



Fylde Bird Club Lancashire

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March Newsletter 2012



We are well into the new year now and the excitement of another Spring is here. For some people the cuckoo is the harbinger of Spring but for me the arrival of the first Wheatears at Cockers Dyke is the start. Every morning in March I wander the sea wall till a flash of a white rump tells me Spring has started. Over the last few years my first sighting has varied between March 18th and March 31st, see what this year brings.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue and any items for the next newsletter will be welcome. Any birding experiences, favourite walks, special birds or your herald of Spring, feel free to share them with us.

Last year was a great year for the club with a record number of members, 138.

We printed 50 calendars and I am told sold all 51!! Get in early next year if you want one.

The club has received a grant of £1842 from a partnership between the Forestry Commission and First Trans Pennine Express to fund seed and nest box procurement.

Work started on the Rossall Coastguard station on Monday January 9th and are aiming to complete by the end of May. Work will be confined to the compounded area and a minimum amount of materials will be stored on site. The contractors are fully aware of the environmental impact and great care will be taken to prevent any further damage to the sand dunes.



Artists Impressions of the new facility



Marion Mere report – October-December 2011

The last quarter of 2011 has been very eventful at the Mere. There have been not one but two new birds seen on the reserve and there are a couple of special mammal sightings to report.

October began with a Marsh Harrier on the 1st. On the 9th, similar conditions to those which brought a Gannet over the reserve in July brought another new bird in, this time a Great Skua. At one point, the skua, which stayed the following day, took off from the scrape and landed in the reeds, taking about 10 minutes to work its way out again.



A Green Sandpiper was present on October 11th and there were several sightings of Woodcock, on 26th October, 13th November and 18th and 26th December. On 15th October a female Hen Harrier was seen and the first Goldeneye of the winter appeared on the 16th. The Starlings began to arrive on the penultimate weekend of October, with 12000 reported on the 22nd, peaking at 150000 on the 31st and 1st/2nd November. Other highlights for late October included a Crossbill on the 24th, a Barn Owl and a Little Owl on the 30th (in the owl box and on the barn respectively) and 3000 Pink-footed Geese in the east fields on the 31st. The first Redwing and Fieldfare (1 of each) also came on this day.

On 6th November a female Blackcap and a Short-eared Owl were on the reserve. The latter was also seen on the 13th, along with 2 Treecreepers. 7 Eurasian White-fronted Geese flew over on this date. A male Goosander was on the lake on the 14th, while on the 22nd a Bittern and 2 Otters put in an appearance. November 23rd saw the other newcomer to the Mere, in the form of a Nuthatch at the feeding station. Also present that day were a Stock Dove in the east field and a Black-tailed Godwit, with a Smew seen on the 26th. On the 30th, a Peregrine flew over and there were 3 Whooper Swans on the lake.

December started with another Otter sighting on the 1st, while on the same day, the Whooper Swans had risen from 3 to 17! There were some noteworthy sightings in the east fields on the 10th, namely 2 Tundra Bean Geese, 600 Pink-footed Geese, 2 Roe Deer and a Skylark. The Long-eared Owls have been visible from the path near the Container Hide, with 2 (very difficult to see!) confirmed on the 18th. On the same date, 2 Little Owls were on the barn and a Fox was on the island. A first-winter Iceland Gull, which made its first appearance on 21st December, has been visiting the Mere and was still present on the 31st. On the 29th a Brambling was at the feeding station and on the 30th there were 3 Otters, gorging themselves on eels. Last but by no means least, a juvenile Red-crested Pochard was found with the Wigeon flock, on the afternoon of 31st December – a great way to conclude the year.



Starlings coming to roost

Ellen Pemberton



Bird Reports

November 2011

Highlight of the month was the presence of an American Golden Plover at Cockersand on 4th-5th. Following the Fylde's first American Golden Plover (on Fleetwood Golf Course on 20th September 1988) there was a wait of twenty years before the next was located, a juvenile at Cockersand on 19th November 2008. Since then Paul Slade found an adult male on the Wyre Estuary in July 2011, so the latest Cockersand American Golden Plover represents the fourth Fylde record.



