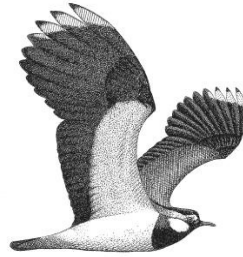


March Newsletter 2018

Charity Number. 1102961



**Fylde
Bird Club
LANCASHIRE**

Editor

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Only two months in and I already have a highlight that is going to be hard to beat. Early morning and the salmon coloured light of sunrise with a hunting Barn Owl seemingly oblivious of me following the sea wall. It finally landed on a post five metres away looked at me (who was observing who) and after a couple of minutes flew and passed me only a few metres away.

Hope the rest of 2018 measures up and good luck to everyone else. May the year be a good

one. P.S. A Turtle Dove 50 mtrs from my front gate, keep going 2018!

More on the Turtle Dove from Paul Ellis in his finders report and Maurice Jones has a short catalogue of the winter history of the Turtle Dove on the Fylde up to 2003.

In this Newsletter Stephen Dunstan gives a roundup of birding on the Fylde over the last 3 months including more information on that Turtle Dove.

I have written about the 3 smaller Grebes that can be encountered with a lot of luck or should I say skill.

Ric Holmes has written about work at Marton Mere. I hope he feels able to make this a regular item, thanks Ric.

Don't forget the Photo Competition and the new rules. Information attached.

Recent Sightings November – February

Turtle Tops the Tree

It probably isn't the most original thing to say, but not all that long ago it would have seemed unbelievable that this species would head a recent sightings summary in preference to any of the three that follow. However the population of this species has dwindled significantly, largely due to persecution on migration routes, whilst some species have become much regular due to global warming. So the Turtle Dove found on 10th February in the Secretary's garden (and Kinta's garden...) on Beech Road, Preesall was the clear highlight of the period.

Of course it wasn't just that it was a Turtle Dove, but a Turtle Dove in February. At this time of year the smart money is on any report of a Turtle Dove being eventually confirmed as one of the two forms of Rufous Turtle Dove (aka Oriental Turtle Dove). The fact that this presumption occurs even though both *meena* and *orientalis* races of the rare species are effectively vagrants shows just how unusual Turtle Doves are in winter.

The bird was eventually found to be fairly regular on Pilling Lane when it wasn't visiting the Beech Road garden where it was found. With its habits largely pinned down it became very popular with visiting birders from throughout the county and beyond. Although some people suggested an escape origin was most likely there is no evidence to support this claim; if Rufous Turtle Doves can turn up in Shetland and the Faroe Islands in winter why not a Turtle Dove in milder Lancashire.

Indeed there is relatively recent previous for wintering on the Fylde, with a bird at Whyndyke Farm, Marton in December 2013. Since then however there have been just two others at any time, in May 2012 at Clifton and May 2013 at Sowerby. At the time of writing the bird is still present and it will be interesting to see when it does finally move on.

Brief Gloss

Glossy Ibis have flattered to deceive on the Fylde as they have nationally. At one point it looked like they were going to become something of a fixture, but then if anything they have become a bit more scarce again. It is a couple of years since one was readily available.

One on floodwater adjacent to one of the feeding stations at Eagland Hill would therefore have been likely to have been quite popular if it had lingered. Unfortunately although it didn't seem to move that far after it was found there was no further sign of the bird and it was seen only by the finder.

Late News from The Ribble

At the very end of November, after the copy for the last newsletter had been finalised, an American Wigeon was seen on Newton Marsh. Given the observer there is little doubt about the sighting, but it is interesting to note the increasing issues on the Ribble Estuary with American Wigeon x Eurasian Wigeon hybrids. On the one hand it may be that the awareness of features of hybrids and more records being photographed is leading to more

birds being reassessed as not pure American Wigeon. On the other hand it could be that one lost drake is fathering broods on this side of the pond and hybrids are therefore more numerous on the Ribble....

Great Egrets

The author is fully open to the suggestion that he needs to let go of Great White Egrets as far as the rarity summary is concerned, given they are regular on the Ribble Estuary now. But to some extent we still punch above our weight given the national situation, and whilst even the three in early December on Warton Marsh could be argued to be expected the same can't be said about the mobile flock of eight there on 2nd February. Even in the context of birds now breeding in the south of England the nine seen on visible migration and now this flock remain remarkable records.

