

Fylde Bird Club

Lancashire

December Newsletter 2013

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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year ***to all and thanks for all your contributions over the last year, keep them coming and keep us energised.***

First of all two corrections, Barry Dyson sent in a letter about access to Spurn Point. We summarised it incorrectly, the letter is in full in this issue, sorry.

The most observant of you will have noticed that the January photo in the calendar shows Sanderlings not Knot, my mistake not Howards, sorry.

Winter is now with skies full of Geese, the mournful swarms of waders, This issue has the Ellen, Stuarts report missed. My report plus many other



us and my morning walk has chattering Pink Footed call of Whooper Swans and wonderful.

report on Marton Mere by on birds on the Fylde I have on a trip to North Wales, items of interest. Chris Piner

has written about his favourite patch and Glen Jacksons " To App or not to App " is interesting.

The entry rules are in for the annual Photographic Competition. We use these for the calendar so as many entries as possible please, don't be shy as without entries there is no competition. David Moreton says landscape format is the best for the calendar.

The tern colony in Preston has a mention in the RSPB magazine and the work of the Fylde Bird Club is recognised plus a photo by Paul Ellis is included.

Peter Rhind



Lancashire Wildlife Trust Members

I recently visited Spurn Point, a Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve and was pleasantly surprised to learn that because I was a member of another Wildlife Trust I was entitled to drive to the end of the peninsula free of charge upon showing my membership card. I've been to Spurn on a number of occasions and been totally unaware of this concession, so I thought I would bring it to the attention of our members in case they too do not know about it. The admission charge to drive onto the peninsula currently stands at £4-00, so a useful saving particularly if you are staying in the area.

Barry Dyson

Marton Mere Report

July – September 2013

Welcome to another action-packed 3 months at Marton Mere. A Tree Sparrow and a Little Tern were present on 4th July, with a Fox seen on the scrape on the 5th. Ducks were beginning to return on the 10th, with 6 Teal seen. There were 4 Pied Wagtails on the 15th and a Peregrine on the Chain Lane pylon on the 18th. 3 Crossbills flew over on the 23rd, a Black-tailed Godwit was seen on the 24th and a Barn Owl was out at dusk on the 26th. Water Rails are not normally much in evidence at this time of year but there was 1 on the 20th and 2 on the 27th. 2 Marsh Harriers also visited the reserve, a female on the 22nd, 23rd and 28th, with a juvenile also present on the latter date. Butterfly sightings for the month included a Small Skipper on the 26th and a Large Skipper on the 27th.

August highlights included over 25 Peacock butterflies, a Peregrine and 250 Woodpigeons on the 2nd, with 5 Dunlin flying over on the 3rd. There were 2 Common Blues on the 4th, a Fox north of Lawson Rd Allotments on the 6th and Peregrine on the 7th and 10th. Foxes and Common Blues were also seen on both the 13th and 26th. The 8th saw a butterfly bonanza, with 55 Peacocks, 2 Commas, 2 Small Tortoiseshells, a Red Admiral and a Gatekeeper. A Barn Owl was seen on several dates between the 8th and 16th and again on the 31st, while a female Mallard with a brood of 5 new ducklings was seen on the 15th. There were 2 Water Rail sightings on the 21st and 28th. On the 23rd there was a Wheatear by Lawson's Wetland and a Weasel on the reserve. A Curlew flew over on the 27th and on the 31st, 3 Stock Doves were present.

The first Wigeon of the autumn were 3 birds on the 1st September. On the 3rd, 2 days after the work party blitzed the reeds, 3 Water Rails were seen! 750 Starlings also roosted that night. On the 4th, there were 2 Foxes north of Lawson Allotments. A Stoat was seen on the 7th, with a Ruddy Duck (a rare sight nowadays) and 19 Black-tailed Godwits on the 8th. A Grey Wagtail flew south on the 12th and a female Pintail was present on the 13th. A Peregrine surveyed the reserve from the dyke pylon on the 14th and there were 62 Jackdaws in the east field. There has been a large influx of Curlew Sandpipers in the north-west and 4 of those flew west over the mere on the 19th. This was a historic day for the reserve, as 2 Water Rails – an adult and a juvenile – were seen – the first evidence of the species' breeding there. They were spotted again on the 23rd, zipping across the gaps in the reeds in front of the Bird Club Hide. The first Pink-footed Geese of the autumn appeared on the 20th, with 325 over Chain Lane, followed on the 26th by 400 over Mythop. On the 24th, there were 750 Starlings and a Weasel. There was considerable activity on the 28th, with 355 Meadow Pipits flying south, a Peregrine, a Spotted Redshank

and one of 2 star rarities of this quarter, a Glossy Ibis! Another Weasel and 3 Grey Wagtails were seen on the 29th (with a Chiffchaff singing (!) by the feeding station), while on the 30th, a Garganey and the other star rarity, a juvenile Red-necked Grebe, turned up. All we need now are some Yellow-browed Warblers in the bushes!