A Great White Egret lingered on Warton Marsh throughout November, a Black Redstart visited Blackpool Airport on 23rd, a Garganey was located at Newton Marsh on 2nd, Hen Harriers were recorded at Eagland Hill, Bradshaw Lane Head and Rawcliffe Moss, three Marsh Harriers and two Water Pipits were logged on Warton Marsh, a Purple Sand was at Blackpool North Shore, two Crossbills flew over Fluke Hall, Bitterns were noted at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park and Marton Mere and Snow Buntings were at Starr Hills (3), Fairhaven Beach, Warton Aerodrome, Cockersand and Rossall Point. Marton Mere hosted up to four Cetti's Warblers and two Long-eared Owls.

On the sea a Red-necked Grebe off Rossall Point on 7th and 9th, Velvet Scoters off Starr Gate (2) and Norbreck and a Great Northern Diver off Starr Gate were the pick of the records.

Scarce geese occurred in good numbers during November; the Todd's Canada Goose was logged at Cocker's Dyke and Fleetwood Farm; pairs of Tundra Bean Geese were at Lousanna Farm and Scronkey (whilst five Bean Geese at Myerscough College and a lone Bean Goose on Pilling Marsh were not assigned to form); Eurasian White-fronted Geese were recorded in excellent numbers, with counts of 21 over Cockersand and 20 at Cocker's Dyke being recorded in addition to several widespread single-figure counts; Brent Geese were at Cocker's Dyke (Dark-bellied) and Norbreck and the peak Barnacle Goose count was four on Pilling Marsh.

December 2011

Brian Wood discovered a Glossy Ibis at Conder Green on 11th December, but it didn't linger long before moving north out of the Fylde Recording Area. This is only the third modern-day record of Glossy Ibis on the Fylde.

A Great White Egret lingered on Warton Marsh throughout the month, an Iceland Gull arrived at Marton Mere on 21st, a Purple Sandpiper remained at Blackpool North Shore, Red Kites flew over Lea and Woodplumpton, up to three Scaup visited Fairhaven Lake, a Black Redstart resided in Knott End, a Snow Bunting was at Fluke Hall, a Hooded Crow was recorded at Todderstaffe Hall, a Little Auk flew past Rossall Point and Hen Harriers were logged at Stalmine, Lousanna Farm, Rawcliffe Moss and Eagland Hill. On 18th a Long-tailed Duck was released on Fleetwood Marine Lakes, having been picked up by a dog in Out Rawcliffe earlier the same day. Sadly the bird died on 23rd. Marton Mere hosted three Cetti's Warblers and two Long-eared Owls.

Birders checking flocks of Pink-footed Geese again recorded a fine selection of scarcities; the Todd's Canada Goose lingered in the Cleveleys/Fleetwood Farm area; Tundra Bean Goose records included five on Lytham Moss, four on Barnaby's Sands, two at both Nateby and Marton Mere and singles at Fleetwood Farm, Eagland Hill and Fluke Hall; two Greenland White-fronted Geese were at both Pilling Lane Ends and Lytham Moss and a lone bird was at Fleetwood Farm; Eurasian White-fronted Goose counts included a peak of 32 on Lytham Moss, 24 south of Marton Mere and 10 at Pilling Lane Ends, in addition to widespread single-figure counts; a Pale-bellied Brent Goose was logged at Fleetwood Farm and six Barnacle Geese were counted on Pilling Marsh.

January 2012

On 28th December 2011 an adult male American Wigeon was discovered south of the Fylde Recording Area on the River Douglas near Hesketh Out Marsh RSPB. On 7th January 2012 Colin Bushell relocated the bird on the River Ribble by Clifton Marsh Landfill Site, before the bird was again relocated the following day, this time on Newton Marsh by Paul Slade.

