



# ***Fylde Bird Club*** ***Lancashire***

## **NOVEMBER 2008 MEMBERS NEWSLETTER**

Welcome to the November newsletter. I think it is more varied than most recent newsletters, so I hope you will find something to interest you.

Whilst it seems a long time ago now the Rossall School Bluethroat was the highlight of the spring and I am very pleased to be able to include an account from Stuart Piner, one of the co-finders.

Thanks to Stuart, Richard Wilson, Barry Dyson and our Secretary Paul for contributing to a piece on 2008 birding highlights. I am especially appreciative of the efforts of our Chairman, who when asked to supply a few lines produced several pages including images.

John Bateman has kindly supplied some personal reflection on our most conspicuous winter wildfowl visitors. There are also a couple of pieces by me on a colour ringed Cormorant and the variety of species you can see in the Fylde whilst contributing to the Atlas fieldwork. Sincere thanks to Cliff Raby for his excellent Cormorant picture which made the Cormorant article possible.

Good birding,

Stephen.

## THE ROSSALL SCHOOL BLUETHROAT BY STUART PINER

I have to admit that I find the art of bird finding a puzzle. I spend almost every moment I am awake pondering about the best way to find rare birds on the Fylde. Where and when to go, what habitat to concentrate on, whether to walk fast and cover lots of ground? Whether to take it slow and scrutinize every single blade of grass? Or whether to in fact, stand still and wait for the birds to find me? Whatever the answer is, I still haven't worked it out. But that isn't for the want of trying – I often wonder whether my strike rate is so low because when out birding my concentration level drops to rock bottom within ten minutes of leaving the car. Instead of being focused on the job in hand, I begin to daydream of the day I might locate a White's Thrush or the moment a Pallid Harrier might glide over my head. Chances are, I'd miss it if it actually happened – I'd be too busy day-dreaming about it!

During the few brief periods I'm not considering where and when the Fylde's first Short-toed Lark will be located, I often find myself discussing the subject with Chris (Batty). More often than not, when I raise the subject of looking for a certain species in our recording area, Chris has already been thinking about it and has a few suggestions of where to look. And it was from such discussions that it became clear that the true challenge in Fylde birding lay not in searching through the vast flocks of non-passerine carrier species that migrate through or winter in our area, but in locating lonesome passerines that make brief visits to our coastline. Don't get me wrong, I spend hour upon hour searching through flocks of waders, gulls and geese, trying to locate a rarity, and I enjoy (nearly) every minute of it. I have an awful lot of respect for those that can pull out a peep amongst a Dunlin flock time after time. However, I am in complete awe of birders who continually find rare passerines on the west coast. In a Fylde context, Maurice Jones and Ed Stirling stand head and shoulders above anyone else. Between them they have found Roller, Red-rumped Swallow, Richard's Pipit, Desert Wheatear, four Barred Warblers, two Subalpine Warblers, Pallas's Warbler, two Yellow-browed Warblers, Dusky Warbler, four Red-breasted Flycatchers, two Great Grey Shrikes and a Woodchat Shrike. That roll call would sound impressive if the birders in question had patched Blakeney Point all their lives – on the Fylde coast, it is simply outstanding.

So, in order to get anywhere near emulating the success of Ed and Maurice, it was obvious I would have to start putting in some serious effort. After flirting with Fleetwood on and off since returning home from university in 2006, I decided to concentrate my efforts on the stretch of coast between Cocker's Dyke and Pilling Lane Ends in spring 2008.

The spring had been exceptional for producing northwest England goodies. Prolonged periods of easterly winds and clear skies throughout May clearly encouraged migrating scarcities to keep going over the east coast and make landfall on the west coast – between Bardsey Island in Gwynedd and Cumbria birders scored Hoopoe, Short-toed Lark, Red-spotted Bluethroat, Great Reed Warbler, Icterine Warblers, Melodious Warbler, Subalpine Warblers and Ortolan Bunting. But the Fylde missed out on this rarity extravaganza and

despite several visits to my new patch I'd scored next to nothing, with just a Redstart and a Blue-headed Wagtail to my name.

Towards the end of May rain finally hit the east coast, and combined with the continuing easterlies, produced classic east coast fall conditions. And bang on cue, a classic east coast fall occurred – Icterine and Marsh Warblers, Common Rosefinches, Bluethroats and Red-backed Shrikes galore. As usual when it is so good on the east coast, I cursed my choice of home and with plenty of work on the go, I spent most of my time at my desk rather than scouring coastal vegetation.