Ellen Pemberton

Bird Report

August 2013

Highlight of the month was a Bee-eater at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, seen in flight for a couple of minutes on 14th before it departed south-east. Remarkably, this is the second Bee-eater observed on the Fylde this year, following the bird seen at Todderstaffe in May. The best of the rest included Hobbies at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park and Rawcliffe Hall, Black Terns off Starr Gate and Rossall Point, Garganey in Fleetwood (2), Myerscough Quarry and Newton Marsh, Avocet at Glasson and Little Stints at Cockersand (2) and Skippool Creek. A mobile Dark-bellied Brent Goose was seen at Cocker's Dyke and Cockersand, and following Curlew Sandpipers at Lytham and Skippool Creek early in the month, an arrival of juveniles towards the end of August produced counts of five at Skippool Creek, three at Cockersand and one at Lytham.

September 2013

At least two Glossy Ibises visited the Fylde in September during an influx of the species into Britain – birds were seen flying over Staining on 26th, a different individual visited nearby Marton Mere on 28th and the final sighting of the month came from Fleetwood on 30th.

In addition to the ibises, September highlights included a juvenile Red-necked Grebe at Marton Mere on 30th, Great White Egret at Freckleton Naze Pool and a Yellow-browed Warbler in St Annes.

Seawatchers at Rossall Point logged a Pomarine Skua on 2nd, Shag on 5th, Puffin on 16th and Black Tern on 17th. Leach's Petrels were observed off Rossall Point (one on 2nd, 3 on 16th and 6 on 17th) and Knott End (3), whilst a dead bird was collected at Starr Gate.

Ospreys flew over Conder Green and Fleetwood, Garganey records came from Fleetwood, Marton Mere, Myerscough Quarry and Conder Green, a Redstart and Dark-bellied Brent Goose visited Knott End, a Hobby flew over Rawcliffe Moss, a Hen Harrier was at Eagland Hill and a Purple Sands returned to Starr Gate and Fleetwood, where a Pied Flycatcher was also logged during the month.

Little Stints were identified at Fleetwood, Cockersand and Lytham, whilst a good showing of Curlew Sandpipers produced peak counts of 8 at Glasson, 7 at Cockersand, 4 west over Marton Mere, 3 at Fleetwood, 3 at Freckleton Naze Pool, 3 at Lytham and singles at Bank End, Cocker's Dyke, Granny's Bay and Newton Marsh.

October

A Glossy Ibis at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 1st was presumably the same bird seen in Fleetwood the previous day. On 6th Glossy Ibises flew east over Fairhaven Lake and flew over Glasson, before landing on Colloway Marsh, just north of the Fylde Recording Area. At Marton Mere the Red-necked Grebe found in September lingered until 1st October – during the remainder of the month a Garganey and Little Stint were also seen at Marton Mere.

Elsewhere October highlights included a Yellow-browed Warbler and flock of three Lapland at Cockersand, Siberian Chiffchaff trapped and ringed in Fleetwood and a Great White Egret again roosted at Freckleton Naze Pool. Two Black Redstarts visited Knott End, a Redstart passed through Gynn Gardens, two Snow Buntings were logged in Fleetwood and a Red Kite flew over Lightfoot Lane. Purple Sandpipers were at Rossall Point and Blackpool North Shore (2), whilst a Pomarine Skua flew past the former site. Curlew Sandpipers were at Cockersand, Bank End, Glasson, Fleetwood and Lytham, and a Little Stint was at Cockersand. An adult Yellow-legged Gull was identified at Bank End, Velvet Scoters were logged off Fleetwood and Blackpool and scarce geese were represented by a flock of 17 Greenland White-fronted Geese at Cockersand, single Greenland White-fronted Geese with Pink-footed Goose flocks in Fleetwood and Eagland Hill, Pale-bellied Brent Geese at Fleetwood and Lytham (2), and Barnacle Geese at Pilling (a flock of 43) and Fleetwood (2).