Dave Pitman discovered a Smew at Marton Mere on 13th January. On 15th January Paul Ellis and Paul Slade relocated what was presumably the same bird on the Wyre Estuary by Shard Bridge before it flew west mid morning. Later that day the bird was again relocated, this time on the Lune Estuary at Glasson, approximately eleven miles north-east of Shard Bridge. Between 15th December 2011-11th January 2012 a Smew had been present at Leighton Moss RSPB, approximately 12 miles north north-east of the northern boundary of the Fylde Recording Area, so it seems plausible that the same individual was also responsible for the mid-January 2012 Fylde sightings. Following its trip to the Fylde the bird returned to Leighton Moss RSPB, via Pine Lake, before again relocating to Glasson on 28th January.



Up to two Great White Egrets remained on Warton Marsh throughout January, a Black Redstart lingered at Knott End, Iceland Gulls visited Marton Mere and Cocker's Dyke, Velvet Scoters were logged off Starr Gate on a handful of dates, four Shag flew past Anchorholme on 2nd and up to two Scaup lingered on Fairhaven Lake. A Purple Sandpiper was at Blackpool North Shore throughout the month and Marton Mere hosted up to four Long-eared Owls and two Cetti's Warblers.

Goose highlights included the Todd's Canada Goose at Fleetwood Farm, widespread Tundra Bean Goose records (including eight at Bone Hill, six at Mythop, five on Lytham Moss, two at Knott End, two at Aggleby's Pit), excellent numbers of Eurasian White-fronted Geese (including counts of 17 at Warton Bank, eleven at Stake Pool, eleven at Pilling Lane Ends, five at Bone Hill and five at Horse Park Lane), four Barnacle Geese at Pilling Lane Ends and up to five Pale-bellied Brent Geese and two Dark-bellied Brent Goose on Pilling Marsh, with a single Dark-bellied Brent Goose on Marton Moss.

Stuart Piner



Glossy Ibis

Sunday, Dec. 11th dawned dull, overcast with the odd bit of drizzle. Undeterred, my good lady and myself decided to venture out with the intention of combining some birding with a good walk and a nice sandwich and brew at the Cafe de Lune. We stopped at Condor pool first and were rewarded with a male Goosander, Teal, Redshank and Lapwing. We parked at Glasson and started to walk along the old railway track towards Condor Green. The weather was still dull and grey, but visibility was about 5 miles. We had good views of birds on the estuary banks, including; Golden plover, Shelduck, Wigeon, Curlew and a Little Egret. We were about half way when I looked over my shoulder and there, flying towards Glasson, was the unmistakable shape of a Glossy Ibis. I quickly alerted Susan and we watched the bird for about 45 seconds, until it was lost from sight behind the buildings at Glasson dock, heading towards Sunderland Point. Susan said "are you sure it is a Glossy Ibis?", but, even with my limited birding experience, I knew I was right (we had seen two at Dungeness the previous year). I showed her the Collins, and we both agreed what we had seen. We carried on and enjoyed a very nice lunch in the Cafe de Lune. That evening I reported the sighting to Steve White, and was over the moon when he replied several days later that the bird had turned up at Leighton Moss. That weekend we drove up to Leighton Moss with Lisa and Jamie, (my daughter and son-in-law) for hopefully some better views. We were disappointed that the bird had re-located just before we arrived but were amply rewarded with the sighting of 3 different Bitterns, one of which was pointed out by our treasurer, John Barker. All in all; a great end to a great week.