On Thursday 28<sup>th</sup>, Chris telephoned late in the evening and announced that it was time to hit the coast. It was so good on the east coast, he believed that something could easily have 'slipped through' and be lurking in the Fylde – we arranged to meet in Fleetwood at 5am for a morning or hardcore searching. So, at 5am the following morning I awoke to the ring tone of my mobile phone – it was Chris – and as usual I'd overslept. Remarkably however, Chris hadn't and was currently driving into Fleetwood. For a moment I considered the rather appealing prospect of a few more hours sleep, but within a couple of minutes I was out of bed, dressed and in the car on my way to Rossall Point. By 6am we were working the coastal edge of Fleetwood Golf Course. A lone Wheatear was the only product of our efforts, but we were not disheartened – we knew that at this time of year it was all or nothing. We proceeded to Rossall School where we began to walk through the rough grass, scattered hedgerows and reedy ditches that look so promising for hosting rarities. Like I previously stated, when birding alone I'm usually day-dreaming; when out with Chris, we are usually talking a load of rubbish at great volume – I suppose hoping that the din and racket we cause will flush birds out from where they might be hiding, rather than opting for the more professional stalking approach – field craft really isn't our forte! But through our symphony of nonsense, Chris heard a jittery song from the reeds in the southwest corner of Rossall School grounds. "*What's that?*" he asked. "*Sedge Warbler*", I nonchalantly responded. "*No its not, it's a Reed Bunting*" Chris followed. I then raised my binoculars, and I fixed my stare on a small area of pumping azure-blue. Before my brain could comprehend what I was actually saying, I was yelling "*Bluethroat! Bluethroat! Red-spotted Bluethroat*" at the top of my voice. Chris calmly set eyes on the bird, a cracking singing male, before it flew from its reed stem perch, during a brief pause from mimicking two of the species co-inhabiting its temporary home. At that point, Chris's and my calmness came to an abrupt halt - several minutes of jumping around, hugging and excited phone calls commenced – we were still in disbelief that we had just located what would prove to be the Fylde's first twitchable Bluethroat.

I cannot think of much else that would beat the euphoria of finding a bird like this on the Fylde. Okay, perhaps it is not a rare bird in a national context, but in Fylde terms it is a total Mega. Up until that morning, only the finders of the previous two Fylde records (Peel Park, Blackpool in October 1997 and Ingol in spring 2003) had set eyes on one. And we hadn't just stumbled across it – this wasn't purely down to luck – the bird was even in the area of Rossall School grounds that Chris had christened the 'Bluethroat Reedbed' a couple

of years ago. Perhaps all those apparently fruitless hours of dreaming and searching does pay off?

## **RECENT CLUB ACTIVITIES – UPDATE FROM THE OCTOBER MEETING**

For members who are unable to get to club meetings here is a short summary of some of the key business issues which were covered at the October meeting.

### **Newton Marsh Black-tailed Godwits**

The RSPB are applying for grant aid to install a fox proof fence around the whole site. The club has written a supporting letter following a request from the RSPB.

### **Farmland Birds Update**

One tonne of seed was bought in August. Some has been sold on to other local feeding schemes (Friends of Marton Mere and Bob Danson). Fifty new Tree Sparrow nestbox kits have been ordered and ten new Tawny Owl boxes will be produced.

### **Planning issues**

The club continues to monitor a number of planning issues. Over Wyre these include a proposed windfarm at Orchard End, Eagland Hill and Tarn Farm 3 Axis Runway on Cockerham Moss. A housing development planning application is also anticipated on Lytham Moss and gas storage at Preesall remains a concern. If anybody is interested in getting involved in surveying these sites or providing records contact the Secretary.

### **Website**

The presentation of recent sightings on the webpage has been streamlined due to the workload issues arising from input of 25,000 records per annum.

### **Bird report**

The 2006 bird report should be available shortly and data for the 2007 report has been collated.

### **Wetland Bird Survey**

Counters are required for Marton Mere, Fairhaven Lake and St Annes beach. Members are welcome to join existing counters at other sites to gain experience of what is involved.

### **Field Trips**

The club has looked into the logistics of running trips and cannot offer a cost effective arrangement. Trips are run by other organisations in the area and members are recommended to consider these.

### **MEMBERS 2008 BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS**

A couple of years ago we included a piece in the newsletter on members birding highlights in the year. This was quite well received at the time, and as a result we have included it again this year. Anybody enjoying a particularly memorable December is welcome to submit an amended version for the next newsletter!

