



## June 2011 Newsletter

### Introduction

Jean Wagstaff

Peter and I have taken over production of the newsletter from Kinta, who produced the last one. Thank you Kinta.

We hope you find this newsletter interesting, and we would like many of you to contribute and share your knowledge of birding on the Fylde.

As Peter and I live Over-Wyre, we do most of our birding around Knott End, Preesall and Cockers Dyke and would like to extend our knowledge of birding in the wider area.

Would any member like to write a short article on their favourite place, and birds that maybe mean much to them. I would like to join them for a few hours on such a trip, I do have a small problem that my wheelchair will not climb steps or go over stiles, rough paths and gravel are not a problem. I attend most of the Bird Club meetings, any news or arrangements can be made with me then.

Articles can be sent to us via emails, hand written or photos through the post, or given to us at the monthly meeting

Stuart Piner has very kindly agreed to write a report for us on birds seen during the past quarter, we will have a bird of the month by Peter.

We also have a cryptic crossword compiled by John and Anne Jenkins, the answers are all birds, so test your knowledge.

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## Marton Mere Nature Reserve Working Party

Jean Wagstaff

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March members of the club gave up their day to make improvements to the Mere, overgrown reeds and willows partly obscured views from some of the hides. Spring is a good time to cut back the reeds before they have a chance to overgrow during the summer months.

Fylde Bird Club was set up in 1983 as a response to the needs of Marton Mere, and still plays



an active part in managing the hides and viewing areas. A book titled "Birds of Marton Mere" was produced in 2002, by Pauline McGough, it is a record of 50 years of birds on the Mere, it is still available today. Sadly Pauline died in 2010. Together with her husband Mike they were active in both Marton Mere and the bird club for many years, Mike still plays an active part with the running of the Mere and regularly sends photos to the club, many of which are taken at the Mere. From as early as 1951 Maurice Jones has been watching the bird life on the Mere. On 15<sup>th</sup> March

1952 he found 9 Garganey 6 male and 3 females. A record of the largest flock in Lancashire, they are usually found in pairs or as single birds as summer visitors to our shores. Maurice still records the birds on the Mere and contributes to the Fylde Bird Report, he was helping to clear the overgrown bushes on Sunday. Paul Slade and Paul Ellis our chairman and club secretary together with Kinta were there in wellies and wet suits cutting back the reeds. Stuart Piner brought his brother Chris, Stuart looks after the Web site. Monty Myerscough brought his chainsaw, what a difference that made, we were whizzing along now. Ellen Pemberton was working hard with the reeds. Mike McGough made repairs to

one of the hides. Marie and Peter Wyld, Mel Bains and her son Ashley helped with cutting back the brambles. Peter Rhind pruned the willow trees, he split his wellies, so he will need a new pair for the next time. Brian Gregory from Beat Naturewatch came to help. The organisation work on projects to protect the environment, including the Great Crested Newt which is found at Marton Mere, they meet at the Solaris Centre, South Shore, Blackpool. We improved the areas around 3 of the hides, including the Fylde Bird Club hide, so



visibility should be much improved for the summer. There is still more work to be done, some of which is on the island. It is impossible to access this without the use of a boat. The Ranger service do have use of a boat and hopefully this will be available at our next working party. Why not come along to the next working party, tools are provided by the Rangers or you can bring your own. Details of the next date will be announced at the monthly meeting.

### March 2011

Stuart Piner

March's highlights included the continued presence of the adult male Ring-necked Duck on the Fylde – relocated by Stephen Dunstan at Bispham Marsh on 3<sup>rd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> before returning to Marton Mere on 23<sup>rd</sup>, a Mealy Redpoll trapped by Chris Batty in Knott End on 23<sup>rd</sup> and a Firecrest located by Jan Stinger in Stanley Park on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Scrutiny of the Pink-footed Goose flocks on Pilling Marsh and in adjacent fields produced



records of Tundra Bean Goose, three Eurasian White-fronted Geese, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Dark-bellied and Pale-bellied Brent Geese and Barnacle Goose. Several flocks of Waxwings continued to linger on the Fylde, with some records probably relating to birds heading back north; peak counts included 32 in Preston, 16 in Staining, eleven in Fulwood and nine at Warbreck Hill.

