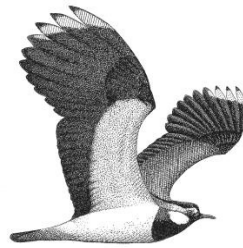


# June Newsletter 2018

Charity Number. 1102961



**Fylde  
Bird Club  
LANCASHIRE**

## Editor

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Welcome to summer at last. I hope you are taking/have taken full advantage.

A Club member has suggested how useful it would be to do articles in each newsletter on the hidden, or not so hidden jewels of birdwatching sites on the Fylde. Are there any volunteers? It would be good to cover one or two sites in each issue and build up a data base which would be available to members. Maybe the input could be shared out. Any help gratefully received.

The birds have certainly started to arrive on the Fylde. I hope you have enjoyed them all. I was in Suffolk under rain and cloud for a lot of the time. My highlights included a distant Cuckoo, a fast passing Hobby, the tail of a disappearing Dartford Warbler, two Green Woodpeckers celebrating spring and an Adder but Minsmere was as wonderful as ever.

In this issue Stephen Dunstan updates us on the last three months of sightings on the Fylde, I write about separating the smaller Plovers (Ringed, Little Ringed and Kentish) and Ian Walker talks about the status of the Great White Egret.

There is another Blast from the Past, I have included the results of the 2018 Photographic Competition and Richard Holmes has an update on Marton Mere.

I have been asked to request that members don't put information on the website on the presence and numbers of hares on the Fylde. There is a feeling that such information may endanger the hares. Sadly some people still see Hare Coursing as a sport!!

# The Fylde Bird Club Photographic Competition 2018

## The Results

### *The Fylde*



Winner	Mike Foy	Goldcrest.
2 <sup>nd</sup> =	Paul Slade	Arctic Tern
2 <sup>nd</sup> =	Jim Wacey	Meadow Pipit
2 <sup>nd</sup> =	Howard Phillips	Waxwings

### *UK*



Winner	Paul Ellis	Pallid Harrier
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Steve Oddy	Water Rail
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Jim Wacey	Nuthatch

### *The World*



Winner	Paul Slade	Red Headed Barbet
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Barry Dyson	Red Backed Shrike
3 <sup>rd</sup> =	Jim Wacey	Black Redstart
3 <sup>rd</sup> =	Paul Ellis	Mountain Buzzard

## ***The Underexposed***



Winner Wendy Noblet Common Tern

2<sup>nd</sup> Stephen Dunstan Starlings

The other placed photographs can be seen on the website.

Thanks to everybody who entered, the standard was as high as ever. I would encourage anyone and everyone next year to share their favourite photos through the 2019 Competition. I love seeing other peoples' photos as I am sure everybody does. Go on do it!

I also feel that the new format worked well with a short and interesting Hungarian Adventure by Paul Slade providing an amusing interlude.

***Peter Rhind***

## **RECENT SIGHTINGS – MARCH-MAY**

It felt for a long time as though this period would flatter to deceive, lots of nice birds and the feeling that a rare bird was always round the corner until it seemed like it wasn't after all. This was particularly galling with so much turning up at Marshside just across the Ribble. Then at the death some real quality – read on...

### ***Shrike Swoops Late and Steals Show***

At around midday on 27<sup>th</sup> May news broke of a Red-backed Shrike at Cockersand. A stunning male, it was a Fylde tick for many as it sheltered in trees near Lighthouse Cottage for the remainder of the day. On a bank holiday Monday it would presumably still have been a big draw the next day but it had departed.

Clearly late May can be a good time to look for scarce passerines, but most people find it more rewarding to do other forms of birding rather than check bushes which are generally very empty in this part of the world most of the time. In terms of spring scarce migrants a male Red-backed Shrike is right up there in terms of looks and wow factor. A lot of people can therefore be grateful to Kate Hughes who found it, and Ian Hartley who confirmed the identification.

### ***How many Hoopoe?***

You may wonder, given I am now about to talk about a remarkable three Hoopoe records this spring, whether I am contradicting myself in saying the spring was salvaged by the shrike. And in

one sense I am, but on the other hand none of the three reports was found by a birder and more significantly none of them were actually seen by a birder.

The first sighting at Mythop in early April wasn't actually corroborated further, though the species is clearly very distinctive and it may well have been a genuine record. On 25 April one was seen and photographed in a Thornton garden. The house owner, not knowing what it was, asked on a Facebook group for residents on the estate. As a result of this, several days later the report became known to the club and the clinching pictures seen.

Fast forward to 13 May and footage of a strange bird in a garden at Catforth also proved to be a Hoopoe. As this was made known to birders in a timely fashion a check of the site was made the following morning but it had already moved on.