Other Egrets...

It was only last summer when the arrival of a group of Cattle Egrets on the north Ribble was still really quite exciting. They went on to nest at Burton Mere in Cheshire, and some observers even argue that they bred on Southport Marine Lake. Either way the occurrence pattern looks set to be one of steady increase. Nevertheless they are still a very scarce species on the Fylde. During the period one was at Freckleton on 23 December and 4 January, there were three on Warton Marsh on 5 January and finally perhaps the original single at Freckleton on 10 January. Perhaps breeding on the Fylde may not be too far away.

Late Leach's

When the winds got up in January there were only so many possibilities. In the event other than the expected Kittiwake and Little Gull influxes it was likely to be a skua or a Leach's Petrel that highlighted, and it was the latter with one past Blackpool North Shore on 17th January. Winter records are still notable, but with a good blow in December or January the track records does show it is well worth targeting this species on seawatches.

Hawfinch – The Middle Act?

Following the record influx in the autumn it was clear that there were still more immigrants wintering in the UK than first suspected as birds moved on as far as the Canary Island and the African deserts. So whilst it was notable it shouldn't have been a complete shock that another was seen on the Fylde, in this case heading south over Freckleton Naze on 20 January.

At the time of writing in late February it is clear that there are still some huge groups to the south of us. There is therefore a decent prospect of more being seen on migration watches in the spring as they begin to reorientate. If you haven't seen one yet on the Fylde and really want to, Rossall Point on a calm day in April, would seem a decent shout for one.

Kites remain elusive

I think I have remarked before as to how brief Red Kites on the Fylde almost invariably are. My memory may be playing tricks with me, but the only twitchable one I can recall was at Singleton for a few days. The brace of reports in the period did nothing to alter this perception, briefly at Fluke Hall on 4th Jan and Preesall on 20th Feb. Spending a lot of time in North Fylde in early Spring may be the best approach if you want to find your own locally.

Geese – Not As Good As Last Year

Sorry to be a bit negative but it is perhaps no surprise that this winter hasn't reached the heights of last year. There were as ever a few waifs and strays with the Pinkfeet.

At least two Tundra Bean Geese were seen, mostly Over Wyre but on one occasion at Lytham Moss. At least one juvenile and one adult were seen, but no more than one individual.

It was a similar situation with Greenland Whitefronts, with no more than one seen but at least one adult and one juvenile. Unusually an adult joined the Canada Geese at Marton Mere a couple of times in January, and it is tempting to think that this was different from one associating with Pinkfeet on Lytham Moss. There were only three reports of European Whitefronts in the whole period, so it was surprising that two of them on 12th February were at different sites Over Wyre and were therefore not the same bird.

Up to two Dark-bellied Brents were at Pilling Marsh during the period. The only Pale-bellied Brent of the period was also Over Wyre at the back end of February.

Farewell Old Faithful?

Perhaps it has just moved wintering grounds, but on the face of it the Conder Green Spotshank may have gone to Redshank heaven. If it has, catching up with this species locally will become quite a lot harder, evidence being the only one in the period on floods at Lytham Hall on 10 February.

Scaup surprise, scarce scoter

No surprise that there were a few Scaup reports during the period, but it was certainly a surprise that they almost all related to no fewer than five juveniles in Marton Mere and latterly Stanley Park. The only other record was two at Glasson briefly.

There was only one Velvet Scoter reported in the entire quarter, a drake off Starr Gate on 15th December. This must make it one of the worst seasons for this species in the Fylde in recent years.

Smattering of Sandpipers

Common Sandpipers were more noticeable than in most winters, with two together on the Ribble as well as regular birds at Conder Green and Myerscough Quarry. Green Sandpipers peaked at four at both Larbreck and St Michaels.

Divers disappoint

There were a barely a dozen reports of Red-throated Divers in the period, never mind scarcer species. One Great Northern was noted, past Starr Gate on 17th February.

Reliable Bewick's

Perhaps because they are big and site faithful Bewick's Swans seem to be very popular with winter birders on the Fylde. Up to nine were seen in North Fylde, and seven at Lytham Moss.

White Winger Whitewash, Almost...

Considering that the period included a good influx of Glaucous and Iceland Gulls nationally late on it was a very disappointing show on the Fylde. Even in Lancs we were surrounded by sites doing better than us for white wingers. We did however have the ever reliable adult in the Marton Mere / Marton waste transfer station / Merside Tesco areas.