The long-staying juvenile Iceland Gull continued its stay at Preston Dock, a Ring Ouzel passed through Fleetwood on 25<sup>th</sup> and Water Pipits were recorded at Warton Bank (4), Burrow's Marsh (2) and The Heads (2). An Osprey flew over Poulton-le-Fylde on 29<sup>th</sup>, a Purple Sandpiper lingered at Rossall Point, Marton Mere hosted a single Long-eared Owl and Bittern and both and Avocet and Scaup were observed at Glasson during the month.

Seawatching highlights included a Black-throated Diver off Anchorsholme and Rossall Point on 30<sup>th</sup> and a Velvet Scoter and Great Northern Diver off Starr Gate.

## **Mealy Redpoll**

Chris Batty

'On 23rd March 2011, whilst catching migrating Lesser Redpolls in my back garden at Coniston Avenue, Knott End, I trapped and ringed a first-winter male Mealy Redpoll. This is the second Mealy Redpoll to be trapped at this site, the other being first-winter male on 2nd April 2009 (remarkably, this bird was later retrapped at Haddon Hall, Woodbridge, Suffolk on 27th February 2010). On 9th April 2011 another Mealy Redpoll was trapped at Rossall School. Due to the variability of Lesser Redpoll the identification of Mealy Redpoll in the British Isles can be difficult. However, this individual matches the expected appearance of Mealy Redpoll, and the weight of 12.4g, the wing length of 75mm and the tail length of 59mm are all indicative - although not diagnostic - of Mealy Redpoll. The presence of red colouration on the cheek, upper breast and rump shows the bird to be a male, whilst the retained (worn) juvenile tertials and primary tips, and the contrast between replaced adult and retained juvenile greater coverts proves the bird to be a first-winter.

The winter of 2010-2011 has seen the largest influx of Mealy Redpolls into Britain since the exceptional redpoll winter of 1995-1996, and several Mealy Redpolls have recently been located in east and north Lancashire. The spring migration of Lesser Redpolls over the Fylde lasts into early May, but there were no further reports of Mealy Redpoll.'

## **April 2011**

Stuart Piner

Ian Gardner added to his fine list of first-class Fylde finds when he discovered Lancashire's first Short-toed Lark at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 24<sup>th</sup>, where it remained until the following day. Short-toed Lark has long been predicted as a likely future addition to the Fylde List given the widespread distribution of British records and especially the records elsewhere in Northwest England and North Wales. Once again it was Ian who turned theory into reality at one of the Fylde's premier sites for rarities.

A White Stork logged by Maurice Jones over Herons' Reach Golf Course at Marton Mere and Staining during the afternoon of 21<sup>st</sup> was relocated by Ian Gardner at Jameson Road Landfill Site later that evening. The bird roosted overnight before departing to the northwest the following morning. Presumably a wild bird given the lack of any indicators of captive-origin (unlike the ringed bird seen in Pilling on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2011 then on Lytham Moss and over Thornton on 18<sup>th</sup> April, which originated from Harewood House, West Yorkshire), this bird represented at least the tenth Fylde record of White Stork.

Migration watches at Rossall Point produced records of Hooded Crow, Great Skua, Hobby, three Little Terns, Velvet Scoter and Long-tailed Duck during April. A Yellow-legged Gull and Purple Sandpiper were also logged at Rossall Point. Nearby a Mealy Redpoll was trapped at



Rossall School.

Scarce migrant passerines recorded during April included a Pied Flycatcher at Bispham Marsh; Wood Warblers in Fleetwood (2), Watson Road Park, Stanley Park and Pilling Lane Ends; Redstarts in Fleetwood (3), Anchorsholme, Rossall School and Rossall Beach. Ospreys flew over Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, Lytham and Jameson Road Landfill Site whilst one was also seen on Pilling Marsh. A Wood Sandpiper flew over Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, Garganey were at Mythop (2) and Newton Marsh, two Avocets visited Freckleton Naze Pool and an Egyptian Goose was noted at Sand Villa.

