



Fylde Bird Club

Lancashire

DECEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to another newsletter, at the end of an eventful year for the club. The saddest event of the year was the very premature death of Pauline McGough, as promised there is a tribute to Pauline in this issues. Thanks to Frank Walsh and Maurice Jones for producing this.

One of the highlights for many members was the return of the autumn pelagics. The Chairman has written an entertaining account of these trips which will hopefully incentivise some of you who didn't got this time to take the plunge (though hopefully not literally!) next year. In a similar vein a short account of my experience on the last ever Marinelife Fleetwood-Larne surveys is also included.

Maurice Jones has kindly summarised another of his foreign trips, this time to Bulgaria. The variety of sought after species seen for a very reasonable outlay may encourage others among you to head east.

In the next newsletter I would like to do another annual highlights piece, as it is a great opportunity for members to get involved in the newsletter. Just four or five lines describing some of your best moments of the year would be great. Go on – get involved.

I hope you had a great 2010 birding year. I also hope that our local birdlife gets through the current icy conditions as unscathed as possible and you have another good Fylde birding year in 2011.

All the best for Christmas and the New Year,

Stephen



PAULINE McGOUGH 1957-2010

On 17th August 2010 Pauline McGough, one of Fylde Bird Club's most talented birders, died of oesophageal cancer. She had been suffering from the disease for less than a year. Since January Pauline had known that the illness was terminal, and she was determined to fit in as many activities as possible in the time left to her.

Pauline had always been interested in animals and their welfare. While still a schoolgirl, she organized the release of a consignment of sheep on their way to a slaughter house. However, along with her husband Mike, she did not take up active birding until the early 1990s. As late as 1991, Pauline was not interested in visiting the Mere to see the American Bittern. In 1994 or 1995 MJ first came across Pauline, who alone, was busy wood-chipping the path to the container hide on the north side of the Mere, showing her commitment to the conservation of the Mere. In 1999 Pauline played a major role in the building of the Fylde Bird Club hide. She organized the purchase of the building materials, as well as helping in its construction. Pauline's and Mike's names first appeared as contributors to the FBC Report in 1996

Initially Pauline and Mike did quite a lot of twitching, travelling frequently to such 'hot-spots' as the north Norfolk coast in search of rarities, and making visits to Scotland and the Scilly Isles, but soon Pauline became more and more focussed on the Fylde, especially Marton Mere, which she visited frequently. In 2002 she published a nicely illustrated book "Fifty Years of Bird Recording at Marton Mere: a Local Nature Reserve". From then on Pauline was especially enthusiastic in documenting the changing patterns of birdlife at the Mere. For several years she led a 'warbler walk' in spring, putting her knowledge of bird song to good use and counting each species en-route in Stanley Park, Herons Reach GC, and Marton Mere. She also became a very active member of the 'Friends of Marton Mere'. At various times Pauline was also involved in WeBs counts, Black-tailed Godwit nest guarding, collecting data for the Lancashire Millennium Atlas and the forthcoming BTO Atlas.

Apart from birds, Pauline was also interested in butterflies and moths, moth trapping in their Poulton garden, mapping dragonfly distribution for a future Lancashire Atlas and, most unusually, studying spiders. However, true to her youthful feelings, Pauline was not prepared to collect specimens. (all trapped insects and spiders were released).

Even during her illness Pauline and Mike visited the Mere regularly and Pauline took great delight in being involved in proving the long predicted breeding of Cetti's Warbler there. (This was also the first proven breeding of the species in Lancashire and North Merseyside). In summer this year Pauline also added Dipper to the Mere Checklist



Pauline and Mike made several birding trips to exotic areas, including Canada, Texas, New Zealand (where Pauline's brother George lives), Australia, Lanzarote, Spain, Turkey, Finland, Gambia and several times to southern Africa. Pauline did most of the research, planning, and booking. She also managed to learn the calls, from tape recordings, of many of the target birds. Once in the field Pauline did the navigating, at which she was amazingly good, and did most of the documentation while Mike drove and did most of the photography. On several occasions the FBC had the pleasure of seeing and hearing the results from these adventurous holidays, with Pauline providing the main commentary. Even in April, though wheelchair bound, Pauline was determined to assist Mike in presenting the results of their last overseas holiday to Zululand. This was a memorable evening for all her friends.