Barry Dyson:

Seeing a Water Rail at Warton Bank on the 10/3 paddling far out on the high tide. After what seemed like an age it eventually made its way to a floating inner tube and climbed on board.

Finding the Red Kite on my local patch at Singleton on the 29/7 having already found a Black Kite just east of Lancaster at Littledale on the 9/5. A Honey-buzzard between the A6 and Warton village, Silverdale being mobbed by 20+corvids on the 21/5 made up a pleasing trio of raptors.

Stuart Piner:

My 2008 highlight was finding the Bluethroat at Rossall School with Chris. Moments like that make all the fruitless hours in the field worthwhile, and will hopefully keep me optimistic during the many fruitless hours to come. Rossall School also hosted the bird that caused my biggest disappointment of the year - I missed the Red-backed Shrike. I was only thirty three days old when the last Red-backed Shrike graced Fylde soil in 1985, so I hope I don't have to wait another twenty three years for another chance.

On a national scale, this autumn's plethora of American vagrants was like stepping into the pages of the history books - Philadelphia Vireo and Scarlet Tanager were both birds that last occurred in Britain or Ireland in the 1980s - and we also got two firsts in the form of Little Blue Heron and Alder Flycatcher - I was fortunate enough to see them all.

Richard Wilson:

My 2008 UK birding highlight would be seeing a Wilson's Phalarope (Grindon Lough, 17<sup>th</sup> August). I now need a good sighting of a Richard's Pipit to get both my name-birds. My 2008 abroad birding highlight would be seeing a party of 15 Greater Flamingos flying at 100m range in full sun against a backdrop of a hill (Alvor, Portugal, 20<sup>th</sup> September): colours, shapes, the lot!

My 2008 virtual birding highlight would be finding the latest DNA studies on bird evolution on the Tree of Life web site. <http://tolweb.org/Neornithes/15834> and discussed at <http://montereybay.com/creagrus/list.html>. Plenty to think about when out birding: Falcons are not Birds-of-Prey, Wagtails are more closely related to Finches than are Sparrows, etc, etc.

Paul Ellis:

1) Finding the first-summer Bonaparte's Gull at Marton Mere on 3rd May was one of my all time British birding highs. However it was tempered by the fact that only two other people got any sort of reasonable views because it flew off within 5 minutes of being found. When I find a good bird I always want everyone else to see it.

2) Seeing the Ross's Gull at Granny's Bay after dipping it by 10 minutes at the Mere! I'm still gripped by the fact I didn't see it at the Mere but so pleased to have caught up with and photographed it at Fairhaven. Shame it pegged it, wonder why?

3) The second Rose-coloured Starling in St Annes. What a stunner, what a poser. Great photos. After missing the Inskip bird by 3 seconds in the morning, then by 10 minutes in the evening of the same day, this was an epic grip back.

4) Chris and Stuart's Bluethroat. Top bird to see anywhere.

5) Playing away (1): Caucasian Black Grouse and Guldenstadt's Redstarts in Georgia just before the Russians moved in. Fantastic mountain scenery and mega birding in Georgia and Armenia.

6) Playing away (2): Mad four days of twitching in October resulting in Alder Flycatcher in Cornwall on Thursday, Scarlet Tanager in Ireland on Saturday and Little Blue Heron on Sunday also in Ireland.

The Editor:

I have really enjoyed doing lots of Atlas fieldwork but otherwise my highlights this year have both been out of the Fylde. A holiday on La Palma in the Canaries afforded the luxury of seawatching from the hotel balcony. It was fantastic to be able to watch Little Shearwaters passing, with counts in the 20s in some evenings, as well as large numbers of Cory's and several dolphins.

Best of all though was my second visit in as many years to Out Skerries. Last year I found a Pechora Pipit so it had something to live up to, but I was more than pleased with two self-found national rarities – Arctic Warbler and Siberian Stonechat.

Paul Slade:

January started well when looking through Pink Feet at Fluke Hall on the 4<sup>th</sup> I picked out 3 Eurasian White-fronted Geese (2 adults and a youngster) feeding at the back of the flock.



adult and juvenile Eurasian White-fronted Geese Pilling January 2008

18<sup>th</sup> January saw me soaking wet in Norfolk twitching the White-crowned Sparrow at Cley, a definite highlight as I missed the brief staying one at Seaforth Docks in the 90's. The rest of the day I managed to see 40 Snow Buntings, Lapland Bunting, 2 Tundra Bean Geese and a Lesser Snow Goose before ending the day with a fine steak and chips at the pub staying with friends in Langham.