A male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was seen at Lytham Hall towards the month end and a Willow Tit lingered at Cottam Brickworks. A flock of 15 Waxwings paused in Hambleton and the long-staying Iceland Gull remained at Preston Dock. A Marsh Harrier was observed migrating north over Ellel Grange and seawatching at Starr Gate during the month produced two Velvet Scoters, Black Tern, Long-tailed Duck and three Little Terns.

### Short Toed Lark.

Without a doubt April's bird of the month was the Short Toed Lark, found by Ian Gardner. It was a first for the Fylde and for Lancashire. It was Sunday April 24<sup>th</sup> and he had been birding around Fleetwood tip pools and decided to finish off at the Fleetwood Marsh nature park. As he passed the model aircraft field he flushed a small brown bird whose call he immediately recognized as that of a Short Toed Lark, a call he said he had heard many times before. It landed on the track in front of him, posing so he could confirm it's ID. Then he got the message out. Seamus Eaves couldn't believe it, but was there in 10 mins. By nightfall about 20 people had seen it. It stayed around all Monday, and Ian saw it for the last time at dusk. It didn't reappear again.



Short Toed Lark. Paul Ellis

### I am now a retired twitcher.

Peter Rhind

Every now and again a text message appears on my phone promising exotic birds visiting the Fylde. I have on many occasions loaded up telescope binoculars and camera and gone to see. Usually I arrive to be told how well it was showing 10 minutes ago and what great views everybody had. To be fair Chris Batty gave me perfect views of the Caspian Tern and Stuart Piner showed me an American Wigeon.

I am not really helped by not always having my phone on and by being a lazy birdwatcher but I resolved to try harder this year (with birds over Wyre at least ) The message came up, White

Stork at Lane Ends, I loaded up and 5 minutes later there was the bird. Mind you it is hard to miss a massive white bird in a nearly deserted green field. I took photos of what was a first for



me in England and came home happy, twitching can be fun after all. Another message appeared on my phone. The White Stork is an escapee from Harewood House. Thanks a lot Chris, normal service is resumed, I am again a retired twitcher.

P.S. Saw the Kentish Plover, now briefly out of retirement.

## **Easter Monday Boat Trip**

Paul Slade

Easter Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April saw 10 of us meeting at 05.50 ready for a 6 o' clock rendezvous with the 'Blue Mink' at Fleetwood Beach.

A flat calm sea looked promising as did the clear blue sky. First bird's of the day were a couple of Tree Pipit's calling overhead pushing North on their Spring migration. We quickly boarded the boat and headed out of the River, Andy the boatman commented how lucky we were with the weather again, not many 'millpond' days in the bay! Sandwich Tern's were busy calling and feeding and before long we saw our first Guillemot's of the day. Looking ahead it looked very murky and we soon hit quite heavy fog, not great at sea. Luckily we soon passed through the fog and it was clear again a couple of miles out. Over the next few hours we managed to see 3 Kittiwake, 2 Fulmar, 28 Red Throated Diver, a Razorbill, 17 Guillemot, 200+ Common Scoter, 9 Gannet, 3 Arctic Tern, 70+ Sandwich Tern and a few Swallow's pushing North. I brought a few loaves of bread hoping to attract gull's to the back of the boat and drag a Skua in, the gull's came but no skua, an adult Yellow Legged Gull was a nice surprise though. Highlight of the day for most of us I am sure were the 7 Harbour Porpoise which kept us entertained for about half an hour coming within feet of the boat testing a few photographers skills ! Although we perhaps didn't see as many birds as we would have liked it was still a very enjoyable day out at sea in glorious sunshine with good company. We have arranged a further four trips in July & August so please give me a ring or drop me an email if you would like to book, details in this newsletter or see the website : <http://www.fyldebirdclub.org/announcements.html>



## **Amended times for Pelagic Trips**

The pelagic trips have been rearranged due to the clash of times with the monthly bird meeting. The trips start from the Lifeboat Station at Fleetwood, the boat is accessed by a ladder or a steep plank

Please rebook with Paul Slade, his email address is paul@winclad.fsnet.co.uk or telephone 07970 986904 a refund will be given if the new dates are not convenient.



