup> April. John met us at Tripoli harbour and en route to his villa we saw several Hoopoes, 3 Serins, Crested Lark and a soaring White Stork. We then headed off to the Roman Theatre and ruins at Sabratha along the coast to the west of Tripoli. There were no other tourists so we wandered at will taking photographs-all the time bird watching. We saw Palm Doves, Rock Sparrows, 2 Little Owls, 9 Ortolan Buntings, 30 Short Toed Larks, Western Black Eared Wheatears, Great Grey (now Southern) Shrikes, Woodchat Shrikes, 6 Wrynecks, Serins, Subalpine Warblers and a lovely Rufous Bushchat.

5<sup>th</sup> April. Near John's villa we had Lesser Kestrel and 2 Tawny Pipits. We then headed off to a stream (Wadi Turgat) where it reaches the sea. Here we saw 6 Red Rumped Swallows, 8 Little Ringed Plovers, 2 Quail, 30 Serins, Nightingale, Night Heron, both Shrikes, a migrant Lesser Spotted Eagle, male Pallid Harrier, Great Snipe and Fulvous Babbler. Tripoli had many Pallid Swifts.

6<sup>th</sup> April. After birding around the villa we headed to the Azizia Plain lying inland from Tripoli where one of the highest temperatures on earth has been recorded. We saw male and female Rock Thrushes, a male Collared Flycatcher, White Storks, Lesser Kestrels, 2 Lanner Falcons, Red Rumped Swallows, Pallid and Alpine Swifts, Pallid Harriers, 30 Dotterels, both Shrikes, Fulvous Babbler and hundreds of Spanish Sparrows which were nesting in tall eucalyptus trees.

7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> April. Near the villa we had Subalpine and Bonellis Warblers. We then drove to the Wadi Caam along the coast east of Tripoli. Here we saw Purple Heron, Little Ringed Plover and Little Stints, 4 Kentish Plovers, 2 male Collared Flycatcher, 50 Short Toed Larks, Wrynecks,

Nightingales, 1 Squacco Heron, Gull Billed Tern, male Ruppels Warbler, Blue Headed, Ashy Headed and Black Headed Wagtails, Tawny Pipit, 20 Lesser Kestrels, 6 Bee Eaters, 3 Red Throated Pipits, 8 Audouins Gull, Isabelline Wheatear and a male Rock Thrush. En route to Misurata we had many Woodchat Shrikes, 13 Spotted Redshanks, Ruffs and Green Sandpipers. Pools at Taworga had more Wagtails, a Fan Tailed Warbler, 2 pairs of Desert Wheatear, a male Tristrams Warbler and later a Red Rumped Wheatear. We slept the night in some part built houses in sub-desert. A striped Hawk Moth came to our camping light.

9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> April Towarga pools provided a female Little Crane, 2 Spotted Crakes, 7 Water Rails, Wood Sandpiper, Black Winged Stilt and Rock Thrush. We then began our adventure into the Sahara and a search for a special bird John had planned for us. Along the coast road at Bu Gren a right turn heads due south towards Fezzan. We followed this road for 200 miles to a tiny village and huge palm oasis at Waddan. When it last rained there 4 years ago the flash flood had washed the road away, big oil drums were preventing a 4 foot drop!!! The detour was across stony and fine sand desert. Good birds included Black Eared, Isabelline, Red Rumped and Mourning (now Magreb) Wheatear, Cream Coloured Courser, Brown Necked Raven, Bar Tailed Desert Lark, male Pallid Harrier. The bird of the day however was in the palm oasis---2 male and a female Desert Sparrow--- a superb pattern of grey, black and white. Within minutes we soon realised that the distant palms in a huge sandstorm heading our way. We retreated to the village and sampled the hospitality of sweet tea and then a change of plan. The road had been part blocked by drifts of sand. A lorry driver rescued us from the section where the road had been washed away-we could see nothing in the blown sand as by now it was pitch black. Coated from head to toe in fine sand we eventually ran out of the sandstorm and camped by the roadside.