Still in January I couldn't resist a quick nip up the A59 to Clitheroe to photograph a very showy Slavonian Grebe which spent a couple of weeks on a small pool there.



Slavonian Grebe Clitheroe January 2008

Barry Dyson and Bob Danson ensured a great start to February when they found the Ross's Goose at Staynall on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.



adult white morph Ross's Goose Staynall February 2008

On the 6<sup>th</sup> I caught up with the juvenile Iceland Gull on the Wyre at Fleetwood, only the second Iceland I have seen in the Fylde after the first on Fleetwood Marine Lake about 20 years ago!

Late in February I made my annual winter weekend trip to the west coast of Ireland where one of the best moments was having 37 Black-throated Divers in view at once on a flat calm sea including a flock of 18 close enough to see without bins or scope, 14 Great Northern's scattered round were pretty good as well. The next couple of days were spent around Nimmo's Pier at Galway where we caught up with 2 American Herring Gulls, 2 Kumlien's Gulls, about 20 Iceland Gulls, Glaucous Gull, 2 Ring-billed Gulls, Forster's Tern, Surf Scoter and a nice flock of 25 Scaup.



Adult and first Winter American Herring Gulls Co Galway February 2008

22<sup>nd</sup> March at Lane Ends I caught up with a couple of Greenland White-fronted Geese.

31<sup>st</sup> March and Jones'y and the McGoughs had more than just me dashing to Marton Mere after they found a stunning Ross's Gull which as we all know regrettably died later in the spring at Fairhaven Lake.

6<sup>th</sup> April I was back at the Mere looking at a pair of Garganey, always one of my favourite Spring migrants. On the 13<sup>th</sup> I was again looking at geese at Lane Ends when I picked out a Tundra Bean Goose stood next to the Ross's Goose! A fly-by Raven was only my second Fylde sighting.

A phone call from Ian Gardner on the 16<sup>th</sup> caused a quick dash round the corner from work to look at a Lapland Bunting he had just found with Skylarks, the following day an early Wood Sandpiper on Mythop flood was well worth a look as also on the flood were Ruff, Green Sandpiper and Common Sandpiper.

At Marton Mere on the 4<sup>th</sup> May three summer plumage Black Terns looked fantastic even in the pouring rain.

Todderstaffe on the 9<sup>th</sup> was the start of an annual highlight when we ringed the first young Tree Sparrows of a slightly disappointing year from the nestboxes.

An early morning phone call from Chris Batty on the 12<sup>th</sup> June meant a quick drive to Inskip for amazingly the first of 2 Rose-coloured Starlings on the Fylde this year.

Perhaps a slightly surprising highlight of my year was a Spotted Flycatcher at Ramper Pot on the WeBS count on 20<sup>th</sup> June, not quite as surprising when you think how rare they have become in recent years.

A trip to the Farne Islands 21<sup>st</sup> June was an amazing day, taking about 900 photographs then deleting about 800 of them! Not as easy as it looks this Birds in Flight lark!



Puffin Farne Islands June 2008

Late June I started my annual Wyre Estuary obsession resulting in over 100 visits by early October, highlights including up to 39 Common Sandpipers, 10 Greenshank, Kingfisher, a Common Scoter, a second-Summer Yellow-legged Gull, Little Stint, several Curlew Sandpipers, Garganey, Ruff and up to 1,500 Dunlin. Ever increasing numbers of Mediterranean Gulls brought up to 10 in the evening roost on several dates this autumn keeping alive my interest in what is still one of my favourite birds.

31<sup>st</sup> July amazingly I picked up what is presumably the returning adult White-rumped Sandpiper on Ramper Pot (its third visit in 6 years!)

Away from the Wyre Mick MCGough found a Spoonbill at the Mere on 25<sup>th</sup> July which gave me the run around for a few hours until catching up with it at Mythop Flood. A few days later Barry Dyson found a long overdue addition to many a Fylde list when he noticed a Red Kite circling over Knowle Wood at Singleton.

Ian Gardner did it again on 17<sup>th</sup> September when he phoned to tell me he had found a juvenile Red-backed Shrike at Rossall School, again only 5 minutes from work.

27<sup>th</sup> September was a rare day out of the Fylde when a juvenile Stilt Sandpiper at Campfield Marsh on the Solway was too tempting to miss.

Another day away on 9<sup>th</sup> October meant a long drive to Land's End for Britain's first Alder Flycatcher in Nanjizal Valley, a long overdue new bird for the year, a Richard's Pipit and a couple of Chough flying around added to the day.