Monday 11 July 4-9pm £25.00

Monday 25 July 3-8pm £25.00

Wednesday 24 August 3-8pm £25.00

Thursday 25 August 4-9pm £25.00

*Book early as the last trips were very popular*

### **Birding Highlights of 2010**

Maurice Jones

On the 13<sup>th</sup> June a full summer plumage Black Guillemot flew south about a quarter of a mile off South Promenade, Blackpool. These have become more regular off Lancashire coast in recent years and this was my 7<sup>th</sup> since 1994 but they are always a surprise!

On the 11<sup>th</sup> July, I made another of my many visits to South Promenade. I saw about 70 Manx Shearwaters and 30 Gannets in just over 2 hours. I had only been watching a quarter of an hour when my scope picked up a superb adult Long Tailed Skua about 30 feet up moving South almost a third of a mile out. It was tracking in towards me so that I changed to just binocular views in case I lost it in the scope. All its features including that superb long tail were easily seen. This was only the 2<sup>nd</sup> I have seen in the Fylde and the first on a sea watch in 50 or more years! My birthday had arrived a day early!

On the 8<sup>th</sup> October, I made one of many autumn visits to the Fairhaven dunes. I checked the bushes below the promenade opposite the King Edward and Queen Mary School. Eight Tree Sparrows and 4 Coal Tits indicated that there was some migration.

Turning back towards the Lake, I noticed a Thrush size bird flying quickly south but against the light. A check with binoculars revealed a superb Great Grey Shrike. It landed in a clump of Sycamores. I was aware of approaching dog walkers behind me so I asked if they could divert their route. They kindly agreed so turned to view the bird only to find it had already moved on!

The other highlight was of course the proving that Cetti's Warblers were breeding at the Mere – a first for Lancashire.

### **You are here at the wrong time.**

Dave Wadsworth.

I have been very fortunate to have an expenses-paid voluntary job which has taken me around the world for the last ten years. As a birdwatcher I can always find time for a little birding. Twice recently I had trips to Slovakia - and as part of the deal friends arranged to help me with my strange habit. In 2010 I went to Bratislava, the start was inauspicious, early April, and only common terns and common sandpipers on the lake. However, I learned that eastern hospitality is both incredible and mysterious. The next day my contact drove us from Bratislava to Kosice near the Ukranian border by the slow route, two Lesser Spotted Eagles and the biggest heronry in the country made it a quiet day! At Kosice my wife retired to the splendours of the hotel while I set off to meet a man in Tesco's car park who would show me a pair of Imperial Eagles. Waiting in a strange place for someone to just turn up is a trifle worrying but turn up he did. He was a warden at the Senna Fishponds reserve with a good command of English and a desire to show the reserve to "foreigners" Had I been there in May or September it would have been much better was his opening comment! There are no hides and the ponds are about two or three km away. Small parties of cranes and large groups of ruff and green sandpipers were the openers followed by a black stork and a nesting white tailed eagle, marsh



harrier, hen harrier, spoonbill, Caspian gulls, yellow legged gulls and the usual great and little egrets. As we walked back I asked casually about penduline tits and on cue he pointed out one of their delightful nests, and just as he was saying they weren't back yet, a male popped out and displayed wonderfully. A month later we would have seen all three Marsh Terns and all the east European Reed/Water margin warblers plus passage migrants.

In February 2011 I was invited to a birthday party back in Kosice, which entailed flying via Budapest. I met my contact in a lay-by in dark and sleet and mist one hour from the air port. We raced through the night to Hortobagy, we spent the night on the Hungarian plains where older members of the club will remember world war three tank battles were going to be fought! One house rule, do not even put your toothbrush in the water. We went to sleep listening to a Little Owl and Greylag geese, and awoke to a Kestrel and Collared Dove. Inevitably he had a friend who was a warden at the reserve, and on the way to his house we saw a Bittern, just standing in the open by the road ignoring traffic, even when we returned to see it. (how I wished I was a photographer, I would have run the Mortons close in the next competition!)