When Mike was working, Pauline, who did not drive, frequently went birding with MJ, benefiting the team with her keen eyesight and hearing. Pauline's and Mike's other great interest was in Family History and Pauline spent many happy hours working in the County archives in Preston.

Pauline's loss will be widely felt, as clearly demonstrated by the attendance of many birding friends, and others, at her funeral.

Maurice Jones & Frank Walsh



All At Sea

In the early to mid 1980's Roger Scholes arranged a couple of trips out in to Morecambe Bay for Fylde Bird Club members aboard 'The Lancastrian' a very plush and high tech training craft owned by Fleetwood Nautical College of which Roger was the top man at the time.

On the first trip on 7th May 1983 we headed from Fleetwood towards Walney and managed to see the following, 56 Common Tern, 4 Red breasted Merganser, 15 Cormorant, a Swift, 2 Reed Buntings flying towards Fleetwood about 5 miles from shore, 70 Gannet, 3 swallows, 47 Guillemot, 2 Kittiwakes, 3 eider, 4 Razorbill, 11 Red Throated Diver, 2 Black Throated Diver, 4 Razorbill, a Fulmar, 47 Sandwich Tern, a Little Tern and Wheatear and Arctic Tern on Foulney A second trip went out on the same route on 11th February 1984 between 07.45 and 15.30 even though it was dull and very foggy ! We saw very little but had a nice adult Kittiwake sat on the boat showing very well.



Seumus Eaves, Roger Scholes, Ian Gardner, Tony Myerscough, Pete Scholes and Pat Davies aboard 'The Lancastrian' (Paul Slade)

Over recent years I had been thinking about trying to arrange a similar boat trip off the Fylde Coast spurred on by reports coming on the pager from similar trips all around the UK coast. I thought it must be worth trying some trips at different times of the year and even try some 'chumming'

I started my search for a boat and skipper by asking around a few friends who do sea fishing in small boats suitable for two or three people, I was told by all of them I wouldn't have a problem finding both !

Internet search engines were my next port of call and I came up with a list of three boats that operated out of Fleetwood, firstly the 'Wyre Princess' sounded very grand but the phone number was dead, secondly the 'Lancashire Lass' sounded very local and traditional and came with two phone numbers, one of which was dead and the other a wrong number, slightly disheartened I tried the last number, Andy from the 'Blue Mink' bingo he was more than happy to put a couple of trips together for me.

The first trip was arranged for 22nd July leaving at 17.10 for about 5 hours at sea.

We were to be picked up from the beach by Fleetwood Lifeboat Station so met with eager anticipation complete with a bin of gruesome smelling chum kindly 'fermented' by Chris Batty at home in his garage. Quickly aboard bang on time we steamed out of the estuary and headed strongly WSW.





Aboard the 'Blue Mink' 22nd July 2010 (Paul Ellis)

We soon picked up a couple of Manx Shearwaters, Gannets, Guillemots and Common Scoter before we stopped about 8 miles out and deployed the chum.



Manx Shearwater (Paul Ellis)



Gannet (Paul Ellis)





Chris Batty 'Chumming' (Paul Ellis)

Very little happened for the first hour before a few Lesser Black-backed Gull's joined us which seemed to have the desired effect as a Fulmar and a few Kittiwakes joined the 'feeding frenzy' giving fantastic views close to the boat. There was quite a swell as we sat waiting but luckily most if not all of the crew were feeling ok.



Fulmar (Paul Ellis)





Kittiwake (Paul Ellis)



A Whimbrel flew high calling over the boat shortly before we headed back to shore (Paul Ellis)



Chris Batty wringing out his soggy smalls (or should that be 'biggs') after a choppy few hours and a beach landing.(Paul Ellis)



A further trip was arranged for 18th August but unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the gusting wind conditions, a week later the rearranged trip also had to be cancelled, finally we thought try once more time.

Friday 3rd September dawned perfect with a gorgeous sunny and calm day, at 2pm we again met on the beach and boarded the Blue Mink.

We decided not to head as far out this time but try a little closer inshore, we were quickly rewarded with close but brief views of a couple of Harbour Porpoise.