A couple of days later saw myself, Paul Ellis and Kinta Beaver were on a plane bound for Ireland hoping to catch up with another couple of mega rarities from America in the form of a first-winter male Scarlet Tanager and a first for Europe, a juvenile Little Blue Heron, both of which we saw down to a few feet in the company of only a handful of other birders, ahh the joy of birding in Ireland!



juvenile Little Blue Heron Co Galway October 2008



first-winter male Scarlet Tanager Co Cork October 2008

Closer to home in early November were the 3 Short-eared Owls at Pilling giving fantastic views from the road, it seems a long time since we used to regularly see double figures at Marton Mere before the Golf Course drove the owls away.



Short-eared Owl Pilling November 2008

A pager 'Mega Alert' on 7<sup>th</sup> November tempted a drive to Lincolnshire for a first-winter Steppe Grey Shrike, my 5<sup>th</sup> new bird of the year.  
16<sup>th</sup> November and 4 Ravens at Ramper Pot were surely going to be bird of the day, but no! Maurice Jones did it again, this time an adult male Surf Scoter off Starr Gate which unfortunately I missed by a couple of hours, but surely it will be picked up again over the winter, three male Velvet Scoter were a bonus as they were the first I had seen in the Fylde.  
17<sup>th</sup> November and still a few weeks to add to my highlights.....

## **ATLAS LISTING**

It is probably fair to say that whilst I am not an ardent lister I do like to see as many species as possible on the Fylde, and in the past have done a reasonably committed Fylde year list once as well as being part of a Fylde bird race team for several years now as mentioned in previous newsletters.

One of the issues with year listing and listing within the boundaries of the Fylde, whilst it can be great fun, is the fossil fuels burned to see birds you have seen many times before or even in some cases that are relatively plentiful not too far away (Bullfinch for example). Of course public transport listing or birding only by bike / on foot is one option that is practiced elsewhere, though the Fylde's transport network does rather militate against such measures.

Over the last twelve months I have been doing a lot of fieldwork for the national breeding and wintering Atlases, in which I am covering nearly 50 2km squares in one capacity or another. There are two elements to the Atlas – two hour visits to each tetrad in both winter and the breeding season and also casual records. I thought it would be interesting to see how many species I have seen whilst doing Atlas work over the last year. In defining this I felt it would have to only include timed tetrad visits, as otherwise it would be rather easy to manipulate the results from 'ordinary birding'.

I was particularly interested to know whether I had made the 100 species mark over the last 12 months. The answer to that was yes, with 109 species excluding escapes and such like. The most obvious omissions from the regular species were Golden Plover, Ruddy Duck, Pintail, Reed Warbler (the Mere tetrad would have been nice with hindsight), Golden Plover, Merlin, Siskin and all the owls other than Barn Owl with one seen from Mile Road on a Singleton visit.

In terms of the 'bonus' birds which I have seen whilst surveying a Raven on the very first tetrad at Poulton was one of the best. A Barnacle Goose with Pink-footed Geese near Great Plumpton was also a good one to get, as well as the aforementioned Barn Owl and Manx Shearwater and Arctic Skua at Starr Gate. I hope to pick up one or two more species over the next three years of fieldwork, though the most pleasure in fieldwork is in going to places not normally visited and learning more about the distribution of the birds of our area.