11<sup>th</sup> April At dawn 3 Dorcas Gazelles were crossing the desert and 50 Spotted Grouse flew over calling. New Larks included Hoopoe Lark, Temmincks Horned Lark and we saw 2 more Cream Coloured Coursers. With our trip to the interior curtailed we had Red Throated Pipit, Night Heron, Bonellis Warbler and Montagu's Harrier at Wadi Caam. A mountain escarpment, the Jebel Nefusa runs from the coast inland and gets higher as you reach the Tunisian border. Here we saw 3 Thekla Larks and a Black Wheatear and on our way home we had 40 Lesser Kestrels, Shrikes, a Roller and a Bee Eater. On some pools we saw Temmink's Stint and found a dead Little Crane. I fished this out of the pond and decided to let it dry on the patio overnight. Alas the local cat beat me too it!!

12<sup>th</sup> April A return to the Wadi Turgat and the pools again finding 6 Red Throated Pipits, Lesser Kestrels, Tawny Pipits, Marsh Sandpiper, 2 Jack Snipe, 10 Wood and Green Sandpipers.

14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> April We travelled south west below the Jebel Nefusa then up hairpins to the town of Jefren perched on the edge of the escarpment. Several Montegu's Harriers were on route plus lots of Lesser Short Toed Larks and Hoopoe Lark. A quarry had a pair of White Crowned Black Wheatears with a nest containing 2 eggs. A dry wadi had Desert Wheatears, Subalpine and Bonellis Warblers, 8 Little Swifts and a Tristram's Wheatear. At Jefren we saw Trumpeter Finch, 2 Thekla Larks, Black Wheatears, Egyptian Vultures, Bonelli's Eagle, Lanner Falcon and House Bunting. Continuing to Rumia oasis we had 2 more Bonelli's Eagles, 5 Rufous Bush Chat, 4 Little Swifts, Black Wheatear, a Rock Thrush, Orphean Warbler, Trumpeter Finch, Nightjar, Ring Ousel and the North African race of Chaffinch (*Spodiogenys*)

15<sup>th</sup> April Descending the hairpins below Jefren we saw Rock Hyrax and a Jackal then over 100 Pin Tailed Sandgrouse, 4 Cream Coloured Coursers, 3 Bar Tailed Desert Larks, Hoopoe Larks, 20 Short Toed Larks and a Tristram's Wheatear. A ravine at Ain Zargh produced Lanner Falcon,

2 Little Swifts drinking at a small pool, a nesting colony of Rock Sparrows, Trumpeter Finch, 2 male Rock Thrush, 2 Long Legged Buzzards and a 4 foot long snake (Rock Python?) Graham managed to get himself bitten by this whilst attempting to hold it- Fortunately it was not poisonous.

16<sup>th</sup> April In sub-desert we saw many birds we had seen earlier plus Thick Billed lark and 20 Coronated(Crowned) Sandgrouse.

17<sup>th</sup> April A return to Sabratha seeing Oortolan Buntings, 2 Wryneck and Black Eared Wheatear.

18<sup>th</sup> April A return to the Azizia plain seeing 40 Pin Tailed Sandgrouse, Black Wheatear and a Long Legged Buzzard. We checked a small cave where John had previously seen Eagle Owl but they were not at home.

19<sup>th</sup> April A return to the Wadi Caam taking in the spectacular Roman city of Leptis Magna. This covers a huge area on the coast and we were alone to photograph at will! Nearby were 100 Lesser Kestrels and 150 Flava Wagtails. At the Wadi Caam were Bee Eaters, Shrikes, 1 Squacco Heron, 2 Temminck's Stint and 7 Little Terns.

20<sup>th</sup> April To the coastal Wadi Badsis where we saw 2 Golden Orioles, a Great Reed Warbler, 2 Little Bitterns, Osprey and a migrant Saker Falcon that stooped and missed a Little Bittern that we had just flushed. The Wadi Grim had Lanner falcon, Squacco Heron, Purple Heron and Osprey. The Wadi Turgat had male Collared Flycatcher, Roller and 7 Audouin's Gull.

21<sup>st</sup> April We flew from Idris Airport to Malta where we saw Spanish Sparrows, Sardinian Warblers and Turtle Doves before our onward flight.

Graham Blackwell stayed on for another 2 weeks and on the very first drive into the desert John woke him up – there was a Houbara Bustard on the track they were driving on.