As I write this I am in Shetland. The locals here are fairly more bird savvy than average. Most years a top drawer rarity is found by somebody who spots an unusual bird in their garden and posts it on Facebook asking what it is. Perhaps this may become more frequent in our own neck of the woods.

### ***Unusual Black-necks***

Black-necked Grebes are always a welcome sight on the Fylde, being less than annual. The two records this spring had the added bonus of being unusual in their respective ways. One on the sea at Starr Gate on 29 April was so unusual in this habitat that it was the first that seasoned observers at the site had seen in half a century of observations.

Anyone who dashed down for a glimpse needn't have hurried however as on 4 May one was found at Kincaig Lake, cruising up and down within ten feet of a rather incredulous finder. It continued to perform astonishingly well for several days, before becoming rather elusive in the last days it was reported up to the 13<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Fleetwood Fire***

A Firecrest was singing at Fleetwood's Mount Park on 9-10 May. Firecrests are difficult enough to catch up with on the Fylde, but a songster is particularly noteworthy.

Sharp eyed readers may notice that this bird found by local observers features in these pages whereas other records do not. This is simply because the recent sightings are compiled from the records which are submitted to the club's webpage and WhatsApp group.

### ***Turtle Dove Remains***

The best bird of the winter on the Fylde, the overwintering Turtle Dove at Preesall, was still in situ in March and April. It would be fascinating to know what its next journey was.

### ***Trillers Thrill***

Wood Warblers are barely annual on the Fylde these days, so a couple away from the Fleetwood passage stronghold was a good showing. One on 4<sup>th</sup> May at the North Blackpool Pond Trail Community Orchard saw many birders commuting between here and the nearby Kincaig Lake for the Black-necked Grebe. The following day another was seen in the more expected site of Stanley Park.

### ***Cuckoos Clocked***

The same can be said of Cuckoo as Wood Warbler really, except the Fleetwood bit. The first was reported by a non-birder at Hackensall on 22 April, with another bird present when birders checked the record out. One was heard in the Green Drive area of Lytham on 6 May, and lastly one was at Burrows Farm, Staynall on 20-21 May.

### ***Other Spring Passerines***

There was a mixed showing among the regular 'scarcities'. Yellow Wagtails were conspicuous, with an excellent peak of six at Braides on 21 April and several other multiple counts here. Four Ring Ousels was also very respectable, in April at Stanley Park on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Lytham Crem on 14<sup>th</sup>, Fairhaven on 19<sup>th</sup> and Newton Marsh on 22<sup>nd</sup>. About 18 Whinchat were noted, mostly singles but two at a couple of sites in early May.

There were three Pied Flycatchers noted, in May at Stanley Park on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Blackpool Moor Park on 8<sup>th</sup> and Kinraig Lake on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A very early Garden Warbler was reported at Stanley Park on 17 April, with two there on 14 May and one at Kinraig Lake on 4 May. All Redstarts were also seen on 4 May, at Cockers Dyke, Fleetwood and Stanley Park.

In terms of the negatives there was only one Spotted Flycatcher, at Stanley Park on 4 May. Particularly conspicuous by their absence were Tree Pipits, with hardly any records.

### ***The Seabird Spring***

There was very good coverage of the sea, particularly at Starr Gate, and as a result there were a number of relatively unusual reports. Perhaps the rarest was the Puffin at this site on 16 March, this species remains a description species in Lancashire though numbers of sightings do appear to be increasing somewhat.

Black-throated Divers are most often seen on the Fylde in spring. There was one close in off Rossall on 31 March, whilst on 11 May two were together on the sea at Starr Gate.

A fairly typical scattering of spring Pomarine Skuas included two at Starr Gate and one at Rossall on 28 April, and one at the latter site on 15 May. A few others were recorded at Fleetwood but not submitted to the club. The only Black Terns of the period were at Starr Gate, one on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May and five on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Little Terns were seen at Starr Gate on 4 May, with four the next day on 5 May.

There were two Shags during the period. One was at Cockersand on 16 April whilst one flew past Starr Gate on 15 May. Three drake Velvet Scoter were at Starr Gate on 21 March, among up to 7000 Common Scoter. On the theme of large counts over 1000 Manx Shearwaters were present on several dates, Sandwich Tern passage peaked at 785 birds, Kittiwakes at 112 individuals and Little Gull 42 past Rossall.

There were 13 Arctic Skua bird days reported including three at Rossall on 13 May. Fulmars peaked at 8 at North Shore and 9 at Starr Gate on 26 April.