SD

## COLOUR RINGING – A LESSON IN EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED

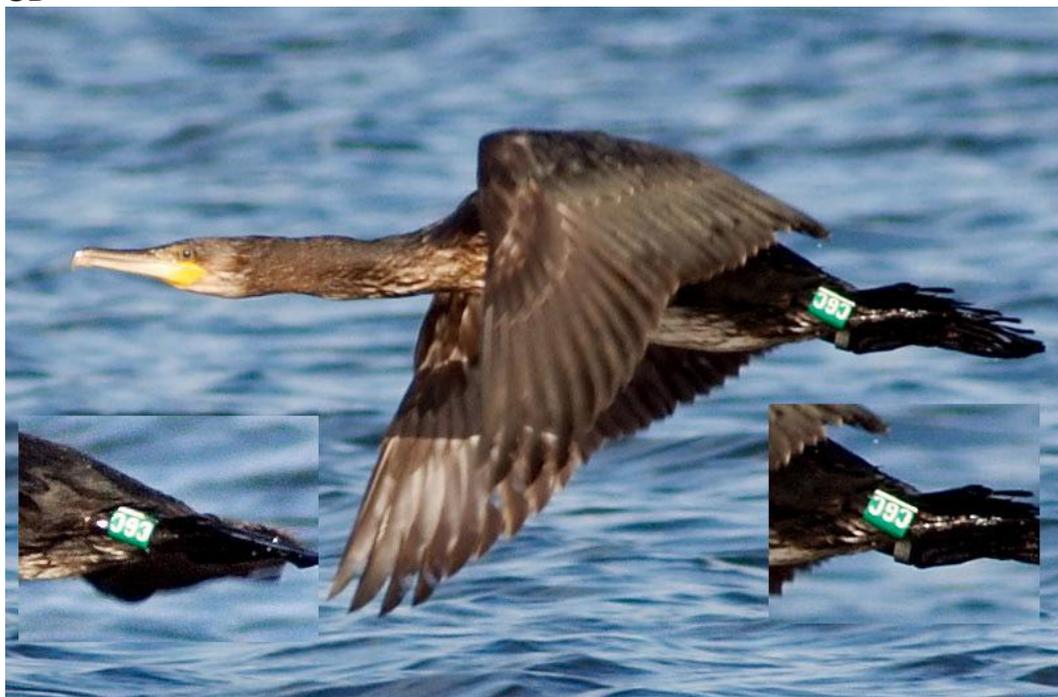
During the autumn I saw a ringed Cormorant at the Naze and then Savick Brook. This bird (green ring, CCE in white) had been ringed on Puffin Island, Anglesey. I mentioned this to Maurice Jones when I saw him at Starr Gate, and he asked me if I would forward details of C6C at Marton Mere to them, presumably from the same scheme. When I did so they said it wasn't one of theirs, and Stuart Newsom from the BTO then contacted me to say this was a Danish bird of some maturity and unlikely to have moved to the Fylde.

The polite suggestion was made that the ring had been misread, so I asked a few other people and Paul Ellis came back to me to say that he had also recorded C6C at Skippool, and though it was distant he was clear that was correctly read. The BTO were now considering the fact that a Danish bird had perhaps turned up on the Fylde after all.

Resolution to the uncertainty came with the excellent photos taken by Cliff Raby at Marton Mere and reproduced below with thanks. These show what is clearly a Cormorant of the *carbo* (British) race and also a first year. Therefore it would only be CGC from the Puffin Island even though it clearly appears to read as C6C. So next time you 'accurately' read a colour ring sequence in the field and the results you get back appear unlikely it may be because they are!

Thanks to Cliff Raby, Maurice Jones, Paul Ellis, Chris Batty and Stuart Newsom for help with this scenario enabling this article to be written.

SD



## **SPIRIT OF AUTUMN**

October is a month of anticipation for most birdwatchers; the returning flocks of waders from their breeding grounds back to local estuaries; ringers ringing the last of the summer migrants and the first of the winter ones; visible Migration - the chance to observe and record in the right conditions the mystery of migration; twitchers visit the East coast hot spots hoping to find and observe rarities; local patchers pishing and bush bashing hoping to have the thrill of finding their own rarity on their local patch. Each to his own, as stated before birdwatching is a very catholic pursuit.

To a general birdwatcher like myself the spirit of autumn is epitomised by the sightings of two species:

### Pink-footed Geese

This Autumn I personally have seen the highest numbers of this species in the area so soon into the autumn, twice flocks of 10,000 have been observed and smaller flocks of between 2/5000 have been regularly seen, with several flocks flying around the area. One possible explanation I have heard for the reason for such numbers so early is that due to EU regulations, farmers in Norfolk have reduced the production of sugar beet, consequently the birds have lost part of their traditional feeding areas, whether this is true or not our area has benefited.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> October my friend Peter (PW) and I visited Cocker's Dyke near Knott End to check the gull roost there, whilst checking a small flock of Pink-footed Geese was seen on the sands as we watched a father 750 lighted down to join them, as we watched them milling around a white bird was noticed in the middle of the group slightly smaller than its companions and appeared to have black markings, could it be possible, a quick telephone call to Chris Batty who lives nearby, and within twenty minutes he had confirmed our suspicions - a Ross Goose (was it the same bird as seen earlier in the year) who knows. On the 17<sup>th</sup> October a flight of 10,000 was observed whiffing down onto the marsh at Lane Ends, a really spectacular sight.

### Whooper Swans

This species is generally found in small family parties at traditional sites, a favoured area is the coastal fields behind the seawall along Marsh Lane Cockerham between Braides Farm and Sand Villa, on the 15<sup>th</sup> October Peter observed a family party of 10 Whooper Swans distantly thus confirming this area as being one of the first places to find this species.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> October as Peter and I were driving down Jeremy Lane Thurnham in a field behind Saltcote pumping station in with a 130 Mute Swans a family grouping of 10 adults and 5 juvenile Whooper swans seen. As stated at this time of year family parties are usually seen, later in the year larger groupings can be seen (as last years sightings on Fluke Hall Lane).