Rather than head straight out then start chumming bread was slowly thrown off the back of the boat to keep a few gulls following nearby, after about 6 miles we stopped and deployed the chum, almost immediately the gulls lost interest and landed on the sea briefly before taking off en mass and heading back towards Fleetwood, a bit of banter then took place towards Chris and the now useless looking chum before we realised what had made the gulls scarper, a shout of Bonxie went up as a stunning Great Skua flew right over the boat before alighting on the sea about 500 metres away.



Great Skua (Stuart Piner)

Many more birds were seen on this trip including about 25+ Guillemot, 20 Sandwich Tern, 12 Common Tern and 30+ Kittiwake.

As we were enjoying the sunshine the skipper was on the radio to one of his fishing friends discussing large numbers of Scoter present recently at the end of the outflow pipe about 4 miles out off Norbreck, he asked if we would like to head that way to see if we could see any, a decision we would not regret as we neared the marker mast with flock after flock of Common Scoter all around. Switching off the engines we marvelled at the sight and sound of probably over 10,000 Common Scoter, they truly were amazing, thousand's of calling sea duck is not something I have witnessed before. Some birds were clearly flightless as they dived to get away from this strange looking craft full of birders. Many of them must have been moulting as the surface of the flat calm sea was littered with feathers, as far as I know no-one realised Scoter were using the Fylde Coast as a late summer moulting ground.



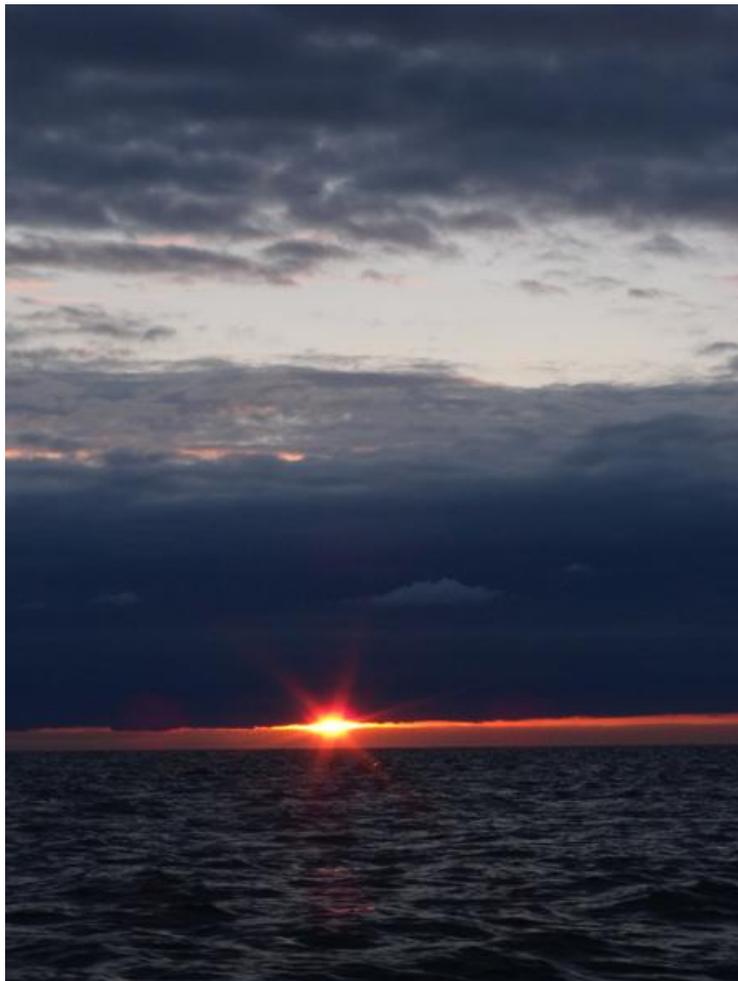


Enjoying the Sunshine and a joke (Peter Rhind)

As we left the stunning Scoters we slowly headed back towards Fleetwood passing a couple of curious Grey Seal's, several close Guillemot and a near summer plumaged Red Throated Diver took off to avoid the boat.

All aboard agreed we had been very lucky to have such a fantastic afternoon out and looked forward to trying again next year.

The following day I received an email off Barry Dyson in which he summed up the day with 'Memories are made of days like that' I couldn't agree more !



On the way home ! (Paul Ellis)



Many Thanks to Paul Ellis, Peter Rhind and Stuart Piner for photographs.