Waxwing mini-invasion

A very mini invasion. There were two singles, a first winter was at Anchorsholme on 21 January and one in Lytham on 2 February.

Best Of The Rest / A Notable Omission

Purple Sandpipers were most reliable in Blackpool, not Rossall during the period, and it was at the former site that the peak count of six was noted. Given this species is dwindling at other sites it is pleasing to see Fylde wintering numbers recovering.

A Black Redstart was seen in January and February in Norbreck, Blackpool, but was clearly mobile and elusive.

There were at least two Bittern at Marton Mere. It is unclear if one at Staining Lodge golf course on Christmas Eve was a different bird, but presumably it was.

During the January storms an adult Shag was seen past Starr Gate on the 17th, the week before a dead juvenile was found on St Annes Beach and had been ringed at Puffin Island, Anglesey in the summer.

Two Snow Buntings were seen on several dates on St Annes North Beach, probably the best Fylde site for them.

A final thought – though there were a couple of Short-eared Owls reported there were no Long-eareds. Has the Marton Mere roost moved to an area it can't be viewed from or have these birds gone.

Stephen Dunstan

Pilling Lane Turtle Dove

On the weekend of the 9th and 10th of February we decided to do some overdue decorating owing to a horrible weather forecast for the weekend (just like all the others this year). So birding was off the agenda and I was having to cope with that.

At 1:30 pm on the Saturday we were taking a well-earned break and having a bite to eat sitting looking out into the garden. The usual suspects were mostly there, including an impressive mob of 18 Tree Sparrows and about 30 House Sparrows on the seed feeders. A few Collared Doves and eight Woodies were wandering about on the ground hoovering up the discarded shower of seed thrown out by the Sparrows.

The Collared Doves flew off then quickly returned and as they landed I noticed that one looked very small. This woke me up and I reluctantly exchanged my fish finger buttie for a nearby pair of bins. I shouted Kinta to look at the bird because it was going to be something different. Before I focused the bins I was already considering the possibilities and escaped Palm (Laughing) Dove was my prediction, so I wasn't too excited at that point. In the past, one had been at large in Watson Road Park for some time and certain members of the old Bird-Line team attempted to make a case for its ship assisted but wild origin. I and the birding authorities weren't convinced.

On focusing the bins on the suspect I was shocked to see what appeared to be a normal looking but clearly out of place and time Turtle Dove. Eddies in the Space-Time continuum? Ref. Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy (a must read but not much use for identifying doves). Now the pressure was on. Could it be a Rufous Turtle Dove, which is a mega rare vagrant from the east but which has form for wintering in British gardens? Now that really would be something in the Fylde! However it clearly wasn't right for Rufous, which is big, even bigger than Collared Dove. The impression of small size when it flew in was confirmed by comparison with the adjacent Collared Doves as they fed on ground; it was tiny. I checked around the other features anyway and they were all good for European Turtle Dove: small dark centres to the broadly rufous edged mantle and wing covert feathers, large bare area around eyes and brown rump.

Having settled the identification, what to do next? Try to take some pictures? Ring the news out? Finish the fish finger buttie? I went for the camera but had to change the lens and put in a card. I took a few shots and had a quick bite of the buttie, then without



warning or any apparent reason, it flew off. It had been present for less than five minutes! Although the bird had gone for now, the newly instigated Bird Club WhatsApp thingy was pressed into service. This is really useful and easy to work. I picked a picture on the back of the camera, opened WhatsApp on the phone, picked the Bird Club Group, pressed the photo button in the App to take a picture of the Back Of the

Camera ('BOC shot' is a new term we all have to learn now), typed a few words and pressed Send. That's all there was to it and the news was out. Within a few minutes it was

picked up by the RBA pager service and Paul Slade had also texted the news out to members.

Although we kept checking every few minutes, the Dove wasn't seen again for the rest of the day and even though we were at home all the next day, it didn't come back. However prolonged visits by the local sparrowhawk will not have helped. Other birders also checked the surrounding area on the Sunday without success. We thought it might have moved on but then at 0820 on the Monday, Kinta saw it again, back under the feeders. Again it only stayed for a few minutes before flying off towards Pilling Lane. The following day it was located sitting in trees round the corner on Pilling Lane and at the time of writing (early March) it is still being seen in that area on and off. Its visits to our garden are irregular but most days it drops in for a feed but usually stays for less than five minutes.