Imagine our surprise on the 28<sup>th</sup> October following a tip off from a fellow birder Peter and I drove to a flooded field near Nateby and there in front of us was a flock of 300+ Whooper Swans (the highest number I have ever seen in my birdwatching life), it was nice to see a mixture of adults and juveniles although unfortunately the third species was missing (Bewick's Swan).

Both these birding experiences are to me the Spirit of Autumn.  
JWBateman

## **RECENT SIGHTINGS**

**Compiled by Stuart Piner.**

All records of rarities and scarcities are subject to appropriate ratification.

### **August**

One of July's star finds, the Skippool Creek White-rumped Sandpiper, was still present on 1<sup>st</sup> August, which injected quality into an otherwise generally mediocre month. Most of the August highlights were seabirds, headlined by a Pomarine Skua past Starr Gate on 11<sup>th</sup>. Other notable seabirds included Great Skuas past Starr Gate on 9<sup>th</sup> and a couple past Rossall Point on 10<sup>th</sup>, a Shag at Rossall on 11<sup>th</sup>, Black Terns were logged past Starr Gate on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, along with an incredible count of 42 Arctic Skuas on the latter date. Twelve Little Terns were also logged past coastal sites during the month.

Yellow-legged Gull records included a couple at Glasson (the returning adult and a second-summer) and a second-summer visited Cocker's Dyke. Ten Crossbills flew south over Cockersand on 9<sup>th</sup> – this proved to be the sole Fylde record of a significant nationwide Crossbill invasion. A Quail could be heard at Crimbles on 8<sup>th</sup>, a Scaup joined Tufted Ducks on Glasson Basin on 10<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> produced a Wood Sandpiper at Arm Hill and notably a Goshawk over Glasson. The Freckleton Naze Little Egret roost peaked at a tremendous 81 birds on 23<sup>rd</sup> and a Hobby was seen there on 28<sup>th</sup>.

Curlew Sandpipers visited Skippool Creek and Cockersand during the month, up to four Mandarins remained at Bispham Marsh and at least five Ring-necked Parakeets lingered in Lytham Crematorium. Raven records came from Wharles, Elswick, Preesall, Skippool Creek and Thurnham and Marsh Harriers were logged at Rawcliffe Moss, Fluke Hall, Glasson Marsh, Thurnham, Eagland Hill, Warton Bank, Lytham Marsh and Lytham Moss.

### **September**

Ian Gardner found the bird of the autumn so far on 17<sup>th</sup> September – the Fylde's third modern Red-backed Shrike, and the first since 1985. The bird spent two days at Rossall School, the same site that hosted the spring Bluethroat, thus once again confirming this site as a premier location for coastal birding. The last two modern Red-backed Shrike records involved birds at Lea Marsh in September 1971 and at Fleetwood Power Station in May 1985.

A couple of Honey Buzzards were also star discoveries and the only Fylde records in a spectacular nationwide influx of the species. Maurice Jones watched the first fly north over Warton Marsh on 8<sup>th</sup> and the second was logged over Lytham Moss by Len Blacow on 14<sup>th</sup>. The 14<sup>th</sup> also produced a

Great White Egret at Warton Marsh, but this bird was only seen by the lucky finders – Frank Bird, Alan Hinchliffe and Tony Myerscough – one day we might get a Great White Egret that hangs around long enough for everyone to see!

A juvenile Black-necked Grebe arrived at Conder Pool on 1<sup>st</sup> and remained at the site until 18<sup>th</sup>. The northern limits of the Fylde also produced adult and third-winter Yellow-legged Gulls at Glasson with an Osprey and Hen Harrier there on 14<sup>th</sup>, an Osprey at Conder Green on 16<sup>th</sup>, a couple of Little Stints and a Curlew Sandpiper at Cockersand on 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> and Pale-bellied Brent Goose there on 29<sup>th</sup>.