Paul Slade

PS: I will be arranging more trips for next year, details to follow in the Newsletter and on the Website.

Birding Trip to Bulgaria September 2010

Participants: Maurice Jones, Harry Shorrocks, Len Knowles, Tony Rhodes, Barry Dwire, Roy Drinkwater, Andy Myerscough

We arrived at the Park Continental Hotel, Sunny Beach not long after midnight early on the 21st. We had the same 9 seat minibus as on our May trip. We were hoping to repeat the success of a trip in late Sept 2005 when we had 1460 Black Storks, 847 Lesser Spotted Eagles, 1200 Buzzards, 15 Booted Eagle, 16 Short Toed Eagle, 8 Honey Buzzard and 1 Greater Spotted Eagle. In this respect we failed but did see some light passage and in some other respects did better than in 2005.

21st: A short walk before we had our vehicle delivered produced 2 Lesser Whitethroats and a Little Owl. Five Lesser Spotted Eagles were also over our hotel. Our first day took us along the bumpy road to Cape Emin. At the river en route were Kingfisher, Red Backed Shrike (the first of many), Green and Greater Spotted Woodpecker. The grassy and shrubby areas nearer the Cape had 12 Whinchats together, Corn Buntings, 4 Tawny Pipits, Eastern Orphean Warbler, 2 Sombre Tits, Wryneck, 3 Middle Spotted Woodpecker, 1 Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, 2 Redstarts and Red Breasted Flycatcher. Barry saw his favourite bird Ring Ouzel. At the bridge a Hobby showed well (seen daily, including from our hotel).

22nd: At Aheloi on the coast main road E87, we had 4 Steppe Buzzards, Turtle Dove, Red Breasted Flycatcher and Short Toed Eagle. There was heavy coastal passage here on the 22nd in 2005. At Atanasovsko raptor watch point everything was rather distant with 200 Mediterranean Gull, hundreds of Avocet, many White Pelicans and 10 Spoonbill.

A hide near Bourgas (which is always closed!) had lots of duck and 8 Great White Egret; there was no sign of the nesting Penduline Tit we had seen in Spring. The huge lake at Bourgas had 15 Dalmatian Pelicans, 6 Whiskered and 1 White Winged Black Tern. Mandra Lake, further along the E87 had 11 Dalmatian Pelican, Ferruginous Ducks and juvenile Purple Heron. Poda reserve just across the road had 60 Pygmy Cormorants, Black Kite, Squacco Heron and 2 Caspian Terns. By the salt museum at Pomorie were 2 Broad Billed Sandpiper, 10 Kentish Plover and Black Necked Grebes. Our final stop was a well-hidden saltpan, which had 2 Red Necked Phalarope, 20 Marsh Sandpipers, 50 Spotted Redshanks and 14 Wood Sandpipers.

23rd: We returned to this wader hotspot seeing 174 Spotted Redshanks, Garganey's, the Phalaropes, Great White Egret, 1 Spotted Crake, a flight view of Temminck's Stint.



Rare from a Bulgarian standpoint was a Pectoral Sandpiper found by 2 Irish birders the previous day. The salt museum area had Arctic Skua, 1 Broad Billed Sandpiper, Little Gulls and 1 Caspian Tern. A journey into a valley in the Balkan range was not too productive in late afternoon – only 3 Woodlarks and a Hobby.

24th: We started with good views of a Syrian Woodpecker on the dunes between Sunny Beach and New Nessebar. A sea watch off Old Nessebar produced 4 Arctic Skua and about 10 Yelkovan Shearwaters. We then drove south through Bourgas and turned right between the huge lake of that name and the even bigger Lake Mandra. Over Bourgas inner lake were Little Gulls and Black Tern. Two juvenile White Tailed Eagle, Buzzards, 2 Short Toed Eagle, thousands of Pochard, 1 White Stork, 33 White Pelicans, Purple Heron, Marsh Harriers and one Raven. In a very distant field stood 150 White Pelicans. The lake had 7000 White Pelicans only a couple of days previously! Returning north we had 2 Purple Heron and 10 Pygmy Cormorant at Camping Evrova marsh by the E87. The wader hotspot at Pomorie had 8 Greenshank, 150 Spotted Redshank, 5 Red Necked Phalarope, 21 Marsh Sandpiper and 15 Wood Sandpiper to name just a few.