Brian Wood



Glossy Ibis, Peter Rhind



American Golden Plover at Cockersand

I had spent Autumn 2011 hiding from anything affiliated with work, so by early November my 'to do' list was significantly longer than my 'Finds list'. I had every intention of hanging up my bins until I'd cleared the backlog but after just a couple of days of continuous computer work I needed some fresh air. I therefore decided that I would take an early morning stroll at Cockersand on November 4th before returning to the computer for further mind-numbing key pushing. It was barely light as I walked along the coastal path towards Plover Scar and my mind was far from the job in hand, an unusual Spotted Redshank-like call attracted my attention and compelled to frantically scan Plover Scar. A moment later and I had locked on to a medium-sized smoky-grey wader. The flight view was over in a flash but before it had landed close by I knew what this combination of features had created- this was a juvenile American Golden Plover! I fired off some digiscoped shots before rushing back to the car to fetch my digital SLR camera. However, just as I returned to my previous viewing point I noticed the American Golden Plover flying up-river along-side two Shelduck.

It was at that point that 'finders doubt' set in an awful feeling of anxiety that crawls through your veins to reach every part of your body- the bird had vanished and I'd wasted most of the brief amount of time it was on show trying to photograph it rather than just watch it. Had I really seen all the diagnostic plumage features? How would I describe the call? Do my poor photos show any features that will eliminate a small Grey Plover? Panic set in so I set about trying to re-find the bird. Fortunately, it soon reappeared, and still looked like an American Golden Plover. Satisfied with the results of my pre-work stroll, I returned home to my 'to do' list.

Stuart Piner

--SQR--

American Wigeon on the Ribble, 7 January 2012.

On 29th December 2011 I made my first attempt to see the American Wigeon which had been discovered the previous day by John Aitchinson near the Douglas - Ribble confluence. It was a rather disastrous affair, with gale force winds making observations difficult as the rough waters flooded Longton Marsh and I was unsuccessful. In fact there were very few Eurasian Wigeon to look through, so I decided I would check up-river from Hutton Marsh at the next available opportunity. This didn't arise until 7th January 2012 when I finally made it out to the river again. Although the conditions were far from perfect (very blustery), I felt that if this bird was still on the Ribble it would be between the Preston Water Treatment works and the docks, as this stretch of the river regularly hold large numbers of Eurasian Wigeon in winter.

Walking along the southern shore from Longton Marsh I checked Eurasian Wigeon flocks at favoured areas like Hutton and Clifton Marshes without joy. "The next lot will be my last", I said to myself as I peered up-river towards Savick Brook on the Fylde side, when suddenly I noticed a "stranger" in the flock. The creamy crown stripe, green and grey-brown head and pinkish-brown flanks of the drake American Wigeon stuck out like a sore thumb among its Eurasian counterparts, even in the choppy waters of the Ribble at high tide. I immediately put a message on the Ribble Estuary Nature Facebook page and contacted a few local birders whom I knew would spread the news. After obtaining a few digiscoped record shots of the bird I had to leave and by now the Baldpate was mid-river "No Man's Land." It later made its way to the Fylde side of the Ribble where some excellent photos were taken.

The American Wigeon could not be relocated on the river the following morning, but thankfully it was discovered in the large flocks of Eurasian Wigeons on Newton Marsh and as far as I know has not been seen since that very wet Sunday morning.