Stuart Piner

A Piece of the Glossy Action

At ten to four on the afternoon of 28th September, I called in at the Mere on my way home, intent on finding a garganey (something I failed to do all autumn). The hide was locked so there was no one to hand to advise on what was about.

When arriving at a site, it's usually a good idea to have a quick scan round using your bins for obvious goodies, in case they decide to vanish straight away. On this occasion, I ignored my own advice, walked into the hide with scope and tripod at the ready and immediately began grilling the teal on the scrape. Half a dozen teal later, I nudged the scope a little to the left to see some more and was surprised to find the view filled with a big brown, long legged, long billed bird digging in the mud! It was, of course, a Glossy Ibis. Next was a bit of a panic, I needed to phone out the news, work out its age and take some pictures of it. I had my phone to hand and it wasn't flat, so that came first. While phoning I could see pale bluish lores, only lightly streaked head and neck and smooth brown upperparts with glossy wings – so it was an adult and still in summer plumage. Now I needed to get some pictures but the camera was in the car, back at the Ranger Base, (at least it wasn't at home). I ran back to the car, grabbed the camera bag and charged back to the hide. As I approached the hide Maurice Jones was driving towards it from the other direction, he stopped when he saw me hurtling past and realising something was afoot; he enquired through the open window: "what is it?" I yelled back an incomprehensible "Glossy Ibis on the scrape", and steamed into the hide without slowing down.



Thankfully it was still there, walking up and down digging in the mud and I aimed the scope at it. A puzzled Maurice came, I explained in English what was there and he took a look through my scope while I readied my camera and then took some photos. Initially it looked very settled but then started wing stretching and within five minutes it took off and flew southeast out of sight from the hide. We waited a few minutes, in case it was going to do a circuit and return but we didn't see it come back. Only fifteen minutes had passed since I had first found the bird. Our next move was to go and look for it at the outflow but we

couldn't see it. On the way the first twitchers arrived to be greeted by the news that we had lost it already.

The Ibis wasn't seen again for a couple of hours when it re-materialised on the scrape but could only be seen by climbing on the roof of the container hide! Thankfully, it then had another fly round, showing to all who had turned out to see it.

This was the second record of Glossy Ibis at Marton Mere in living memory, following one seen in flight by Paul Slade in May 2007, which was believed to have been the long staying individual that spent most of its time at Warton Bank. The only previous record from the Mere, was of one shot there in 1859.

Remarkably that wasn't quite the end of the story. Eight days later seven of us were



standing on top of a sand dune at Fairhaven counting visible migrants, when Andrew Myerscough noticed a peculiar looking bird flying east at some distance inland. As we watched it started to look good for an ibis, my scope was set up and Paul Slade, being closest, quickly targeted it and confirmed that we were watching another Glossy Ibis. We determined that this was 'another' Ibis because it had a full set of flight feathers and

the Mere bird had a couple of feathers missing from its left wing. On the same day another one was just outside the Fylde, across the Lune from Glasson.

These records were part of a national influx of Glossy Ibises, which began in September and involved up to 14 together in Cumbria.

Paul Ellis

My Favourite Patch

Pete Rhind asked me to write a piece on my favourite patch. Well I guess that's a good question, what do I consider my *favourite*? My favourite birding location at home would be Myerscough Quarry, but for the last two years, the majority of my time during migration periods has been spent birding Bardsey Island. I was asked to write this piece the day after I found a first for Bardsey Island and a third for Wales, a Pied Wheatear, so perhaps my judgement is a little clouded. Back to the relevant topic though, Myerscough has been my favourite place for the last four or so years, or at least the most convenient to visit, let's put it that way. Myerscough doesn't get the amount of birds that a coastal location such as Cockersand gets, another of my favourite birding locations locally. However it does get a good turnover of birds and a variety of species throughout the year. Finding a 'proper rarity' there has of yet eluded me, however 'gripping off' my brother with firsts for the site such as Marsh Harrier is enough incentive to keep me going back as often as time allows, this being his childhood patch! Myerscough Quarry always has something to offer whatever the season, whether its early autumn for passage waders or winter for wildfowl, the site draws me back time after time, often because I think I should go but I guess that's the obsessive nature of birding, if you don't go out you won't find anything. Seeing new birds to the patch is what really makes me tick and although I rarely find anything, coming up with the goods yourself gives me the most satisfaction in birding, although you can't beat a bit of twitching thrown in for good measure. Good birds have turned up at Myerscough in the past, such as Lesser Scaup, Ring-billed Gull, and Black-necked Grebes etc. It always amazes me

how such an inland site can have such a good turnover of birds, this could be to do with various factors though such as: disturbance from dog walkers etc. therefore new birds move off quick and the fact birds stop off quickly to feed on passage and then move on, amongst other reasons.