### ***Raptor Review***

The best bird of the period was a Red Kite, seen at Medlar on 5 March and nearby Kirkham on the 7<sup>th</sup>. There were at least six Ospreys between 26 March and 9 April, though four reports on 8 April may have involved more than one bird. A couple of Hobby reports at Mowbreck and Pilling Lane Ends respectively typically didn't linger. A wintering Marsh Harrier was on the Ribble to mid March, a migrant was over Lytham Moss and Marton Mere on 19 May.

### ***Passage Waders***

Whilst mindful of the point in the introduction about being in the shadow of Marshside there were a few highlights. Two Wood Sandpipers were at Saltcotes on 6 May, with one still the next day. A Curlew Sandpiper was at Cockersand on 27 May.

## ***Goose Swansong***

Truth be told it hasn't been a vintage winter for scarce and rare geese, and this was particularly apparent as it came on the back of an exceptional one in 2016/17. That said there were still some nice finds to be had in the last throws of the season.

A Greenland Whitefront was at Moss Edge with Pinkfeet. On 4 April the adult reappeared at Marton Mere where it had turned up several times over the winter, never in the company of Pinkfeet.

On 4 March pairs of Eurasian Whitefronts were seen at both Warton Bank, and with Pinkfeet at Crimbles and are assumed to be different birds. The following week on 11 March an adult and two juveniles were at Eagland Hill.

There was one Dark-bellied Brent at several sites Over Wyre early March with Pinkfeet. There were two at Plover Scar on 15 April, whilst a very late bird was on the saltmarsh at Knott End on 16 May. Four Barnacle Geese with Pinkfeet at Crimbles on 4 March had decent credentials to be wild birds.

## ***Best Of The Rest / Long Stayers***

The Heysham Chough, quite possibly the bird in Blackpool and Fleetwood last year, was sound recorded over Knott End on 20 March and also apparently went past Fleetwood on at least one date.

Perhaps it is a bit early to relegate them to this section (sorry) but two Cattle Egrets remained at Warton in April, with one intermittently in May with one observation at Newton Marsh.

Less controversially included in this section Great White Egrets were seen at scattered sites including Cuddy Hill, Inskip, Lytham Crem, Marton Mere and Wrampool.

A drake Garganey was on Newton Marsh on 23 April.

A singing first winter male Black Redstart was singing at Coniston Avenue, Knott End on 16-17 April, whilst a female or immature was at Cockersand on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month.

The regular Marton Iceland Gull was seen on a number of occasions until mid-March.

Up to six Water Pipits were at the currently favoured site of The Heads in April, with one at Warton Bank in March.

The two Snow Buntings on St Annes beach were seen into early March.

Short-eared Owls were seen at Carr House Green Common, Marton Mere and Warton Marsh.

At least one Bittern remained at Marton Mere into March.

A Bewick's Swan remained at Moss Lane to 3 March.

Two late Purple Sandpipers were at Anchorsholme Park on 1 April.

Up to three late Brambling were at Coat Walls Farm in April.

The only Mandarin of the period was at Preesall Hill on 19 April. In a similar vein for what it's worth Ring-necked Parakeets have colonised Stanley Park.

**Stop Press** A Quail was reported singing in the buttercups at Cockersand on May 30<sup>th</sup> and a Little Tern was on the beach at Starr Gate on the last day of the month.

***Stephen Dunstan***

## The Status of the Great White Egret on the Fylde.

The Great White Egret has a worldwide distribution covering large parts of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas.

The Birds of the Western Palearctic Vol 1 describes its habitat as 'largely restricted to extensive wetlands and margins of fresh water in lowland regions. Forages in meadows, marshes, depressions, swamps, flood lands, drying pools and on margins of rivers, oxbows, streams, channels and lakes; **mainly in winter, shallow estuarine or coastal waters**' and indeed it is here where we start with our first record of the species on the Fylde.



It was on Warton's estuarine marsh where on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2007 the first accepted record of a Great White Egret was made on the Fylde.

Since that first record, the Warton Bank / Marsh area has proved to be synonymous with the species.

Using a 10 year Data Set from 2007 – 2017 – of the total 160 records for Great White Egret on the Fylde- 81 (51%) have been at Warton Bank / Marsh. In addition -

nearby sites including Freckleton and Lytham add a further 26 (16%) of the total and therefore with a 67% representation of all records, the Ribble Estuary is the strong hold for the species on the Fylde.

As can be seen on the graph provided by the BTO - the WeBS annual indices and associated winter population dramatically increased from 2006 – 2007 which coincided with the species arrival on the Fylde.