Next was a Rough Legged Buzzard, but there were Buzzards of both types on every other tree, (just like Ospreys on telegraph posts in Florida) Flooding had driven the rodents slightly closer to the roads. We then saw a flock of Rooks, an Imperial Eagle, two Hen Harriers and several Great Grey Shrikes, all in the first hour, no Saker Falcons though. After a short, very muddy drive, we found eight Great Bustards, five of which were displaying, and just above them a White Tailed Eagle, which I almost missed in my excitement! Another drive and a short walk, through the stickiest mud in the world (a tank would have been useful) there was a Greater Spotted Eagle and two more White Tailed Eagles in flight. That turned out to be the finale, a morning had gone and after goulash in the local restaurant, we headed on to Kosice. Jahodna a low level ski area promised Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Tenjalm's Owl, Capercaillie and Black Grouse. I saw four species of Tit, a Nuthatch and Chaffinches! There were wild boar tracks in the snow and strange footprints which I thought might have been a bear, but turned out to be a yeti, according to the locals!

This is a super area to visit in May and September when Red Breasted and Lesser White Fronts are with the geese as well as other migratory species. Hortobagy is an hour and a half from Budapest and Kosice two hours further. The local wardens are really helpful, and want to show their patch to the world. If I was going on a birding trip, I would probably spend a couple of days around Hortobagy, then a couple around Senna before moving on to Tartras for the wood and mountain species. Jet 2 to Budapest was about £230 Car hire £30 per day, and accommodation varies. Top hotels are European prices but the ski resort had self catering at 14 euros per night for a two person room, with a meal for less than 10 euros. It can be cheap to holiday here still, but they are learning fast!

## **March 17<sup>th</sup> 2011**

Pete Rhind's favourite bird

We have had siskins in the garden now and again but they have always been uncommon. On January 14<sup>th</sup> a group of 3 arrived and over the next few weeks we had around 5 every day. Two or three females always reach the feeders first followed by the males a few minutes later. Do the females really check out the site first!!?? They are one of my favourite birds, tiny, agile and gaudy.

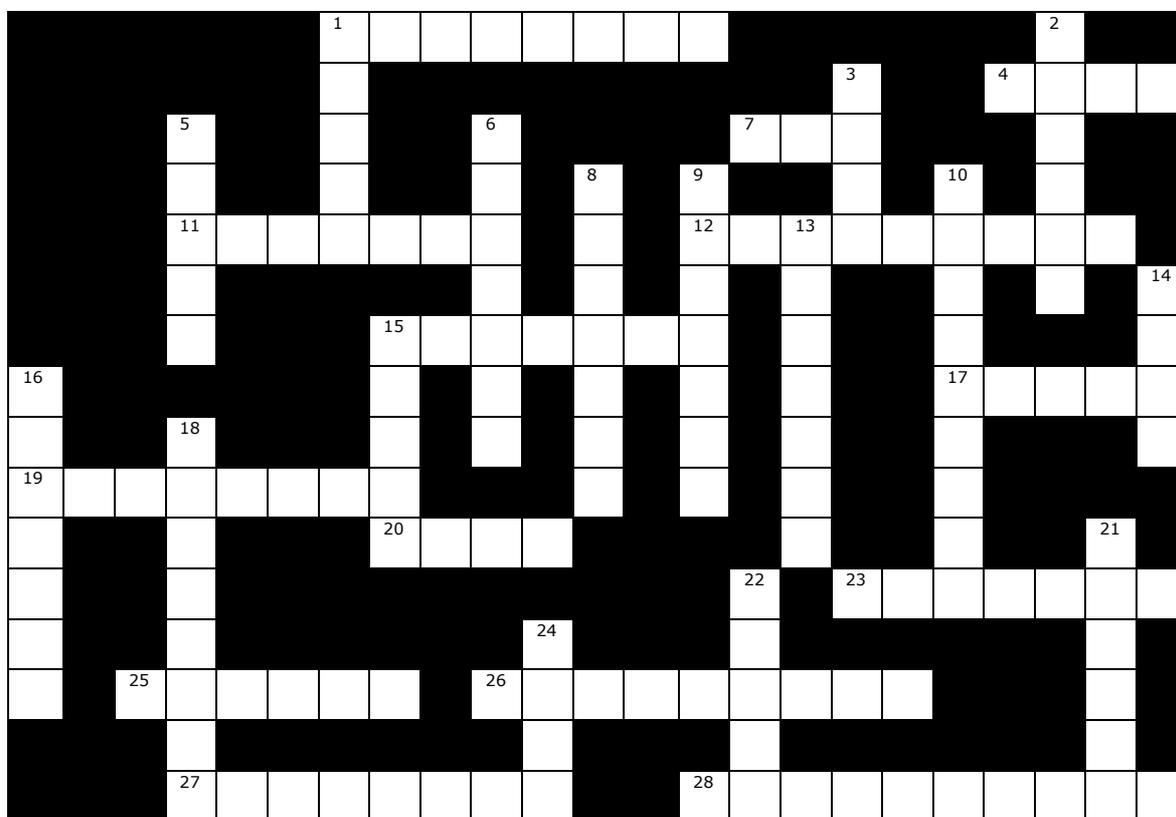
March 17<sup>th</sup> started as usual, 2 females on the feeder, but then the rest arrived. For the next quarter of an hour at least 15 were on the feeders or on the ground and this group was constantly changing as birds flew in from nearby trees. I estimate that at least 30 birds were involved in this dance. The vivid greens, yellows and blacks made for me an unforgettable spectacle. One of the birdwatching experiences which will remain with me for a long time.