The best strategy for seeing this bird is to walk up and down Pilling Lane in the vicinity of Beach Road checking the trees on either side. Most days it eventually shows up in these trees and can sit there for long periods. We will of course keep putting out the news if it comes back to our garden but unless it changes its routine, there's not much chance of connecting with it there.

This appears to be a first winter bird based on the presence of some older juvenile wing coverts with whitish edges. The black and white neck marks don't appear fully developed and the breast is greyish-brown instead of pinkish. The outer primaries are also older and paler with very worn tips. Turtle Dove is normally a summer only visitor to Europe and it is a vagrant to the Fylde with only 15 records since 1990. Almost all have been one day only birds including the last (only just) twitchable one at Sowerby in 2013. There is at least one previous winter record when one was seen on two dates in December 2003 at Wyndyke Farm. The species has now become scarce even in its former strong holds of East Anglia and South East England. Therefore, this long staying (25 days and counting), wintering Pilling Lane bird, offers a rare opportunity to see one without travelling very far.

Paul Ellis

Turtle Doves on the Fylde (Winter)

Turtle Doves have suffered a drop in numbers of over 90% in the recent past. They are summer visitors to the U.K. so what is one doing in the Fylde in winter? Well the record is not without precedent, the first bird coinciding with the arrival of the first Collared Dove in the 60's.

The following are the published records.

- One with 11 Collared Doves in a St Annes garden, 7th- 9th of Dec 1964. (N.Harwood)
- One or two Lytham Moss area (site not precise) until early Nov 1965. (P.Carah)
- One in 1965 in the same St Annes garden as the 1964 bird.
- Another reported on the 16th December 1965. (Mrs Lancaster per N. Harwood)
- A probable winterer 29th of March 1966 (per N. Harwood)
- One wintering at Poulton Le Fylde 1970-1971. (Mrs K.Meredith)
- One at a bird table Whyndyke Farm, Marton. 1st – 5th of Dec 2003. (P. Kirkham et al)

Maurice Jones

Confusion Species

Little Grebe, Black Necked Grebe and Slavonian Grebe

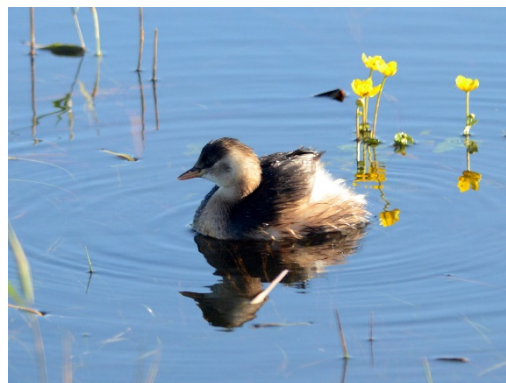
These three are our smallest Grebes and can all be seen on the Fylde if you are **very very** lucky.

Little Grebe- aka Dabchick, Divedapper or Divy Duck



The commonest of our small Grebes. It can be seen all year round on almost any available stretch of water. At least 2 of its nicknames refer to its habit of noiselessly slipping under the water if disturbed and it then vanishes. It really can be illusive. The summer call is quite distinctive, described as similar to the bubbling call of a female Cuckoo, or a loud trilling sound , or whinny of a small horse or finally a slightly insane giggle. Take your pick.

It really is a charming, diminutive, and characterful little water bird. It has been described as a water rabbit due to its fluffy tail in both summer and winter plumage. In summer the fluffy ball like shape, no rear end, dark colouring, bright yellow gape and ginger neck make it a beautiful little Grebe. In winter it retains the same dumpy shape but the plumage is paler brown and the crowning glory of that powder puff tail is white. Its flight across the water is a weak flutter but do not under estimate this feisty little grebe, it can and does cross the North Sea.



Like all Grebes it has large lobed feet and its legs are set well back on its body which works perfectly well propelling through the water but when it visits the land it is front heavy and awkward. One very old Lancashire name for the Little Grebe was “ little footy a--- “ Feel free to complete the unflattering missing word.