At the same time as the number of records in Britain increased, the seasonal pattern altered. When the species was an extreme rarity in Britain, virtually all records were of single birds in spring or summer. These were probably over shooting spring migrants or perhaps nomadic individuals prospecting from continental Europe during midsummer. However since 2000 the winter months have become the peak period for British Records and this pattern is the same on the Fylde. Between October and March 122 records were made equating to 76% of all the records over the 10 year period compared to only 24% made between April and September.

So where have these birds come from? All 12 colour ringed Great White Egret records in Britain originate from France. This pattern matches that in the Netherlands, where an increasing number of colour ringed birds are mostly of French origin.

The traditional European breeding birds in countries such as Austria and Hungary tend to migrate south in winter however there are now new populations in France and the Netherlands and therefore it is reasonable to presume that our wintering population are made up of birds from here. Of course this could be supplemented by the fact that the Great White Egret bred in Somerset for the first time in 2012.

Data collected by the BTO shows that the North West of England is a vital area for this bird in Britain. The Dee and Ribble Estuaries plus Morecambe Bay all hold multiple records for this species.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2016 a new county record was established as 9 birds flew past Ainsdale and then Fairhaven possibly ending up at Leighton Moss where 6 roosted overnight which were the first autumn records there that year.

Secondly a mobile flock of at least 8 birds were witnessed this year on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 at Warton Bank on a falling high tide. Records such as these demonstrate just how important our recording area is in reference to the status of the bird in Britain.

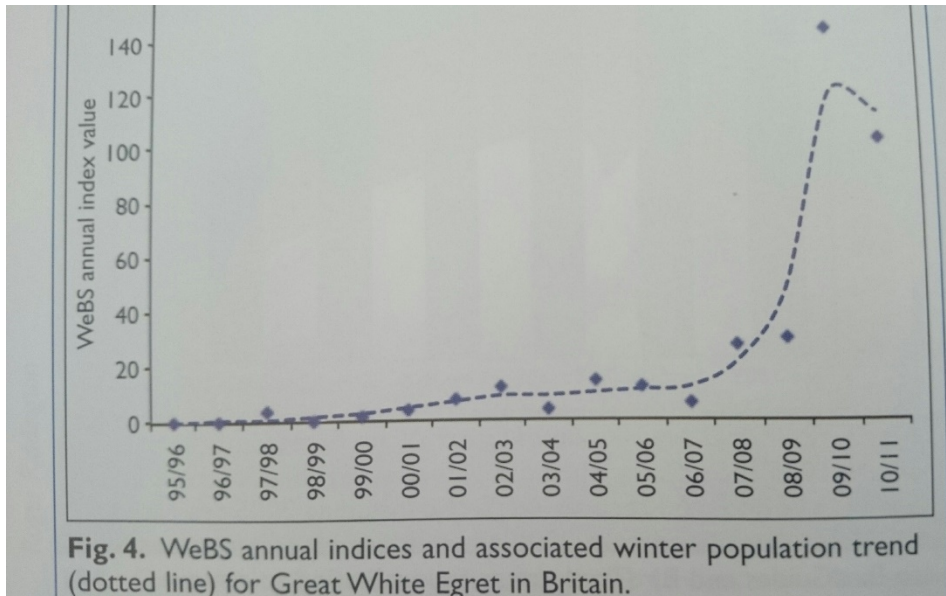


Fig. 4. WeBS annual indices and associated winter population trend (dotted line) for Great White Egret in Britain.

It will be interesting to see the status of the Great White Egret in the next 10 years. Indeed as more populations become successful in Somerset, France and the Netherlands, the wintering records on the Fylde should remain steady and potentially increase.

Following successful breeding in

Somerset, further attempts in Britain are likely to also increase however for this to happen, large areas of marsh habitat with suitable foraging areas are necessary.....perhaps if we are lucky - the first Fylde breeding record could be at the same location as the first sighting back in February 2007?

## References

Holt, C. 2013. The changing status of the Great White Egret in Britain. British Birds Vol 106

White, S et al 2017. Lancashire Bird Report 2016

Cramp, S et al. 1984. The Birds of the Western Palearctic Volume 1. London, Oxford University Press

## Thanks

In order to write this article thanks must go to Neil Calbrade the WeBS Research Ecologist at BTO and Chris Batty for the relevant data.

**Ian Walker** Photo – Paul Slade



## Confusion Species

### The Small Plovers – Ringed, Little Ringed and Kentish

#### **Ringed Plover (a.k.a. -Sandy Lu/Lo on the Northern Isles)**

This small, chubby wader is a common sight on the shores around the Fylde. Numbers grow in winter and on migration when it is hard to avoid as it restlessly searches for food in the sand and pebbles. It searches in short bursts followed by stillness when it uses its eyes to locate its prey. It also has a tap dance routine when it taps one foot on the sand and waits attentively. It is believed the vibration brings prey to the surface.