*If you have an unforgettable experience to share let us know.*

**Cryptic Crossword 1** (answers on page 13, no cheating!)  
 John & Anne Jenkins



**Across clues**

- 1 Sounds like this wader made a study of travel on foot – no pony. (8)
- 4 Christopher changed sex to be in the navy. (4)
- 7 Cockney raptor? No, it was a great seabird. (3)
- 11 Bird in the bar? Now let us see! (4,3)
- 12 Fleetwood Mac meets the Ancient Mariner. (9)
- 15 Gerrit down yer! (7)
- 17 Is leggy bird on t'list? (5)
- 19 Bedtime tipple. (8)
- 20 Granny, for example. (4)
- 23 Cross here! (7)
- 25 In summer, linnet may be its prey. (6)
- 26 Include 500 in round played before short measure. (9)
- 27 Ruskie's soubrette. (8)
- 28 This VTOL flyer can lay an egg! (3,7)



### Down clues

- 1 Garden bird is brown, south west primarily not included. (5)
- 2 Grumble – about the notorious whisky? (6)
- 3 One through the kebab on the BBQ, we hear. (4)
- 5 Table football – a pastime. (5)
- 6 Still holds track record set in 1938. (7)
- 8 All aboard for high jinks! (7)
- 9 Winter visitor definitely not on the wane! (7)
- 10 Angry on receiving invoice. (9)
- 13 Sad little garden bird. (4,3)
- 14 This bird bears a mark of quality. (4)
- 15 Does it bring babies from its high nest? (5)
- 16 This kind of bird comes out for the gala. (7)
- 18 Weather a confused bird arrives here in spring. (8)
- 21 Theft is on this birds agenda. (6)
- 22 Finch mentioned in twitter – we hear one less tea required – not right! (5)
- 24 Bird reputed to be follicly-challenged! (4)

### E-mail address check

So that we can ensure we send your newsletter and any correspondence to the correct e-mail address can you please update us on your current e-mail address. Please just send a quick e-mail to Paul Ellis (paul.ellis24@btinternet.com) and we can cross check with our database to ensure that we are up to date with your contact details. Please also remember to let us know if any of your other contact details alter (e.g. mobile phone number) so that you do not miss out on any postal correspondence or mobile text alerts.

Thank you  
Kinta Beaver (Membership Secretary)

### Walk on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Mark Farrar

Langdale

Distance 10.5 miles / 16.9 km

Ascent (total) 3550ft 1082m

Time 7.5 hours

Sunset time 19.35

Map Explorer OL6 The English Lakes, South Western Area

Grid Reference NY 293063

My name is Mark Farrar, 46 years and I am a keen birdwatcher/twitcher. I have been interested in birds all my life, even from being a youngster. I am keener than ever before and always on the look out for that rare bird, like everyone else in Fylde Bird Club. I have been fellwalking/rambling for 25 years now. I have completed all 247 Wainrights in the Lake District, 80% of them I have done 3 times or more. The remote fells I have to do again for the second time. I do enjoy fellwalking/rambling and find walking is the best exercise there is. I find going for a walk is a tonic. Just to be out walking, weather permitting of course, makes me feel better. On this day we were going to the Langdales which is one of my favourite locations for walking. When the weather is good, walking is exceptional, when the weather is bad. Langdale can become a dangerous location and one of the last you will want to visit, because there is very little to do there. No shops, birdwatching terrible, visiting Langdale when the weather is bad can make me feel miserable. Our coach arrived at 10.10am, after a brief toilet visit, we were walking at 10.25am. What follows is the brief itinerary of the walk.