Photographs – Summer Mick Mcgough. Winter Peter Rhind

Black-necked Grebe aka Firey Eye

Find this on the Fylde and that is a good day's birding. It has been identified 14 times in the last 14 years so is it scarce or rare? [I don't remember it appearing in its full beautiful summer plumage but I stand to be corrected]. YES IT HAS (Thank you Stuart Piner) It usually calls in on migration in winter or juvenile plumage. A summer bird really is stunning, plumes of golden feathers adorn the cheeks, the body is dark and the neck is black. The eye is, as the nickname implies, a brilliant red. It sits high in the water showing a grey rear end.



Wonderful as it is we normally see winter birds on the Fylde. It can then be easily confused with the Slavonian Grebe. The Black-necked Grebe is a slightly longer than the Little Grebe but it shares the same fluffy rear end. The body is grey with a pale chin and it is generally a scruffy bird (sorry to Grebe lovers) It is the head which picks out the Black-necked Grebe to me. The bill is fine and very slightly upturned, the forehead rises steeply



to a bump and this gives what I would describe as a “chuchi” face, other people liken it to a blend of imp and cherubin. Whatever words you use this head shape is very distinctive and visible from a distance. The head is finished off with the firey ruby red eye and a black cap which falls below this eye.

The call is plaintive and squeaky interspersed with short whistles.

**Photographs – Winter Craig Bell
Summer Stuart Piner**

Slavonian Grebe



The rarest of the small Grebes only being reported on the Fylde 6 times in the last 14 years. The normal caveat applies of how many pass through unseen or unidentified.

The first and only summer plumaged Slavonian Grebe I have seen was on Loch Ba on the island of Mull. Sea Eagle perched in a tree on my left, Golden Eagle being mobbed by 2 Ravens on my right and these stunning Grebes in front of me. Which way to look was my problem.

The golden feathers on the cheeks of the breeding Slavonian are longer than those of the Black-necked and it is a more compact and the rear end is not as fluffy.

It is the winter version we are likely (that is a very hopeful word) to come into contact with



quite often at a distance. It has been described as a diminutive blob with white cheeks and a black “woolly hat or even a Northern cloth cap “. The bill is straight and strong and the forehead shallow giving the grebe a very different profile to the Black-necked. It has a pale chin and neck and of course a blood red eye. The Slavonian is more likely to be seen on the coast. .The normal call is shrill with screams

reminiscent of a Water Rail, not a song bird then!

Photographs – Summer John Jenkins. Winter Paul Ellis.

Peter Rhind

Photographic Competition 2018

Please note the changes for the Photographic Competition in 2018.

The planned format for the meeting will be as follows,

Sightings report as usual but kept brief to avoid photos followed by more photos.

The Photographic Competition.

A visiting speaker, 30/45 minutes.

The results of the Competition, prizes and a few words about the winning photos.

It is hoped this will make the meeting more attractive to members who would like more than just Photographs

Fylde Bird Club Annual Photographic Competition 2018

Each year the Fylde Bird Club holds a photographic competition. All current members who also paid their subscription in the previous year are invited to enter and vote for their favourite photographs. Members may submit up to **TWO** photographs for the Fylde category, **ONE** photograph for the British Isles category, **ONE** photograph for the World category and **ONE** photograph for the Underexposed category (if the photographer is eligible to enter this category). All categories are described below:

- **Fylde** (Fylde coast recording area)
- **British Isles** (does **NOT** include a photograph taken in the Fylde)
- **World** (does **NOT** include a photograph taken in the Fylde or British Isles)
- ***Underexposed** (person entering has not won before in a previous competition; photograph must be taken in the Fylde)

Digital photographs taken in the calendar year prior to the competition are acceptable. The competition will be held at the meeting on April 24th and all entries to be submitted to Peter Rhind (by e-mail or by flash drive). It will help Peter enormously if all entries could reach him by Sunday April 15^t, although it will still be possible to enter on the night. If you have any queries please contact Peter: Tel 01253 812495; E-mail: rhind1003@btinternet.com

Competition rules

Only **TWO** images for the **Fylde** category per photographer

Only **ONE** image for the **British Isles**, **World** and **Underexposed** categories per photographer

All photographs must be taken during **2017**

No photographs taken at the **nest**

No photographs of **captive** or **trapped** birds

Please submit **digital photographs** only; slides/hard copies/prints will not be accepted (but may be submitted as scanned images).

The top three photographs in each category will be announced. However, only photographers who have taken the winning photograph in each category will be asked to elaborate on their entry (e.g. where the photograph was taken, type of equipment used etc).