Colin Bushell

--SQR--



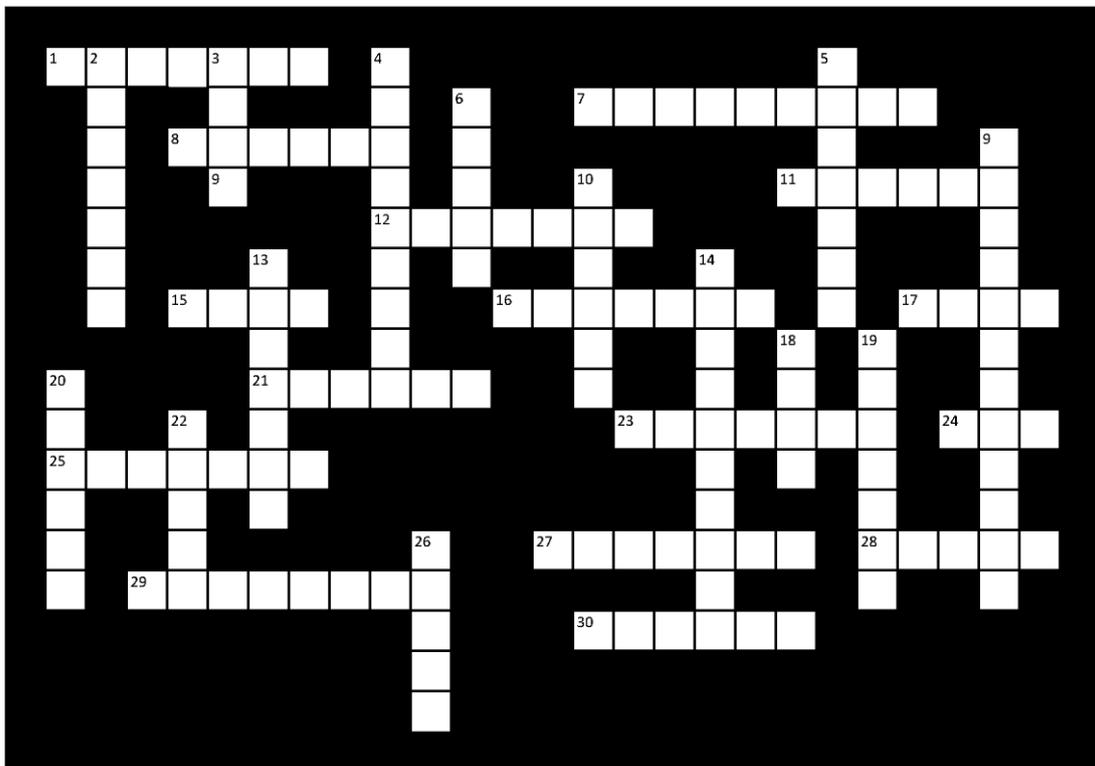
The top 10 birding bands and singers

- | | | |
|-----|--|------------------------------|
| 1. | Bird of prey loving angels... | Hobby Williams |
| 2. | 1980's punk-rock duck..... | Smew Model Army |
| 3. | Bad moon rising over a sea bird colony... | Creedance Shearwater Revival |
| 4. | Girl band booming from the reeds. | Atomic Bittern |
| 5. | It's those gothic finches..... | The Siskins of Mercy |
| 6. | An unlikely partnership.... | Shrike and Tina Turnstone |
| 7. | Two more waders,DJ's?... | The Chemical Plovers |
| 8. | Tiny bird rapping loud... | Wren DMC |
| 9. | Woodies cousin has a taste for reggae... Desmond Woodpecker and the Aces | |
| 10. | Gravel voiced seabird stealing fish... | Bonxie Tyler |

Thanks Ellen



Bird Crossword No 3



Clues

Across

- 1 Right argument after bath, for instance. (7)
7 Alters course from treble to bass? (9)
8 Who can we hear? Edgar Allen? (6)
11 I am mixed up with the confused amiable ogre. (6)
12 This LBJ is a shade of brown and heard to strike. (7)
15 Jenny found in new rented accommodation. (4)
16 Ale? Not, initially, to follow. (7)
17 This wader originally kept north of Thornton. (4)
21 Judge dons this for an absolute age! (6)
23 Suffer after a drink of beer. (7)
24 I is followed by this! (3)
25 Flapper follows the circuit. (7)
27 Busy bees do this in London's East End! (7)
28 A brave noble holds this bird, (5)
29 Heather follows Polaris, for instance. (8)
30 A dove calls twice for this opportunist. (6)