Ah well, you can't win them all.

**Maurice Jones**

## **JOHN PORTER'S 'HISTORY OF THE FYLDE OF LANCASHIRE 1876'**

While rooting through some old documents I came across a long forgotten extract from the above mentioned book. I think it is worthy of bringing it to a wider audience so I have copied it below for your interest and comment.

It lists a selection of 128 Fylde bird species that occurred '*during the whole year or only in certain parts of it*' and gives only a vague idea of numbers involved, a far cry from the fine tuned information we see in the Fylde bird report where distribution is down to tetrad level and counts are the norm.

Compare that to the numbers description given at that time:

- 1) Very common
- 2) Common
- 3) Rather common
- 4) Rather rare
- 5) Rare
- 6) Occasional visitor

- 7) Very rare
- 8) Very rare indeed

Clearly no thought was given to the future importance of accurate counts at that time, but then who would have thought bird watching would have developed into the global phenomenon it is today.

It is also interesting to note that whereas the vast majority of vernacular names have remained unchanged, the scientific names have all changed bar 3. Those that remain the same are Fieldfare, Dotterel and Woodcock. This is because they are the only representative in their genus. They are Monotypic. Many of the others are now seen to be subspecies with their names extended to comprise of Genus, species and subspecies. For example the SWALLOW is no longer Hirundo rustica but Hirundo rustica rustica. Others have had their genus and species name changed, for example GREY PLOVER Vanellus griseus is now Pluvialis squatarola and SEDGE WARBLER Calamodyta phragmitis is Acrocephalus schoenobaenus.

This constant change reflects a growing understanding of avian evolution, the current main driver for change being the use of DNA. Interestingly when I was looking for the falcons in the 2014 FB report I thought they had been overlooked. But no, instead they now nestle between the woodpeckers and the parrots. Taxonomists now believe that falcons are closely related to parrots.

It is of interest to note that Willow Warblers were described as rare back then while the Whinchat was common, but surely only on passage. The Song Thrush is shown as very common so presumably it was less of a skulker in those days to have been described as such.

All farm birds were common including Land Rail (Corncrake), Yellow Wagtail and Quail. I wish that were the case today. Surprisingly Barnacle geese and Bean geese were also common. The Knot was rare, sharing the same status as Temminck's Stint and Ruff.

There has been a reversal of fortunes for the Alcids with Puffin shown as common but the Guillemot and Razorbill rare. I must say it is difficult to believe that the Storm Petrel was common and there are other entries that I am curious about:

- |   |                   |        |
|---|-------------------|--------|
| 1) Limosa vulgaris  | Common Godwit     | Rare   |
| I'm guessing this is Bar-tailed Godwit but don't know for sure.   |                   |        |
| 2) Little Black-headed Gull   | Larus fuscus      | Common |
| Larus fuscus is Lesser black-backed Gull which doesn't have a black head. The only little black-headed gull is Little gull so is it this, although it's difficult to believe it was ever common, but maybe at some time it was. |                   |        |
| 3) Sooty tern   | Sterna fuliginosa | Rare   |
| Not very rare, or very rare indeed!!!   |                   |        |
| 4) Buffel-headed duck.  | Clangula albeola  | Common |
| This is a vagrant North American species so how it could ever be described as common is a mystery.  |                   |        |

***Should you have any comments on any of the above observations please include them in the next newsletter.***

## SELECTED BIRD SPECIES LIST FOR 1876

There are few districts of similar area which can boast so many and such interesting varieties of the feathered tribes, either natives or visitants, as the Fylde. Some of the rarest sea-fowl are occasionally seen along the coasts, while the fields and hedge-rows abound with most of the melodious songsters of our island.