Fylde, British Isles and **World** categories are open to **ALL** members.

'**Underexposed**' category: **Optional** category that is only open to entrants who have **never won before** in any category (Fylde, British Isles or World). Only photographs taken in the **Fylde** are eligible. The same photograph can also be submitted in the Fylde category

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

Peter Rhind

I attach a letter from Shaun which should be of interest to members.

Peter,

Please can you share the latest Ban Driven Grouse Shooting petition with the members of Fylde Bird Club?

The deadline for signing this petition is 2nd April 2018 so hopefully it's inclusion in the next Newsletter will allow members a period to sign before the deadline. If not perhaps members could be emailed separately from the newsletter to make them aware of it?

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/201443>

Many thanks,

Shaun Ankers

What's WhatsApp

A new co-operative bird news service has just started for local bird news. The service uses the Mobile phone app (application) called 'WhatsApp', so users will need to load this 'app' on their smart phones or tablets or computers in order to participate. Once the app is loaded, users then join the Fylde Bird Club WhatsApp Group using the link below.

The service is free to use for individual users and there is no cost to the Fylde Bird Club. Once joined, users will receive all messages posted to the group.

The important feature of this service is that all users can post their own news messages directly onto the Fylde Bird Club WhatsApp group from in the field using their mobile phones.

This means that the service should run itself without any one person having to continuously maintain it.

The idea is to use it to immediately share local news of scarce and rarer birds that people are likely to want to go and see. In addition to rarities it will therefore include records that will not make the pagers and Fylde Bird Club text service but are still of local interest, e.g. Green Sandpipers, Purple Sandpipers, Whinchats, Bramblings and Barnacle Geese, etc.

Please note that the WhatsApp service is an extra means of sharing information and does not replace anything else already in use. Therefore the Fylde Bird Club text service will continue to operate as before and members should continue to post all their sightings on the Bird Club's Sightings Page on our website.

I hope this will be of use and interest. Thanks to Stuart Piner for suggesting its use and to Ash Baines for setting it up for us.

Click this link to start: [Fylde Bird News](#)

or if you are reading this on paper, type this address into your internet browser on your phone:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/AI5mgJdrLVPJiufhjXdoE>

Paul Ellis

Forthcoming Meetings

- March 27th Hay Bridge Nature Reserve. Robin Cope.
- April 24th Birds of the Gambia. Paul Slade. 2018 Photographic Competition.
- May 22nd Discovering Donana. Paul Kenyon.

The View From The Mere

This is the first of what will be regular three monthly updates from Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve. Fylde Bird Club has a long and proud history working to protect and develop the Mere and I'm delighted to be playing a part in protecting that legacy and taking things forward to manage and develop the reserve.



Firstly I'd like to recognise and thank FBC for all the support and advice, and in particular recognise the fantastic regular commitment of those FBC members who are part of our



Volunteer Rangers Team, turning up week in week out on our regular volunteer work days of Tuesday and Thursday, along with additional patrols, staffing the Visitor Centre and supporting events. So thanks Len, Jan, Jonny, Nigel and Geoff. A number of FBC members are also active participants on our Friends of Marton Mere Group and of course we have the continued support of FBC and Mick McGough in the provision of supplies for the bird feeders.

Although I have only been in post officially with Blackpool Council since the start of last December I have been volunteering on the Mere over the last couple of years. Having volunteered regularly for RSPB, Lancs Wildlife Trust and Lytham Hall I can honestly say the volunteers at Marton Mere are the most enthusiastic, resilient and friendly group I have worked with.





This update covers the period December, January and February and I've tried to give a flavour of the ongoing work on Marton Mere, including habitat management and events. I've included plenty of photos and limited the text to hopefully provide an interesting little read over your morning tea or coffee break. To

combat the problem of encroachment by people and dogs into the habitat of the North scrub area we have been using material from the winter tree work to barrier areas off. We have used a combination of willow raddling and dead hedging to do this and created a more sympathetic look to the standard stock or post and rail fencing, plus it's free! In line



with the management plan for Marton Mere, the North West area of the scrub has been carefully managed this winter with some selective removal of trees, bushes and other vegetation.