The adult is a brightly coloured bird, dark brown back, white underparts, Yellow/flesh coloured legs and a head bedecked with hoops of brown, black and white. The cap is brown, a black mask goes through the eye and around the neck

meeting on the breast, a white eyebrow and forehead and a short yellow bill with a black tip completes the look. What is amazing is the way such a bright bird seems to vanish when still amongst the pebbles. It relies on this superb camouflage when on the nest although when danger threatens it is one of the birds which does the, “look I have broken my wing and am helpless” act as it draws predators away from the nest. The young are nidifugous and so leave the nest after hatching.



The standard call is a tremulous double note delivered in a minor key and rising at the end. This is for the musicians amongst us.

The display flight is described as butterfly like as it circles and in flight the bright wing bars are visible unlike the fairly plain wings of the Little Ringed Plover.

Juvenile Ringed Plovers are more difficult to separate from juvenile Little Ringed Plovers. The plumage of the juvenile Ringed mirrors that of the adult although the young is plain pale brown and white. The upper part brown is finely edged giving it a lacy look. The bill is dark and the legs are duller. The head of the Ringed shows the white/pale forehead and white/pale eyebrow whereas the Little Ringed has no such markings giving a hooded appearance.

***Photos – Peter Rhind***

#### **Little Ringed Plover**

This is the smaller freshwater cousin of the Ringed Plover though of course separating by size works best if the birds would only stand next to each other!! It always looks smaller headed and is much nimbler and slimmer.



They are however very different. It is a dainty little Plover usually seen picking its way around the waters edge of looking for edible morsels such as small invertebrates and even seeds.

With its black necklace and bright yellow eye ring it is a very attractive bird. The neck band meets on the breast like the Ringed Plovers but is slimmer than the band on the Ringed Plover. In flight it lacks the bright wing bar and the call is thin and drops on the last note unlike the Ringed

Plover. The bill is black and the legs are fleshed coloured.

Its distribution is world-wide but we are on the edge of its range. It first bred in England just prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war and its place in our island has been helped by its love of the bleak landscape of gravel quarries and similar habitats. It is certainly attracted to landscapes that we might label as dumps. It has gradually spread and colonised such places but is still by no means common. The display flight is a butterfly like circling of its territory whilst calling constantly. On the Fylde it is rare breeder and passage migrant.

**Photo – Peter Rhind**

### **Kentish Plover aka – Snowy Plover.**

My first Kentish Plover was the long and regular visitor to Rossall in winter seven years in succession. I saw it on its last visit in 1997. This appearance was a complete anomaly



however and the best chance of seeing this bird would be on a rare visit during spring or autumn migration. The only other Kentish on the Fylde in the last nearly 30 years was at the aptly named Plover Scar at Cockersand.

It is a sad irony that the county which gave it its name no longer has breeding Kentish Plovers. When it was identified as a separate species taxidermy and egg collecting saw it vanish quite quickly from its very restricted breeding stronghold on

the south coast.

It is one of the smallest of the sand plovers and well spread across the world. All are pale, the degree of paleness varies between sub species according to geography and habitat. It is a leggy plover with a prominent head and shoulders. Tiny black bill and black legs, pale brown back and snowy white underneath complete the outfit. The Kentish Plover has a white eye brow and a white necklace. The band, which on the 2 other plovers meets on the breast, remains as shoulder pads on the Kentish. In flight it shows an indistinct wing bar. It really is a great find to brighten up a cold winters day.

**Peter Rhind Photo – Mick McGough.**

## The View from the Mere

Since my last update there has been plenty going on down at Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve. I've tried to list below things that might be of interest to FBC members.