A Ruddy Shelduck was observed at Lytham on 4<sup>th</sup> and nearby a Redstart made landfall on St Annes Pier on the same day. A couple of Garganey were located at Pilling Marsh during the month and lone birds were seen on a flood near Nateby and at Skippool Creek. Apart from the aforementioned Cockersand Little Stints records also came from Skippool Creek on 13<sup>th</sup> and Cocker's Dyke on 25<sup>th</sup>. Up to two Curlew Sandpipers were noted at Skippool Creek and a singleton was at Cocker's Dyke. Hobbies were reported from Ratten Row, Lytham, Fleetwood ICI Tanks and Pilling Marsh, Ospreys were logged at Marton Mere and Lytham and a Hen Harrier was seen at Warton Marsh. A Pied Flycatcher was watched briefly at Fluke Hall on 28<sup>th</sup>, a Bittern returned to Marton Mere on 26<sup>th</sup>, a Barnacle Goose joined Pink-footed Geese on Pilling Marsh on 24<sup>th</sup> and a Pale-bellied Brent Goose flew past Rossall Point on 28<sup>th</sup>. The Freckleton Naze Little Egret roost peaked at 87 birds.

Seawatching highlights included a Black Tern past Knott End on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Black Guillemot past Rossall Point on 7<sup>th</sup>, Long-tailed Duck and Velvet Scoter past Starr Gate on 11<sup>th</sup> and five Leach's Petrels past Rossall Point and two past Knott End on 30<sup>th</sup>. Six Great Skuas, 25 Little Terns, at least four Shags and a Scaup were also logged past coastal watchpoints during the month.

## **October**

Pete Woodruff and John Bateman located an adult white morph Ross's Goose amongst the Pink-footed Geese at Cocker's Dyke on 28<sup>th</sup> October. This individual first made landfall in south Lancashire on 4<sup>th</sup> October with the returning Pink-footed Geese. It toured around several sites south of the Ribble until it made its brief visit to the Fylde in late October - it was back at Martin Mere WWT by 2<sup>nd</sup> November. Flight photographs of the bird suggest it is likely to be a different individual from the bird that visited the Fylde from 2<sup>nd</sup> February-4<sup>th</sup> May earlier this year.

Aside than the Ross's Goose October goose highlights included a flock of 21 Barnacle Geese at Cockersand on 3<sup>rd</sup> (up to five Barnacle Geese were seen on Pilling Marsh during the month and a lone bird joined Pink-footed Geese at Todderstaffe) and Pale-bellied Brent Geese were seen on Pilling Marsh on 6<sup>th</sup> and past Knott End on 21<sup>st</sup>.

A Leach's Petrel flying over Lytham Green on 2<sup>nd</sup> must have been an peculiar sight. More conventional seabird sightings related to a Leach's Petrel past Blackpool North Shore on 4<sup>th</sup>, a couple of Great Skuas past Cleveleys and a singleton past Rossall Point on 1<sup>st</sup> and a Shag past the latter site on 8<sup>th</sup>.

Curlew Sandpiper records included four on Pilling Marsh and one at Cockersand on 2<sup>nd</sup>, up to six at Skippool Creek mid month and lone birds at Pilling Lane and Glasson. Little Stints were typically scarce, the only records coming from Pilling Marsh on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Two Long-eared Owls and at least one Bittern returned to Marton Mere for the winter, Short-eared Owls were recorded at Lytham Moss, Bradshaw Lane Head, Pilling Moss and up to three Hen Harriers were logged at Warton Bank, with another at Eagland Hill. Towards the end of October Conder Pool hosted both a male Scaup and a juvenile Common Scoter. Excellent numbers of Whooper Swans passed through the Fylde towards the month end, including a flock of 303 at Black Lane Head on 28<sup>th</sup>.

## **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT AND 2009 YEARLIST CHALLENGE**

The next couple of months provide a couple of opportunities to get involved in co-ordinated listing activities run by the club, one a sprint and the other a marathon!

### *2009 Yearlist Challenge*

For those with staying power the rules of the yearlist challenge are simple – record as many species as possible within the Fylde recording area between 1 January and 31 December. The person to have seen or heard the most species will be the winner. BOU taxonomy will be used during the competition. To ensure that all entrants have an equally fair chance to see rare and scarce species please continue to send all relevant bird news promptly to [news@fyldebirdclub.org](mailto:news@fyldebirdclub.org).

Once the competition is underway a webpage showing entrants progress will be available on the club's website. All participants are then asked to send updates to their year list as regularly as possible to keep this current.

### *Christmas Bird Hunt*

Between Boxing Day and New Years Day club members are asked to recorded species seen in the Fylde Recording Area during the sponsored Christmas Bird Hunt.

Sponsorship money will be used to fund the Winter Feeding Project & Nest Boxes for Declining Farmland Bird. Sponsorship forms can be obtained from the Secretary, or downloaded from the club website.

Last year 131 species were recorded during the period of the Christmas bird hunt.