25th: The day started with Syrian Woodpecker from our hotel balcony. We then went to the Valley in the Balkan range. A Suslik on the road gave good views. A thermal had 10 Lesser Spotted Eagles with 3 more later, 10 Hawfinch, Cirl Bunting. A Black Woodpecker flying across the road was seen by only 2 of us. At a high pass to the North we had 8 Lesser Spotted Eagles. A Sombre Tit was at a picnic stop at Djulino. In the Goritza area we had 20 Crag Martin, Red Breasted Flycatcher and common passerines. As we drove back South on the E87 through the Balkan range a migrating flock of 2 to 300 White Pelicans was a wonderful sight.

26th: Our only drizzle of the week but by the time we had reached PODA BSPB reserve it was warm and sunny. This was a day of light raptor passage with 2 Short Toed Eagles, 3 Ospreys, Hobbies, 1 probable Red Footed Falcon, Sparrowhawks and Buzzards. A flock of 400 White Pelicans was again a wonderful sight with another 150 later. Also seen were 1 White Stork, 160 Pygmy Cormorant, 5 Slender Billed Gull, 20 Ferruginous Duck, 10 Spoonbills, Kingfishers, Marsh Harriers, Squacco Heron, Great White and Little Egrets. We couldn't resist a visit to the Pomorie salt pan seeing 2 Caspian Tern, 3 Red Necked Phalarope, 200 Spotted Redshank, 50 Greenshank, 30 Marsh Sandpipers, 70 Ruff, 30 Little Stint, 40 Wood Sandpipers etc.

27th: The Valley in the Balkan range was quiet so we headed due south and again visited Poda. Another Osprey and 7 White Storks flew South otherwise it was much as before. The wader hot-spot No. 2 was on the busy E87 road North of Pomorie and had 2 Red Necked Phalarope, 4 Little Gulls, 20 Kentish Plovers and 80 Little Stints. After returning our bus we were entertained in the hotel grounds by Hummingbird Hawkmoths at the flowers and a Red Breasted Flycatcher.

Total cost was c £450.

Maurice Jones



SHORT NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fleetwood-Larne Surveys

With the closure of the route announced this month I was fortunate to be on the Marinelifa team surveying on the last ever such trip on 18th and 19th December.

Leaving Fleetwood some interesting local observations were made. As well as just over 100 Cormorants on the Wyre Light much larger numbers, estimated at c700, were on a more distant sandbank. The larger numbers of Cormorants on the Fylde coast was evident last winter as well as this, nevertheless it was still a real surprise to see circa 800 Cormorants on the Fylde.

In the Lune Deeps a Little Gull was welcome, and soon after several more were seen. The total was difficult to be clear on as a couple appeared to pass the boat twice. There were at least 15 birds though, all were adults except for one first winter. A couple of Red-throated Divers were also recorded on the Fylde.

Further out to sea auks were the name of the game. Beyond the Isle of Man a couple of Puffins were a bit of a surprise this time of year, otherwise large amounts of the time only Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes were seen. Four Long-tailed Ducks off the Mull of Galloway were a bonus, the only Fulmar of the trip was also in this area.

Cetacean wise a single Harbour Porpoise was seen briefly, and there was also a Grey Seal also recorded well out towards the Isle of Man. An indication of the Arctic conditions occurred when a passerine landed on the boat directly north of the Isle of Man presumably desperately seeking unfrozen land. I was told it was a Robin but only saw it briefly myself as it flew onto the roof of the bridge.

These surveys have been great fun and it is a shame they are ending. Others in the north west may be arranged but this is not confirmed at this stage.

Club Calendar

The 2001 calendar for 2011 is available, costing £4. Contact David Moreton or the Chairman at club meetings, further details are also available on the club's website.

Cockers Dyke

Paul Slade has asked for a note to be included warning of the perilous state of the track to Cockers Dyke, which led to one member damaging their car. If you plan to drive down here to view the gull roost please take extreme care.

Goose Counts

The roost counts at Pilling are now being done by birders, having previously been done by wildfowlers. If you are interested in getting involved please contact the Newsletter Editor.

Next Meeting

Annual General Meeting 25th January 7:45pm in the River Wyre Hotel (meeting room upstairs).