I do sometimes wish I lived on the coast though and could patch the likes of Cockersand or Fluke Hall every day. Inland sites like Myerscough do however have their strong points like I mentioned. Other local areas I stomp around on a regular basis are Sowerby and Carr House Green Common; these combined with Myerscough usually make a good mornings birding circuit.

I'm looking forward to getting home from Bardsey and going to Myerscough and grilling those winter wildfowl, hoping that the Fylde's first Blue-winged Teal is lurking amongst the flock of Teal or a Little Bunting has decided to join the Reed Buntings, (dream on). American Wigeon has got to be on the cards though...

Chris Piner

In The Footsteps of Alan Davies

Having read "The Biggest Twitch", heard Alan talk at the bird club and bought his guide to birding in North Wales, we set off at the end of September for a week on the Lleyn Peninsula with his guide on the back seat. Our first stop was at Caerhun Church, a beautiful 12th century church surrounded by yew trees which themselves dated back 1200 years. This was the best place to see Hawfinches and yes, the yews were full of finches but none were Hawfinches. We were however treated to the sight of a mixed flock of 20-30 Fieldfares and Mistle Thrushes flying in and out of the yews feeding on the berries. As we left a Red Kite circled over our heads as a final treat. We stopped at the RSPB reserve at



Jack Snipe

Conway for a picnic (I need feeding regularly). A quick visit to the hides and there, bobbing as if on springs was a Jack Snipe. The first time I have had a clear and prolonged view of this bird and never a photograph till now. Time to move on to the Lleyn resort of Nefyn where we were staying. The next day we visited Porth Ysgaden, it was a beautiful warm still day, great for sitting and reading but the Manx Shearwaters were out of sight. The headland was covered in Meadow Pipits, Pied Wagtails, Linnets and Wheatears, all

the common gulls plus Cormorants, Shags, Guillemots, Razorbills, Gannets, Scoter and 2 distant divers, too far away for me to identify. Ravens were around all morning, a Sparrowhawk frightened the Meadow Pipits and Choughs were calling. A pretty idyllic place. After a wander along Nefyn beach and an ice cream, a small glass of red wine and a curry called us home. After tea we drove out to Porth Ysgaden to see the sunset and to look out for Manxies again. Sue spotted a splash out at sea and through the scope was a dolphin lying on the surface and beating its tail on the water. Over the next half hour the pod built up till at least 10 dolphins were visible. With an amazing sunset and a chat with a

local who told us the history of the headland and the small harbour that had been active 200 years ago, it was an unforgettable experience.



Dolphins & Sunset at Porth Ysgaden

The following day we made the drive to South Stack on Anglesey, the weather forecast was good so a perfect day was expected. Nobody had told South Stack, which was shrouded in mist and fine rain. Being from Yorkshire and brave and hardy (or daft!) we explored the headland and its Stonechats, Pipits, both Meadow and Rock and fast-flying Choughs which I attempted to catch with my new camera, (cue pictures of an empty sky). After lunch I left my new and now damp camera in the car and we went to see the iron age hut circles and guess what - the Choughs proceeded to amble around us like best friends!! I had my old camera in my



Chough

pocket so got what I wanted. From there we moved on to Beddmanarch Bay. Waders galore, Curlew, 2 Whimbrel, Godwits, Redshank and Dunlin. In the bay I was looking for early Slavonian Grebes but all I found were 4 Great Crested Grebes. We then left Anglesey. We called at Aberdesach and wandered along the beach with pipits galore, Guillemots at sea and another distant diver. The rest of the week we continued to explore the Llyn using the trusty guide. Highlights included the headland at Uwchmynydd (pronounced yewchminith) overlooking Bardsey Island. The views, Choughs, hunting Kestrels, Buzzards, Pipits, Wheatears and hundreds of Red Admirals on the flowering gorse and heather made it special. Porthmadoc had Goosanders and the steam railway, Borth Y Gest overlooked the estuary with Herons and 5 Red Breasted Mergansers I lost count of Buzzards and Ravens. In conclusion we found all the sites we looked for. The directions were good - they needed to be as we have made getting lost an art form. The birds, Hawfinches in particular, need to brush up on where they are supposed to be and the Fylde Bird Club doesn't need to tell me what I am missing as I gaze out on to an empty sea miles away!