Down

- 2 Instruction to overcook the egg! (7)
3 Man is cornered on board. (4)
4 Picnic on a birding expedition? (9)
5 Wow! Do we hear a seabird? No, it's a raptor. (7)
6 Does this bird stretch its neck to lift a load? (5)
9 Cry – "that hurt!" – hit by this tool? (12)
10 Lambretta, for instance, has no heart. (6)
13 The far-left contingent. (7)
14 Cabbage and sprouts perhaps for guitarist Mr Marvin, (10)
18 This duck turns up late! (4)
19 Bad French fat. (7)
20 Seabird found in beautiful Martinique. (6)
22 Lilliput was his creation. (5)
26 Edith didn't have one of these – not to start with, anyway. (5)



The Biggest Week at Magee Marsh

Having seen it described by the American Bird author Kenn Kaufman as 'The Warbler Capital of the World' we decided, in May 2011 to visit Magee Marsh on the southern shore of Lake Erie, Ohio, USA.

Any birder interested in North American birds will have heard of Point Pelee on the northern shore of Lake Erie in Ontario, Canada. We had visited Point Pelee several years ago but Magee Marsh had only come to our notice recently. Magee aficionados argue that birds migrating in spring will stop and rest on the southern shore once they see the daunting body of water, even if the weather is favourable for migration. Point Pelee, however tends to rely on inclement weather to create 'Fallout' conditions.

We timed our visit to coincide with the modestly titled 'THE BIGGEST WEEK IN AMERICAN BIRDING'. This 10 day event organised by the Black Swamp Bird Observatory includes workshops, evening talks and guided trips to other good birding sites nearby.

We decided on direct flights from Manchester to Chicago. Although this left quite a drive to Magee we had a planned overnight stop about half way. There were other flights to Cleveland and Detroit which were nearer to Magee but these involved connecting flights.

Magee really is a great place for spring migration with 20 species of warbler easily seen in a single day with up to 35 species possible over a couple of weeks in mid May. It is the closeness and confiding nature of the birds, so easily seen from the boardwalk, that adds to the appeal of Magee. The boardwalk does become very crowded with photographers and birders but everyone tries to ensure that you get to see 'the bird'. Guides are also on the reserve.

Magee is not just about warblers. Good numbers of vireos, flycatchers and thrushes are also seen at close quarters giving great opportunities to 'sort out' these tricky species.

Magee is not the only place to visit. Next door, literally, is the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge with its superb visitor centre and excellent mixed habitats. The nearby fields, especially those with standing water can be very good for waders with dowitchers, yellowlegs, phalaropes and sandpipers all possible. Fields without water held Bobolinks, Dickcissel, American Pipits and Horned Larks,

A fantastic bird watching experience so good we have booked again for 2012!





Black and White Warbler



Prothonotary Warbler



Canada Warbler

Alan & Beryl Turner



Norfolk

Early February we left for our annual trip to Norfolk. The temperature read 0°C as we left the Wyre and stayed there till we passed Sleaford, it started to drop and finally settled at -9°C where it stayed till we approached Kings Lynn. The trees were covered in thick frost and roadside hedges where water had been splashed up were like filigree waterfalls, beautiful.

We arrived at our accommodation in a balmy -3°C, went to the new Titchwell, the freshwater lake was mostly frozen and two cold bitterns were stood in the reeds and a water rail rummaged in the ditch, a good start. We visited there every day at some time and saw some great birds, seawatching produced two Velvet Scoters, four Long Tailed Ducks, Divers, Goldeneyes, Mergansers, Slavonian Grebe, Great Crested Grebes and all the usual waders. In the car park area Sue found a Woodcock which I seemed unable to see!! In the trees were all three Redpolls but with my limited skills and by now a very stiff neck I was unable to separate them with any degree of certainty.

Holkam Hall area seemed almost devoid of the flocks of feeding geese we usually see so we had to make do with Marsh Harriers, a Rough Legged Buzzard, a distant male Hen Harrier, Grey and Red Legged Partridges and a big flock of very confiding Snow Buntings.