- The Marton Mere Steering Group met recently with FBC represented by Paul Ellis and Malcolm Evans. All the work detailed below and reported on our social media feeds has been agreed by this group and it's fantastic to be working with the support of FBC. If any members would like to know more about any particular area of work on the reserve then please feel free to come down and see us or email me at [richard.holmes@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:richard.holmes@blackpool.gov.uk)
- Since my last update we have launched an Internship scheme and I'm delighted to say we now have three keen Interns. Two of our Interns are studying postgraduate qualifications in conversation related subjects so are on with some excellent survey work, some of which will help with the production of an updated Management Plan for the reserve.
- Fixed Point Photography Vegetation Survey work has been completed as part of our ongoing monitoring of the sites vegetation. Alongside this we have conducted a detailed survey of the invasive plant species within Marton Mere, Lawsons Field and Herons Reach.
- A Phase 1 Habitat Survey has been started, utilising one of our Interns GIS skills the data we have gathered will be accurately mapped.
- The Marton Mere Volunteer Rangers now complete the monthly WeBS survey and thanks to Stephen Dunstan for his help in arranging this with the BTO.
- Our links to Blackpool Sixth and Blackpool & Fylde College are proving very productive. We now hold regular work groups with the students and the B & FC students are producing interpretive artwork and two short films promoting the reserve and volunteering for us.
- Accurate species records are now being kept by our Visitor Centre Volunteers and I have sent the latest spreadsheet records to FBC with this update.
- Our season of events is going well, with our recent pond dipping event proving a huge success on our newly installed dipping platform. We've had our second article in the Blackpool Gazette and a nice piece on BBC Radio Lancashire.
- The next time you are in the FBC Hide you'll notice we're keeping on top of the previously cut reed regrowth trimming, along with managing the regrowth on the scrape. Hopefully this work which is no easy task will enhance the viewing opportunities from the Hide.

- A new gate has been installed to the side of FBC Hide to try and prevent people from walking around the front of the Hide. This has been damaged since we installed it and a repair is ongoing. If members need to access the front of the Hide to top up the feeders etc then the padlock on the gate is the same key as the one for the hide door. We will be installing a similar gate at the side of Dragonfly Den Hide to hopefully stop people going around the front of that hide also.
- Our new Woodland Watch education area project is coming along nicely with the erection of a new willow screen to avoid disturbance to the bird feeders. Further plans for this area include a stump seating area for children, bug hotels, pollinating plants area and safe woodchip pathways.

As always FBC members will always be a most welcome site on the reserve and offered a brew in the Visitor Centre. Our Visitor Centre Volunteers are really keen to have any wildlife sightings you might have.

Thanks and happy birding, **Ric Holmes**

### **Richard Holmes**

Environmental Volunteer Coordinator

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**Twitter** – Marton Mere Nature



## Another Blast From The Past

In the early 1950's Mr N. Harwood spent up to 5 hours a day birdwatching in Lancashire. A booklet was published outlining the results of this work looking in particular at the Fylde coast. He was helped by a number of young enthusiasts including a very young Mr M. Jones (would that be Maurice) who led the Blackpool group concentrating on Marton Mere. I have picked out a selection of findings that may be of interest to members.

Marton Mere had a Black-throated Diver for 3 weeks starting at the end of 1953 and a Red-throated diver spent a few days on the lake in Stanley Park in January 1954. A Black Necked Grebe turned up at Marton Mere in January 1954 and a pair of Herons nested at Lytham in 1952. On November 25<sup>th</sup> 1953 10 species of duck were present at Marton Mere – Mallard, Teal, Wigeon, Shoveler, Scaup, Tufted, Goldeneye, Pochard, Common Scoter and a female Merganser (a first for the Fylde) A drake Merganser later arrived at Fairhaven Lake. In 1952 nine Garganey were at Marton Mere followed by a Gadwall in May. Other notable arrivals were a Long-tailed Duck in November 1953 and a female Smew in January 1951.

Some interesting behaviour noted included newly arrived female Tufted and Scaup happily taking food from human beings. Both Scaup and Goldeneye were observed displaying and both Tufted and Pochard were mildly attacked by a Black Necked Grebe.

Winter flocks of up to 840 Pink-footed Geese were counted, a flock of 170 White-fronted Geese were at Cockerham and 6 Grey Lag Geese appeared at Lytham. Freckleton hosted a Whooper Swan in January 1952 and a Bewick's Swan in March 1954.

Raptor sightings noted included a Sparrowhawk taking a Corn Bunting, a Hen Harrier at Cockerham Marsh in November 1854, a Peregrine caught a Reeve at Freckleton but the plucky little bird escaped and flew off!! And also at Freckleton a Merlin was observed taking a Swallow or House Martin.

At Lytham on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1952 N. Harwood and E. Cartmell saw an all-white Falcon, the only other markings were faint barrings on the tail. No facial markings were seen and there was no darkening of the primaries. They believed it to be none other than a Gyr Falcon of the Greenland race. A similar bird was reported by a wildfowler taking a Teal in January 1954.

The sightings reported from Freckleton are mouth-watering in the least. Between 1951 and 1953 these included, White-rumped Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Dowitcher and Pectoral Sandpiper. Add to these flocks of 19 Little Stints, 23 Curlew Sandpipers and 41 Ruff. Amongst the commoner waders observed were Whimbrel, Greenshank, Green and Wood Sandpipers and Jack Snipe. In April 1952 the flock of Golden Plovers were seen to be in summer plumage.