Peter Rhind

Too “Appy” ?

As a relatively new, but enthusiastic “birder”, I have enjoyed the wealth of knowledge to be found amongst the members of the Fylde Bird Club. At times it is quite daunting to hear of their forays abroad, and how frighteningly precise they are at instant recognition of the resident and vagrant species to be observed in our area. However, two incidents in my summer of investigation have made me question the use of modern technology. Let me relate these tales that have left me in a quandary.....

The first involved a visit to Leighton Moss in late May on a “bird bash” to see as many varieties in one visit as possible. Camped for about 30 minutes by the cracked willow tree leading to the Tim Jackson hide, I was certain I had a cettis warbler located, but, as usual, it was being most elusive in the stream reed beds. Along comes an inquisitive walker, complete with mobile phone in hand, asks what I am looking at and I explain. He nonchalantly keyed in “Cetti’s warbler”, plays it, and gets an immediate response from the resident male, who flits around investigating who has entered his territory – result is an easy sighting.

Two weeks later finds me on the wonderful paradise island of Tiree, looking for corncrakes. An hour after landing one scuttles across the road in front of my parked car, and I realise that sightings are relatively easy with a bit of patience and using the car as a hide. The following morning I hired a local guide, and we set off to various locations from where the corncrakes were in full voice. Within about 30 minutes we had no less than 4 of them within a few feet of the car, clearly on view calling – again in response to an app played on a mobile phone. For the results go to “Wild Tiree” on the website!

Whilst appreciating this help to add to my lifetime list, I can’t help thinking that this is a bit of a cheat and makes it a bit too easy. Clearing away the reeds in front of the FBC hide to give a better view of the resident Cettis seems to me to be a much more worthwhile and satisfying exercise.

So I ask the question – To app, or not to app?

Glen Jackson

Wildlife Friendly Gardening

Some feedback on the queries that were raised at the last meeting on October 22nd. My apologies for the delay – I was away on holiday all last week in the Lake District.

One query was relating to what do Bees do in the winter. My colleague, Rick, who is a bee keeper gave me this short answer.

Towards the end of the life cycle virgin queens are produced. These are mated by males (drones) and then immediately seek a place to hibernate which is usually a log pile or under loose earth. It is thought that very few of these queens survive but the data isn't that good. The main reasons for failure are adverse weather and parasitisation. There are some really nasty parasites that eat into sleeping queens and when she wakes up take control of her, forcing her to another likely hibernation where they lay eggs ready for the next unsuspecting queen.

The other query was related to great crested newts and why after 50 years they are still on the endangered species list even though a lot has been done.

Since the 1940s, populations of northern crested newts have declined in most of Europe due to loss of habitat. Although much has been done to make the species protected under law in all parts of the UK, it is still declining due to loss of habitat.

In the United Kingdom, its habitat has diminished due to land development pressure from population growth and agricultural expansion; for example, it is considered eliminated from its prior range at the Portlethen Moss Nature Reserve in Scotland

Where development activities may interfere with its populations, exclusion systems such as newt fencing may be put in place to prevent the newts from entering a development site. Newt fencing may also be used to create a receptor site or 'newt-safe' area to where northern crested newts can be translocated, from an area where they are under threat.

I hope this is useful and once again, thanks for the donation to the Wildlife Trust.

Malcolm Alderton

Fylde Bird Club Annual Photographic Competition

Feb 25th 2014

Each year the Fylde Bird Club holds a photographic competition. All members who paid their subscriptions for 2013 are invited to enter and may submit up to **TWO** photographs for each geographical category:

- Fylde
- British Isles (does **NOT** include photographs taken in Fylde)
- World (does **NOT** include photographs taken in Fylde and British Isles)

Digital photographs taken in the calendar year prior to the competition are acceptable. All entries to be submitted to Peter Rhind (by e-mail or by flash drive) It will help me enormously if all entries could reach me by **Feb16th**. If you have any queries please contact Peter: Tel. 01253 812495; E-mail: rhind1003@btinternet.com

Competition rules

- **Only TWO images per category per photographer**
- **All photographs must be taken during 2013**
- **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).**
- **Only photographers who have taken the top five photographs in each class (as voted by members) will be asked to elaborate on their entries (e.g. where the photograph was taken, type of equipment used etc.)**

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

PS Look out your favourite photos from 2013 (birds of course) and enter. There will be a new category this year for the best photo on the Fylde taken by someone who has never won a category before. Go on give it a go.