This is part of the 5 year cycle to manage the whole of the North scrub. The aim being to create a mosaic of habitats and in particular suitable habitat for breeding Whitethroat and other scrubland species. As we've been working in the North West corner of the scrub we have used the opportunity to lay a traditional Hawthorne hedge. Using traditional techniques and some careful chainsaw work we have managed to lay a significant section and it will be interesting to see how this develops over the next few years. The aim is to lay further next winter season. As regular



visitors to Marton Mere will know the new container hide (Heron Hide) can be a bit of magnet for vandals and antisocial behaviour, with people climbing over the stock fencing to gain access in front of the hide. To combat this we have used nature's best barbed wire and transplanted several rows of Blackthorn to the sides of the hide. Any potential trespasser will only attempt to climb over Blackthorn spikes once if they have any sense! Over the last month we have focussed our attention to the area

around the FBC Hide. The old seed feeding tables were past their best so have been replaced. The reed channels have been cleared giving a much improved view and greater opportunity to see that Cettis Warbler or Water Rail darting across the gaps in the reeds. Again to stop people encroaching round the front of the hide we have managed the trees surrounding the hide and used the material removed to dead hedge along the line of existing stock fencing. I would like to secure

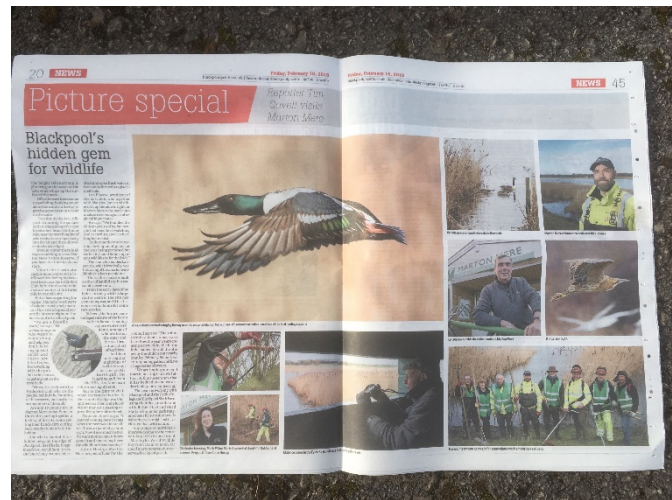


access to the side and front of the hide by installing a gate to block access but to still allow members of FBC to top up the seed with the same key as access to the hide, this will depend on me getting funding for it. There is also a stock of seed in the hide now so please feel free to top up the tables if you notice they need doing. The pathway past Woodland Watch Hide by the feeders was very boggy this winter so has been resurfaced which has improved things no end. The area around the feeders is part of a project to improve access for children and education groups whilst ensuring screening and cover for the feeders. This is planned as part of our work during the spring.



attracting migrating waders this season. It certainly looks in much more favourable condition now. Whilst out on the island we have inspected the Sand Martin bank which appears to be in good order. Thanks to Paul Ellis and Ian Walker for their advice on this subject, let's hope we get lucky this year and it gets used. It's great to see a number of visiting birding groups at

Whilst the weather and in particular The Beast from the East winds and snow have made things challenging we have worked hard to clear the scrape of reed and vegetation, returning it to a nice shallow muddy feeding habitat, hopefully



Marton Mere and recently we've had visits from Oldham U3A and Blackburn Bird Club. We've afforded them some good old Lancashire hospitality and given them access to the FBC Hide, opened up the Visitor Centre for them to use, Len Blacow has kindly acted as a guide. If anyone knows of other groups who would like the same please let me know and we'd be happy to host them. Jan Bramhall is the lead on a project to produce a comprehensive archive to the Mere over the

years, together with members of the friends group, with invaluable help from Maurice Jones the material is coming together nicely. It's well worth a look and is in the Visitor Centre for all to see. The article in the Gazette was a great success giving some great publicity for the reserve and FBC. It also highlighted our future events and guided walks which we have a full programme of this year.

As we move through spring and summer survey work will take place to assess the impact of our habitat management work, in particular breeding bird figures. I will ensure the results of this are contained in my next update.

Further information and weekly updates can be found on our Facebook (Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve) and Twitter @MartonMereLNR pages.

We are always looking for extra help with volunteering and events, in particular staffing the Visitor Centre for a few hours, so if any FBC members would like to help please contact me. If you fancy making use of the material/library in the centre over a coffee give it a go!

Richard Holmes

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Thanks to John Jenkins for his continued help in assembling and proof reading the Newsletter.

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is now available at the reduced, bargain price of just
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