Amongst the number of both land and sea birds which have been observed in the neighbourhood, either during the whole year or only in certain parts of it, may be mentioned the following : —

### ORDER— RAPTORES OR RAPACIOUS BIRDS

#### FALCONIDAE OR FALCON FAMILY

Tinnunculus Alaudarus	Kestrel	Common
Accipiter Nisus	Sparrow Hawk	Common
Circus ceruginosus	Moor Buzzard	Very rare
Strix flammea	Barn Owl	Common
Otus vulgaris	Long-eared Owl	Common
Otus brachyotus	Short-eared Owl	Common

### ORDER— PASSERES OR PERCHERS

#### HIRUNDINIDAE OR SWALLOW FAMILY

Hirundo rustica	Common Swallow	Common
Cotyle riparia	Sand Martin	Common
Chelidon urbica	House Martin	Common

#### LUSCINIDAE OR WARBLER FAMILY

Sylvia undata	Whitethroat	Common
Sylvia trochilus	Willow Warbler	Rare
Sylvia curruca	Lesser Whitethroat	Common
Sylvia sibilatrix	Wood Warbler	Rare
Calamodyta phragmitis	Sedge Warbler	Rare
Saxicola aenanthe	Wheatear	Common
Pratincola rubetra	Whinchat	Common
Pratincola rubicola	Stonechat	Rare
Ruticilla phoenicura	Redstart	Rare
Parus major	Great Titmouse	Common
Parus caeruleus	Blue Titmouse	Common
Parus caudatus	Long-tailed Titmouse	Rare
Parus ater	Cole Titmouse	Rare
Motacilla Yarrellii	Pied Wagtail	Common
Motacilla sulphurea	Yellow Wagtail	Common
Motacilla campestris	Grey Wagtail	Rather rare
Anthus pratensis	Meadow Titlark	Common
Anthus arboreus	Tree Titlark	Rare
Regulus cristatus	Golden-crested Wren	Rare
Regulus ignicapillus	Fire-crested Wren	Very rare



#### TURDIDAE OR THRUSH FAMILY

<i>Turdus musicus</i>	Song Thrush	Very common
<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Missel Thrush	Common
<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Fieldfare	Common
<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Redwing	Rather rare
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Blackbird	Common
<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Ring Ousel	Rather rare

#### LANIIDAE OR SHRIEK FAMILY

<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Red-backed Shriek	Rare
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#### CORVIDAE OR CROW FAMILY

<i>Corvus Corone</i>	Carrion Crow	Very common
<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Hooded Crow	Rare
<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Rook	Very common
<i>Pica caudata</i>	Magpie	Rather rare

#### STURNIDAE OR STARLING FAMILY

<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Common Starling	Common
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#### FRINGILLIDAE OR FINCH FAMILY

<i>Fringilla carduelis</i>	Goldfinch	Common
<i>Fringilla caelebs</i>	Chaffinch	Common
<i>Fringilla spinus</i>	Siskin	Rare
<i>Fringilla chloris</i>	Greenfinch	Common
<i>Fringilla cannabina</i>	Linnet	Common
<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Yellow Bunting	Common
<i>Emberiza schaeeniculus</i>	Reed Bunting	Common
<i>Emberiza miliaris</i>	Common Bunting	Common
<i>Emberiza nivalis</i>	Snow Bunting	Rare
<i>Pyrrhula rubicilla</i>	Bullfinch	Rare
<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Skylark	Very common
<i>Alauda arborea</i>	Woodlark	Rare

### ORDER— SCANSORES OR CLIMBERS

#### CUCULIDAE OR CUCKOO FAMILY

<i>Cuculus canoros</i>	Cuckoo	Common
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### ORDER-COLUMBAE OR DOVES

#### COLUMBIDAE OR DOVE FAMILY

<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Ring Dove	Rare
<i>Columba aenas</i>	Stock Dove	Common

## ORDER— GALLINAE OR FOWLS

### PHASIANIDAE OR PHEASANT FAMILY

<i>Phasianus Colchicus</i>	Common Pheasant	Common
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### TETRAONIDAE OR TETRAO FAMILY

<i>Perdix cinereus</i>	Common Partridge	Common
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<i>Coturnix communis</i>	Quail	Common
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## ORDER— GRALLATORES OR WADERS

### CHARADRIADAE OR PLOVER FAMILY

<i>Charadrius pluvialis</i>	Golden Plover	Common
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<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Ringed Plover or Dotterel	Common
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<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	Common Dotterel	Common
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<i>Vanellus griseus</i>	Grey Plover	Common
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<i>Vanellus cristatus</i>	Common crested Lapwing	Common
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<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Oyster-catcher	Very common
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<i>Cinclus interpres</i>	Turnstone	Common
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### ARDEIDAE OR HERON FAMILY