The walk starts off nice and easy from the car park at Dungeon Ghyll. We walk across the fields towards the Old Dungeon Ghyll. We carry on in the easy style as we make our way along the interminable Mickleden valley into its farthest corner below Rossett Pike and Buck Pike. The route now climbs the narrow defile of Rossett Gill an ascent of 440m/1440ft up to Angle Tarn. Next on the agenda is the small ascent (160m/525ft) to just below Allen Crag, from here we turn SW (left) to follow the path (still climbing) past the small refuge in Calf Cove on the way to today's highest point, Great End (910m/2986ft). From the summit of Great End we had good views of the Stickle, Harrison Stickle and Pike a Stickle, Pavey Ark, Seargent Man, Great Gable and Scafell Pike the highest mountain in England. Take a little time to look around whilst we are here on the 5<sup>th</sup> ranked summit, soon we are on the return leg of today's walk. We retrace our steps through Calf Cove but this time we head to the summit of Esk Pike (885m/2903ft). From here we will see the next summit we are heading for, namely Bow Fell, we walk below Bow Fell to Angle Tarn, from here we rejoin the Mickleden path and descend down Mickleden Valley returning to the New Dungeon Ghyll. We arrived back at 17.00hrs approx, this gave us time to have a pint of real ale and savour the day's walk. The weather had been good all day, good visibility, light breeze to keep us cool while we were walking and the temperature was cool on the tops and warm at sea level. I enjoyed the walk and the pint. Unfortunately the walk didn't allow me to do much birdwatching. When one is walking you don't get much time to birdwatch, especially when you are in a party and have an appointed leader, leading the walk. We had a party of about 18 walkers including the leader, we were of a mixed ability, we all were able to manage the strenuous walk. The birds we saw were, Wheatear, Meadow Pipit, Chaffinch, Ravens, Song Thrush, Blackbird, and Willow Warbler. I hope you enjoy reading this and feel inspired to take up walking.

## Nestboxes

During 2011 the Fylde Bird Club have made a big effort on making nestboxes. We have purchased plywood, cut to size and assembled 133 in total, including:



A Wellwisher!

- 111 small hole boxes for Tree Sparrow / Pied Flycatcher or Blue / Great Tit.
- 14 small open fronted boxes for Robin / Spotted Flycatcher / Dipper or Grey Wagtail.
- 2 boxes for Treecreeper.
- 3 Tawny Owl boxes.
- 1 Little Owl box.
- 1 Starling box.
- 1 double holed box for House Sparrow.



Many of the boxes have already been put up for this year.

Anyone have any Butyl pond liner or old tyre inner tubes lying around at home they don't want ? If so please let me know, they are ideal for cutting up for lid straps or fixing straps.

If anyone has any ideas for new sites or box designs or would like any boxes making for next year please contact Paul Slade on 07970 986904 or email : [Paul@winclad.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:Paul@winclad.fsnet.co.uk)

## **Speakers at the River Wyre Meetings**

### **March 24<sup>th</sup>**

Jeff Harrison showed some excellent photographs of Kingfishers from his garden and the surrounding areas of Cambridge where he lives. He has studied them for many years and caught a pair of Kingfishers mating, a first he believed in this country.

### **April 26<sup>th</sup>**

Stephen Murphy a warden from English Nature spoke of his love of Hen Harriers, he has worked mainly in the Trough of Bowland, and has radio tracked and followed their movements across the country.

### **May 24<sup>th</sup>**

Brockholes Wetlands Nature Reserve has now opened, access is from Junction 31 on the M6 going south. The visitor centre with refreshments, and classrooms for school children, floats on one of the pools, how exciting!

### **June 28<sup>th</sup>**

A business update with photographs from members of the club.