Peter

A Summary of the Fylde Bird Club's Tree Sparrow Support Work

Historical Decline

Since 2002 the Fylde Bird Club has been actively involved in work to stop and reverse the decline in the Tree Sparrow population. By the turn of the last century their population had fallen by over 80% and extinction in the UK looked probable. The reason for the decline was attributed to modern farming practices. In particular, the move to the growing of winter cereal crops and pesticides were blamed. Winter cereal crops mean that stubble fields are ploughed up in the autumn whereas, in the past, they would have been left until the spring.



Stubble fields are full of seeds that many birds feed on through the winter. Pesticides kill the insects that many birds need to feed their nestlings.

It is hoped that changes in agricultural practices, that reward farmers for taking steps to conserve wildlife on their land, will help to reverse the declines in Farmland birds.

The Work of Fylde Bird Club

A two pronged approach was adopted by Fylde Bird Club by providing supplementary food in the form of daily deposits of mixed seed and the provision of nest boxes nearby.

Many of our nest boxes have been made by local schools, with materials supplied by the Club. St Georges School in Marton Blackpool, Cardinal Allen at Fleetwood and Hodgson at Poulton have produced nest boxes for this project.

Grants have been received from the Green Partnership and First Trans Pennine Express / Forestry Commission to assist with the cost of nest box materials and seed.

The co operation of local farmers has been vital to this project and in all instances they have been very helpful and enthusiastic. A project at one farm just 4 miles inland from Blackpool seafront is a particular success story. In December 2002 there were no recent records of Tree Sparrows even being seen in the area but there were old records. Seed was put down and after two weeks the first Tree Sparrow was seen. At the end of February 2003 there were 20. 13 nest boxes were erected in a nearby wood. One pair nested in 2003 and fledged 4 young. By 2011 the colony reached 27 pairs.

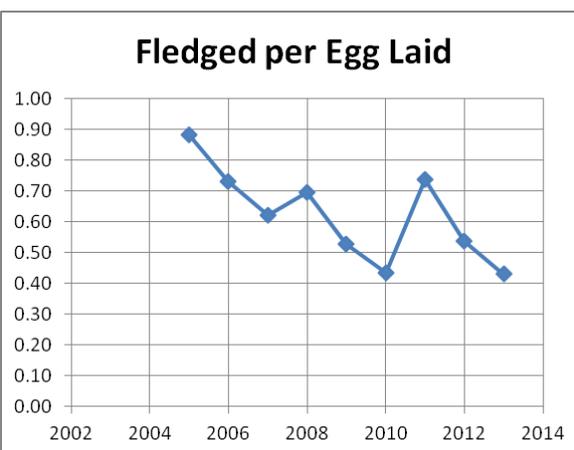
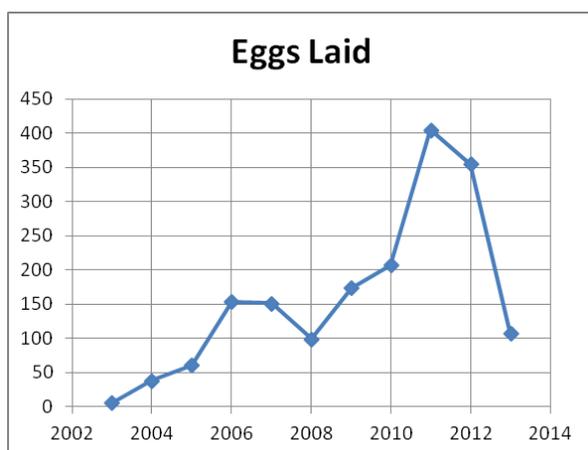
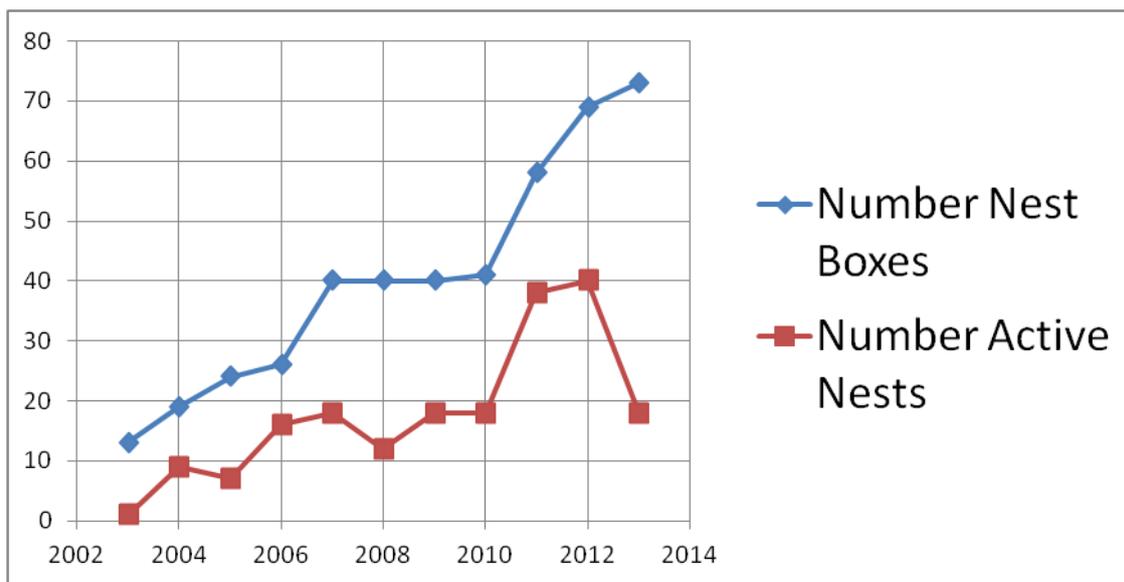
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Totals
No. Nest Boxes	13	19	24	26	40	40	40	41	58	69	73	
Tree Sparrows												
Nests with Eggs	1	9	7	16	18	12	18	18	38	40	18	
Broods	1	9	13	32	34	22	36	47	85	78	23	380
Eggs	5	38	60	153	151	99	174	207	405	355	107	1754
Fledged	4	38	53	112	94	69	92	90	299	191	46	1088
Ringed	0	0	30	109	96	69	90	96	298	208	58	1054
Fledged / Egg			0.88	0.73	0.62	0.70	0.53	0.43	0.74	0.54	0.43	0.62
% Boxes used	8	47	29	62	45	30	45	44	66	58	25	42