In the parkland we came across a feeding flock of Redwings, Mistle Thrushes, Fieldfare, two Green Woodpeckers, Bramblings and a Great Spotted Woodpecker. Interestingly one of the Bramblings was in perfect summer plumage with a jet black head.

On a final drop in at Chosley Barn to see the Yellowhammers and Corn Buntings a female Hen Harrier treated us to a slow low fly past.

It was a brilliant week, we missed the Shore Larks and Short Eared Owls but a list of 108 species plus a Chinese Water Deer made up for anything we missed. We'll have to go back next year again.

Yellowhammer



Water rail



Snow Bunting



P.S. Do Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers really exist.

Peter Rhind



Club Secures Grant Windfall

Last year the Club submitted an application for grant aid to fund seed for winter feeding schemes and nest box procurement. Grants were being offered by a partnership formed by the Forestry Commission and First Trans Pennine Express. I am pleased to report that the Club was successful and has received funding to the tune of £1842.



Tree Sparrow, Paul Slade

We believe that the bid was attractive for the following reasons. Wooden nest boxes, sited in trees, occupied by tree sparrows all have obvious links to Forestry. The Todderstaffe Hall feeding station and nest box sites are very close to a railway line, which is used by First Trans Pennine Express trains.

The funding is intended to finance the purchase of 3 tonnes of seed and materials sufficient to produce 130 Tree Sparrow boxes and 10 Owl boxes.

Paul Ellis, Secretary

--&O&O--

Not Only but also

- 1 Just a quick reminder that subs for 2012 are due.
- 2 The excitement is building for the photo competition at the March meeting. It would really help if entries could reach me before the meeting. E-mail. rhind1003@btinternet.com

--&O&O--



Crossword Answers

Across

| | |
|----|-----------|
| 1 | Sparrow |
| 7 | Turnstone |
| 8 | Hoopoe |
| 11 | Shrike |
| 12 | Duncock |
| 15 | Wren |
| 16 | Bittern |
| 17 | Knot |
| 21 | Wigeon |
| 23 | Pintail |
| 24 | Jay |
| 25 | Lapwing |
| 27 | Buzzard |
| 28 | Raven |
| 29 | Starling |
| 30 | Cuckoo |

Down

| | |
|----|--------------|
| 2 | Pochard |
| 3 | Rook |
| 4 | Fieldfare |
| 5 | Goshawk |
| 6 | Crane |
| 9 | Yellowhammer |
| 10 | Scoter |
| 13 | Redwing |
| 14 | Greenshank |
| 18 | Teal |
| 19 | Mallard |
| 20 | Fulmar |
| 22 | Swift |
| 26 | Egret |



P.S.

Changes Coming to The Fylde Bird Club's Web Site Sightings Page

Drop Down Lists

The major changes will be to the entry fields for **Species** and **Locations**. In both cases when the user begins to type a Species or Location name, the computer will offer a 'Drop Down List' matching the letters typed. For example typing 'bl' in the species field will produce a Drop Down List of birds starting with 'Bl', i.e. Blackbird; Blackcap; Black tailed Godwit; etc. The user will then 'click' on the Species they wish to report and it will be entered into the Species field. The same process will apply to the Locations field.

Review Screen

Currently if a user makes a mistake and submits their sightings, they cannot undo it and must e mail the administrator to get it corrected. In the future when the user selects 'Submit' the computer will display a preview of the sightings entered and ask the user to confirm that they are correct. If the user selects 'Yes' they will be published, if the user selects 'No' they will be returned to the input page, where they can correct their entries before submitting again.

These features will also simplify the process of submitting sightings, by reducing the amount of typing required. In a future issue we will give some illustrated examples and explain why the changes have been made.

One last request: **please do not type 'ditto', 'as above' or use "" marks** to indicate the notes for the record above also apply. Please repeat the notes by using select, cut and paste. This is because when turned into a spreadsheet, the records will be ordered by species and "as above" will no longer mean anything.

Paul Ellis, Secretary