### **July 26<sup>th</sup>**

Alan Davies and his partner Ruth set out on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 to travel round the world to break the record for the total of birds seen in one year 4000, which beat the previous record of 3662.

### **23rd August**

Our secretary Paul Ellis and Kinta will talk on their recent trip to Cuba, their photographs are superb.

If you have not attended our monthly meetings before, please come along, we meet upstairs at the River Wyre Hotel, Poulton. We have an update of the birds seen in the last month, then we have a speaker, these are informal meetings. Many are just casual birders (like me) with some who are much more dedicated to watching and recording and taking photos.

### **Otters at Ambleside**

Jackie Moreton

Without sounding over sentimental and being a child of "The Ring of Bright Water" generation, when the opportunity came to see a wild Otter, at close quarters, it would prove irresistible, so when we heard of the Otters at Ambleside we jumped at the chance to go and see them. An early start saw us parking the car at Waterhead Pier at 7am.

We saw two Otters straight away, swimming near the far bank, then the adult female popped up right in front of us - we knew it was her because she has a damaged left eye, she then swam across to the middle of the lake and then out of view.

Then a gentleman arrived to open up the pier, after about ten minutes he asked us if we would



like to see the Otters, we were on the pier in seconds.

We then watched and photographed a young Otter for some forty-five minutes as it was fishing and having a great time as only Otters do.

The gentleman who runs the cafe on the pier told us that the female had been coming back for the last four years but it is only this year that they have given such great views. What a fantastic experience.



## **Some Reflections on the Losses of Birds in Harsh Weather**

Frank Walsh

It is well known that prolonged icy conditions result in much increased mortality in birds. Probably most species are affected but among those relatively common species which are known to suffer particularly severely are Grey Heron, long beaked waders, Kingfisher, and small insectivorous passerines such as Wren, Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit and Treecreeper. These small passerines lay large clutches and, all things being equal, can rapidly recover their numbers in subsequent years. These effects are probably best shown in long running population surveys run by the BTO, most notable is the heronries census which has been running since 1928 (originally organised by Max Nicholson, before the BTO was founded).

After a long run of mild winters January 2010 was unusually cold. Locally the Grey Heron colony at Stanley Park was reduced by a quarter from 45 to 34 active nests, though the colonies at Savick Brook and Centre Farm, Forton were only slightly down. In 2009 breeding Kingfishers seemed to be at an all-time high in north Lancashire and the breeding population of 2010 was noticeably down on this. It took me until June to come across my first Kingfisher in 2010. The 2009 autumn passage of Goldcrests at Fairhaven was about average, but the spring 2010 passage was virtually non-existent.

The effects of the 2010-11 winter remain to be seen but the unprecedented December freeze-up will surely have reduced many populations. I've already heard of a dead Grey Heron and Kingfisher stored in a freezer awaiting despatch to a competent taxidermist, and of a moribund Common Snipe picked up at the Mere, which could not be revived.

My own observations are very limited but on the shore at Grannys' Bay and along the Fairhaven Sea wall I found 21 dead Redshank on 29 December: five of these were one-legged/footed birds which would probably struggle to forage effectively at the best of times. On New Years Day at Preston Dock, while watching the Iceland Gull, I counted at least 11 dead gulls lying on the ice. Most seemed to be Black-heads, but at least two were Common Gulls. More promisingly Long-tailed Tits seem to be doing reasonably well, perhaps the result of increasing levels of food provision in gardens.

It would be interesting to hear of other occurrences of dead birds seen locally.



## Answers

### Across

1 Redshank  
4 Wren  
7 Auk  
11 Barn owl  
12 Albatross  
15 Swallow  
17 Stilt  
19 Nightjar  
20 Knot  
23 Pelican  
25 Merlin  
26 Goldfinch  
27 Redstart  
28 Hen harrier

### Down

1 Robin  
2 Grouse  
3 Skua  
4 Hobby  
6 Mallard  
8 Skylark  
9 Waxwing  
10 Crossbill  
13 Bluetit  
14 Kite  
15 Stork  
16 Bunting  
18 Wheatear  
21 Magpie  
22 Twite  
24 Coot

P.S.

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