At Lytham during December 1953 the approximate maximum numbers of what might be called the 10 most common shore birds were as follows – Great Blacked Gull(13) Lesser Black Backed Gull (24) Herring Gull (1030) Black Headed Gull (120) Common Gull (70) Oyster Catcher (1050) Lapwing (200) Ringed Plover(4) Grey Plover (17) Turnstone (200) Curlew(3) Black-tail (70) Bar-tail (270) Redshank (335) Knot (5000) Dunlin (20) and finally Sanderling (750)

It is suggested that the high numbers of Herring Gulls was caused by strong winds in January leading to thousands of cockles and starfish being washed up on the beach and

the Herring gulls are not ones to pass up on a free meal. They numbered in excess of 4000 by February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Freckleton turned up a single Little Gull amongst a flock of 50 Black-headed Gulls in 1950 and 6 Black Terns were there from 18<sup>th</sup> of September to the 18<sup>th</sup> of October. They were also seen at Marton Mere and Ansdell during the research period. In fact all British nesting Terns were seen on passage although for the first time in many years the Little Terns did not nest at the usual ternery on the Wyre.

Great Skuas and Arctic Skuas were all present and a one winged Long-tailed Skua was picked up near an airfield at Freckleton. A collision with an aircraft was the likely cause. Finally a Little Auk was found in a garden in Poulton and after 2 days being fed on halibut liver oil tablets and milk it was released on the Wyre and appeared in good health.

Some waders do call for special mention. Black-tailed Godwits numbered 180 in September 1953 and after transferring to higher marshy ground still numbered 98 in February. Redshanks counted 450 on the higher ground and Bar-tailed Godwits reached 820 in February following high winds in January 1954. Grey plovers set new records with 320 in breeding plumage on the shore in May 1953. The report rounds up the waders with 2 Grey Phalaropes, one dead at Fairhaven and one swimming at Lytham.

Other birds worthy of note included a Stock Dove at Lytham and Turtle Dove at Knott End, a Short-eared Owl at St Annes and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at Lytham in 1951. Amongst the Corvids were a single Raven (1951), Carrion Crows, one Hooded Crow in 1953 and Jays. Fieldfares arrive in small flocks in most winters but late January in 1952 and 1954 saw exceptionally large flocks arrive driven by severe weather. They were seen feeding frantically on the Sea Buckthorn at Fairhaven in their hundreds. The Handbook of the time failed to mention Sea Buckthorn as a food for Fieldfare.

To round up the findings at least 7 warblers were nesting on the Fylde coastal area, Chiffchaff, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, Wood Warbler, Reed Warbler and a very early Grasshopper Warbler was identified at Marton Mere on April 21<sup>st</sup> 1954.

Both male and female Pied Flycatcher were around the Marton area in 1954 and a pair of Hawfinch were observed feeding young near Lytham in 1953.

Winter visitors included small numbers of Siskins around Condor Green, Lesser Redpolls near Lytham and 3 Crossbills at Stanley Park in 1953. Bramblings include a flock of 200 at Lytham and small numbers of Snow Buntings were seen most winters during this period.

At Marton Moss on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1952 Mr Harwood was observing a Bunting 12 yards away, with a strikingly pink bill and a wing bar of the same colour. The alarm call and other plumage details identified it as an Ortolan Bunting. Although the field guides at the time did not mention the pink wing bar, this is frequently a conspicuous feature of this species.

The work done by these largely unsung heroes forms an invaluable data base for those who follow.

***Peter Rhind: Thanks to Maurice Jones for the loan of the original report.***

## **Geoff Gradwell thought members might find the Following Two Articles interesting.**

### **Garden Wildlife Health**

Garden Wildlife Health (GWH) is a collaborative project between the [Zoological Society of London](#) (ZSL), the [British Trust for Ornithology](#) (BTO), [Froglife](#) and the [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#) (RSPB) which aims to monitor the health of, and identify disease threats to, British wildlife.

Our particular focus is on garden birds, amphibians, reptiles and hedgehogs. For this we count on the help of the public to submit reports of sick or dead wildlife and to submit samples for analysis.

Wildlife diseases can cause population declines and even local species extinctions. They are a welfare concern (especially if they are caused, or exacerbated, by human activities) and some wildlife diseases can impact public health. It is important, therefore, that we monitor trends in wildlife diseases to identify their impact, underlying causes and to identify new and emerging threats. Every report submitted by the public contributes to a national database of wildlife disease incidents. Every sample submitted is examined and then archived into one of the largest wildlife tissue banks in the world. These are invaluable resources that provide a solid grounding to study and safeguard the health of British wildlife. We also create reports that inform government and NGO policies on conservation management and we liaise with the relevant agencies when a possible domestic animal or human health threat from wildlife is identified.