<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Common Heron	Common
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<i>Nycticorax Europaeus</i>	Common Night Heron	Rare
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<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Bittern	Very rare indeed
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### SCOLOPACIDAE OR WOODCOCK FAMILY

<i>Tringoides hypoleuca</i>	Common Sandpiper	Common
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<i>Totanus ochropus</i>	Green Sandpiper	Rare
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<i>Totanus Calidris</i>	Redshank Sandpiper	Common
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<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Curlew or Whaup	Common
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<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Whimbrel	Common
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<i>Limosa vulgaris</i>	Common Godwit	Rare
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<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Ruff	Rare
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<i>Tringa Canutus</i>	Knot	Rare
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<i>Tringa Temminckii</i>	Temminck's Stint	Rare
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<i>Tringa minuta</i>	Little Stint	Very rare
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<i>Tringa cinclus</i>	Dunlin	Common
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<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	Grey Phalarope	Rare
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<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Woodcock	Common
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<i>Gallinago media</i>	Common Snipe	Common
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<i>Gallinago gallinula</i>	Jack Snipe	Common
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### RALLIDAE OR RAIL FAMILY

<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Water Rail	Common
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<i>Ortygometra crex</i>	Land Rail	Common
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<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Water Hen	Common
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<i>Fulica atra</i>	Common Coot	Common
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## ORDER- NATORRES OR SWIMMERS

### ANATIDAE OR DUCK FAMILY

Anser ferus	Grey-lag Goose	Rare
Anser segetum	Bean Goose	Common
Bernicla leucopsis	Bernicle Goose	Common
Cygnus ferus	Whistling Swan	Rare
Tadorna vulpanser	Common Shieldrake	Common
Mergus Castor	Goosander	Rare
Anas boschas	Mallard	Common
Querquedula Crecca	Common Teal	Common
Spatula clypeata	Shoveller Duck	Rare
Moreca Penelope	Common Wigeon	Common
Myroca Terina	Common Pochard	Rather rare
Margellus albellus	Smew	Occasional visitor
Fuligula cristata	Tufted Duck or Pochard	Rather common
Fuligula marila	Scaup Duck or Pochard	Rather rare
Oidemia fusca	Velvet Scoter	Rare
Oidemia nigra	Black Scoter	Very rare
Clangula vulgaris	Golden-eye Duck or Garrot	Rather common
Clangula albeola	Buffel-headed Duck	Common

### COLYMBIDAE OR DIVER FAMILY

Colymbus glacialis	Great Northern Diver	Very rare
Colymbus arcticus	Black-throated Diver	Rare
Colymbus septentrionalis	Red-throated Diver	Rather common
Chaulelasmus strepera	Gadwall	Very rare
Podiceps minor	Little Grebe	Common

### ALCIDAE OR AUK FAMILY

Fratercula artica	Puffin	Common
Alca torda	Razor-bill	Rare
Uria Troile	Common Guillemot	Rare

### PROCELLARIDAE OR PETREL FAMILY

Thalassidroma pelagica	Stormy Petrel	Common
Thalassidroma Leachii	Fork-tailed Petrel	Rather rare

### LARIDAE OR GULL FAMILY

Larus canus	Common Gull	Very common
Larus ribibundus	Black-headed Gull	Very common
Larus fuscus	Little Black-headed Gull	Common
Larus tridactylus	Kittiwake Gull	Very common
Larus Glaucus	Glaucus Gull	Rare
Larus argentatus	Herring Gull	Very common
Sterna hirundo	Sea-swallow or Tern	Common
Sterna fuliginosa	Sooty Tern	Rare
Sterna minuta	Lesser Tern	Common

## PELECANIDAE OR PELICAN FAMILY

Graculus Carbo	Common Cormorant	Common
Graculus Cristata	Crested Cormorant	Rather rare
Sula Bassanea	Gannet or Solan Goose	Common

Nine years later in 1885 F S Mitchell paints a more accurate picture in "The Birds of Lancashire" the first known comprehensive account of the county's avifauna. There are many references to the Fylde therein and is a fascinating read into the status of our birds at that time. Description of numbers involved remained vague with mention of large quantities, considerable numbers, numerous, not uncommon, not as common as it used to be, plentiful, abundant, pretty regular visitor etc, etc. Occasional references to hundreds are about as good as it gets. However arrival and departure dates, biology, and sites are all included and so long as you don't mind the many references to 'birds having been taken, or shot,' for example hundreds of dotterels offered for sale at Preston market, you will enjoy the anecdotes contained therein. Downloadable free from the internet it really is a must read and one I would highly recommend to you.