Records from five monitored sites in the south west Fylde area are summarised above

Whilst the trend has been of increasing numbers during the past decade, frequent spells of poor weather in spring and summer have resulted in the large fluctuations recorded. The breeding success of Tree Sparrows is very strongly influenced by the weather. This is because Tree Sparrows feed their young exclusively on insects and the availability of insects is dependent on the weather. Prolonged cold spells in spring and summer have a profoundly negative affect on productivity.

The poor season in 2013 is probably also attributable to the preceding severe winter.

These records show that the local recovery of the Tree Sparrow is not yet secure and continued assistance is warranted.



Mysterious Movements

Tree Sparrows are notoriously nomadic and we are interested in learning about their movements to assist with conservation efforts.

Since 2005 all nestlings raised in nest boxes at Todderstaffe have been ringed using serialised metal rings from the British Trust for Ornithology. The total ringed at this site is now 861.

Typically only 20% of all birds present at our winter feeding station have rings despite the fact that we ring almost 100% of all young raised at Todderstaffe. Clearly in winter, most of 'our' birds leave and birds from somewhere else arrive. This makes the task of conservation doubly difficult.

In order to try to learn something more about site fidelity and movements, the later broods of chicks from 2005 were also colour ringed. Colour rings can be recorded without re-trapping the birds and so there is a much greater chance of them being reported. The chicks colour ringed in 2005 had a yellow ring and a metal ring on their right leg and a bicoloured yellow and green ring on their left leg. However, after fledging they were never seen again and are presumed to have moved to new areas.



Tree Sparrow Chicks about to be ringed before being returned to their Nest Box

During 2006 several colour ringed birds from Over Wyre were seen at the Todderstaffe feeding station. So far relatively little has been uncovered about the movement of the Fylde's Tree Sparrows, a few have been recorded in south Lancashire and Cheshire and some remain in the natal (breeding) area. Long lens photography has allowed us to read nine rings at the feeding station, without needing to catch the birds. The oldest have reached almost 4 years of age so far.

The Fylde Bird Club supports similar projects elsewhere in the Fylde by supplying seed and nest boxes.