#### Aims of GWH

- To monitor trends and investigate emerging threats to garden wildlife health.
- To raise public awareness of disease threats to garden wildlife.
- To promote best practice for activities that involve garden wildlife to help safeguard their health.
- To communicate outcomes to the public, scientific communities and government agencies to prioritise actions to enhance the environment and biodiversity, public and domestic animal health.
- To provide a database and wildlife tissue archive for collaborative research.

The Institute of Zoology (IoZ) is part of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and has run [citizen science](#) projects for wildlife disease investigations since the 1980s. We began by performing post-mortem examinations on garden birds from incidents reported to us directly, or via the RSPB, by members of the public on an ad hoc basis. The [Universities Federation for Animal Welfare](#) was instrumental in the development of this research, providing financial support in these early years. This grew into a formal citizen-science surveillance project: the Garden Bird Health initiative (GBHi), chaired by [UFAW](#), which was

a partnership between the IoZ, the British Trust for Ornithology, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and other organisations. The GBHi enabled us to identify a range of diseases affecting garden birds in Great Britain and provided information on how best to manage these if they occurred in a garden. Most importantly, the GBHi identified the emergence, spread and impact of finch trichomonosis and enabled us to provide reassurance and advice to members of the public who found diseased or dead birds in their gardens.

In 1989, the IoZ initiated a study into the health of captive-bred red kites (*Milvus milvus*) before and after their release as part of a national scheme to reintroduce the species to England. Following release, the health of these birds was monitored by investigating the cause of death when red kites were found dead by volunteer networks. This project expanded to include a wide range of other species being released for conservation purposes and became known as the Disease Risk Analysis and Health Surveillance (DRAHS) project. Again, this work has relied on public engagement and involvement to achieve its goals. Perhaps the most important result from this work was the discovery that the decline of the red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) is mainly caused by a deadly virus (called squirrelpox virus) carried benignly by the introduced grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*).

In 1990, the IoZ began a research programme (the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme – CSIP) investigating causes of death of stranded marine animals around the UK coast. This programme relies on the public to report sightings of stranded cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises), seals, marine turtles and basking sharks. In addition, the public contributed survey data on harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*) and grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) during the 2002/03 seal distemper virus epidemic. Since its inception, the CSIP has studied links between human activity and marine animal disease. These have included the toxic effects of persistent organic pollutants, the incidence of bycatch and boat-strike, the discovery of gas embolism disease (a condition analagous to the ‘bends’ in humans) and strandings as a potential result of exposure to marine man-made noise.

In 1992, the Frog Mortality Project (FMP), a partnership between IoZ and Froglife, was launched to investigate the causes of death of amphibians in Great Britain. Again, this project involved members of the public who supplied reports and specimens for post-mortem examination. The FMP led to the discovery of a new viral disease of frogs and toads in Britain, caused by a ranavirus – the first time a ranavirus had been found in the UK and the first one that had been found infecting amphibians in Europe. Our research showed that the virus was most likely an incursion from North America. Results from the FMP tracked the emergence and spread of ranavirus disease across the country. We have since shown that this virus is causing population declines of the common frog (*Rana temporaria*) and is also affecting some of our other native amphibians.

All of these projects have had strong track records in public engagement and, ultimately, in substantially increasing public awareness of wildlife disease issues. These projects have enabled us to determine the profound impacts of disease epidemics on UK garden wildlife species, and to identify other, emerging disease threats, e.g. avian pox infection in great



tits, which could potentially have a serious nationwide impact. Also, they show that wildlife disease threats are changeable and unpredictable, and highlight the need for effective multi-species garden wildlife health surveillance. Our research has shown that disease threatens not only rare, but also common, species, and we believe wholeheartedly that disease investigations, in parallel with population monitoring, are vital in informing conservation strategies across species. Hence, we have now launched the Garden Wildlife Health project, which encompasses the GBHi and FMP and extends the range of species to include reptiles and hedgehogs.

### **Birds on BBC Radio 3**

Hello - I'm emailing to suggest some of your members and subscribers might be interested in a series of essays called *Migrants* by Tom McKinney currently broadcasting on BBC Radio 3 each evening at 10.45. The series of 5 are available to listen to now, and will be on the website for many weeks and months to come.

Enjoy! <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b1psj8>

And also *Nightingales* is proving popular: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b1pgkm>

Many thanks - Mel

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### **Forthcoming Fylde Bird Club Meetings**

- Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June - Gardening for Bees – Julia Hoggard
- Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> July - Heaven 17 – Stephen Dunstan
- Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> August - the Birds of Spurn – Rob Adams

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