*B Dyson February 2017*

### **For Sale**

Hawke Frontier scope 20-60 x 85, c/w Manfrotto 055X tripod. As new. £90 ono.

Tel: **Chris Froggatt** 01253 823580

## **Note from the Fylde Bird Club Committee**

One of the peregrines at St. Thomas's Church has been shot dead while roosting on the church tower. Following this appalling event we have no choice but to request that sightings of Peregrines roosting on buildings, pylons, etc. are not attributed to specific locations on the Club's Website Sightings page. Please e mail the location to [news@fyldebirdclub.org](mailto:news@fyldebirdclub.org)

Similar logic has also led us to request that Brown Hare records are no longer posted on the Sightings page. Again, please e mail the records to [news@fyldebirdclub.org](mailto:news@fyldebirdclub.org)

## **Letter to the editor from Monty Myerscough**

### **Peregrine Falcon shot on St Thomas's Church, St Annes**

An open letter to the Gazette Newspaper and Fylde Bird Club.

I have just been informed about the report of the shooting of the Peregrine Falcon on the roof of St Thomas's Church, St Annes. I would like to point out that a pair of Peregrines have been observed around the tower for about 2 or 3 years and bred successfully for the first time last year, 2016, raising 3 young.

The Fylde Bird Club (by far the leading conservation organisation in the area) have been monitoring the site very closely and obtained permission to site a suitable nest box on top of the church tower to encourage them to breed. I was given the task to build the nest box which I did from plans of Peregrine nest box's already occupied by Peregrines in similar situations. The plan proved to be a success and breeding was confirmed last year with at least 2 and possibly 3 young fledged.

The report in the newspaper states that the dead bird was found on the top of the tower and examined by a vet or someone with similar experience.

The bird must have been shot from below the tower in the car park or from the grassed area and with an air gun that is I suspect beyond the legal (power) limit. I have plenty of experience of shooting air rifles and at that range I would be very surprised to actually kill a bird of that size unless hit in the head.

As the report states Peregrines and many other species of Raptors (birds of prey) are being relentlessly persecuted by a group of mindless idiots who think that they are above the law. Other species likely to get the same treatment are Hen Harriers, Golden Eagles, Goshawks, Sparrowhawks, Merlins, Short Eared Owls and anything with a hooked beak.

Anyone who thinks we are living in more enlightened times and this sort of criminal activity is now rare, couldn't be more wrong. If anything it is increasing to a point where some species are in danger of becoming extinct in Britain.

If the person who shot the Peregrine is reading this I would just like to say that I think a fine or a short spell in prison is not enough punishment for what you did and the chances are you will get away with it anyway.

If anyone knows who committed this offence or has information that may help please contact me on 01772396696 or **Lancashire Police, rural crime on 03003230085.**

**Monty Myerscough**



# Moorland Safari

**Join us for a spectacular walk...**

along one of the Forest of Bowland's most stunning valleys. Take this opportunity to learn more about the international importance of the area for birds of prey and the rare upland habitat they call home during the spring and summer. Birds to look out for include the ring ouzel, a regular breeder in the valley, our smallest bird of prey, the merlin and, if you're lucky, you may be rewarded with a sighting of England's rarest bird of prey, and emblem of the AONB, the hen harrier.



**Tickets:**

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Available from RSPB  
**Call:** 01524 581001  
**email:** bowlandsafari@rspb.org.uk

**For more information call  
01524 581001**

**Dates:**

April 15<sup>th</sup>, April 29<sup>th</sup>, May 20<sup>th</sup> and June 10<sup>th</sup>

**Visit [rspb.org.uk/reserves](https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves)**

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity:  
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