The results of this work have been supplied to the British Trust for Ornithology and the RSPB. This and similar schemes are making a real difference as these results prove. Observers have recently seen Tree Sparrows in gardens in Poulton and Staining for the first time in decades.

General information on Tree Sparrows

How to recognise them:

- All chestnut crown with no grey
- Males and females look the same (unlike House Sparrows)
- White cheeks with black spot
- White collar
- Slightly smaller than House Sparrow
- Higher pitched sharper call than House Sparrow

- Found in countryside not towns

Where to see them

- See <http://www.fyldebirdclub.org/feeding-stations.html>
- The Eagland Hill area Over Wyre
- Cockersand

Breeding

- The birds have between 1 and 4 broods each season. More than half our birds have more than one brood. 4 or 5 young are the normal brood sizes.
- The breeding season starts at the end of April and can extend into August

Additional information

British Trust for Ornithology (BTO and RSPB): -

<http://blx1.bto.org/birdfacts/results/bob15980.htm>

http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/treesparrow_tcm9-133167.pdf

http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/treesparrow_tcm9-148729.pdf

House and Tree Sparrow Nest Boxes

This year St George's High School in Blackpool have very kindly made us nearly a hundred nest boxes for House and Tree Sparrows so we need some new sites! We are all aware of declining house sparrow populations so I thought it would be a good idea/project to try and encourage Club members to put up a house sparrow box at home. Nowadays modern houses rarely have the small spaces available to accommodate nesting birds but house sparrows will readily take to boxes. If anyone would like any boxes but feels uncomfortable going up ladders to fit them, please contact me on 07970 986904 or email sladey67@yahoo.com and I will arrange to come and put them up over the winter.

Tree sparrow's prefer quiet woods, copses, gardens on the very edge of farmland with holes in trees and will also readily take to nest boxes. If you feel your garden is suitable, make contact using the details above and I can visit to confirm its suitability.

Fylde Bird Club buy all the materials for making the nest boxes, so all we ask is for a small donation towards replenishing our stock.

Paul Slade

My thanks are due to John Jenkins for his invaluable help in the production of this newsletter.

Peter

Fracking

If you would like to object to plans to proceed with fracking on the Fylde then please use the attached template letter. Add your signature, address, date and then post it to the address on the letter.

Environment Directorate
Lancashire County Council
Transport and Environment
Development Management Group
County Hall
PO Box 100
Preston
PR1 0LD

Dear Sir / Madam,

PLANNING APPLICATION NO – 05/12/0003 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT – VARIATION OF CONDITION 2 OF PERMISSION 05/10/0091 TO EXTEND THE PERIOD OF TIME FOR THE COMPLETION AND TESTING (FRACKING) IN THE DRILLED EXPLORATORY BOREHOLE AND RESTORATION OF THE SITE AT LAND SOUTH OF GRANGE ROAD, SINGLETON

I am writing to object to the above application by Cuadrilla Resources Ltd, to extend planning permission for test fracking at Grange Road, Singleton, Lancashire.

There is growing evidence that fracking poses serious risks to human health, the local environment and climate change. Therefore the precautionary principal should be applied and the application refused.

A recent report for the European Commission identified water contamination, water resource depletion, air pollution, biodiversity impacts and noise as high risk concerns. There is also the concern that shale gas development could negatively impact human health. The risk of seismic activity – as evidenced by the earth tremors caused by fracking at the Presse Hall site – is a serious concern for local communities, and poses further risks to well integrity and ground water contamination.

The site is less than one mile from the Wyre Estuary, which is designated as a RAMSAR Site, an SPA and SSSI. It is also close to the Ribble Estuary which is another RAMSAR / SPA / SSSI Site. These sites are internationally important for birds. There are also economic risks to the important farming and tourism sectors in Lancashire, which have not been considered.

I further believe that the extraction and use of shale gas will make it much harder to meet our legally binding climate change targets and fulfil commitments to the Lancashire Climate Change Strategy. Lancashire County Council says it has an important role to play in tackling climate change. Therefore it should be promoting expansion of renewable energy rather than the extraction of more fossil fuels, Investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency will secure will secure a clean and green energy supply for the future, tackle fuel poverty and create thousands of new jobs for the county.

I also note that the Supporting Statement to the application is out of date and contains no detail of the proposed operations including hydraulic fracturing, merely referring to a ‘testing phase’. Please keep me informed of the progress of this application and opportunities to comment further.

Yours sincerely,

Signed:

Address:

Date: