



# **Fylde Bird Club**

## Lancashire

### **June Newsletter 2013**

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Well summer is here!! We hope spring brought you all the excitement you wanted, it did me. After a long and perspirational climb up Pendle (we are getting older) we found a Dotterel. A later trip to Filey presented me with a Bluethroat and a Red Backed Shrike, my spring runneth over.

The Photographic Competition went well last month and the winners and their photographs are on the Bird Club website. The standard was as high as ever although I would love more entries even if it did give me more work. We need a bigger field of choice for the calendar so please overwhelm me next year.



In this seasons newsletter we have an article from Maurice Jones on birding on the Fylde 50 years ago, an update on the Terns at Preston Dock, a number of items relating to Species Champions as well as news on birds in the Fylde.

The June Bird Club meeting is a talk on the " Birds of North Wales" by Alan Davies and Ruth Miller. They of "The Biggest Twitch" fame. It will be a really good evening.

July is a talk by the old faithful, Paul Ellis (sorry Paul) on Birding in Bhutan. It will be as enjoyable as always I am sure. I am not going to get to Bhutan so this will be a good substitute.

A long way ahead I know but for those not on holiday for the August meeting Ian Newton will give a talk entitled " Alaska, the Last Frontier "

**Peter Rhind**

## **Marton Mere Report**

**January – March 2013**

The first quarter of 2013 began with a Merlin flying south on 1<sup>st</sup> January. There were 57 Mute Swans on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and two Skylarks flew over on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Iceland Gull which visited the Mere in December appeared in early January, on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Its visit on the latter date lasted a mere five minutes (no pun intended!). Also on the 6<sup>th</sup>, a Ruff flew west and a Golden Plover flew east. Some people would say that spotting one Cetti's warbler is hard enough – two were seen together on the 9<sup>th</sup>, along with two Lesser Redpolls.

One of the many Waxwings which have invaded the country this winter dropped in on the 11<sup>th</sup>, while there were three male Pintails on the 12<sup>th</sup> and a Ring-necked Parakeet on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Two Jack Snipe were seen on the 17<sup>th</sup> and the first Mediterranean Gull sighting was on the 20<sup>th</sup>, with a Shelduck present on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. On 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1250 Pink-footed Geese flew south and Peregrine and Kingfisher were seen on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Stock Doves were seen throughout the period, with January 27<sup>th</sup> bringing a peak of eight. Another Mediterranean Gull was present on the 29<sup>th</sup>, as were three Foxes. January concluded with a sighting of a Bittern (also seen on several dates up to 4<sup>th</sup> March) on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

A high count of 226 Coot was recorded on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, while sightings of Woodcock included three on this date. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> there were five Pintails. The east fields hosted a mixed flock of Rooks and Jackdaws, totalling at least 250. On the 5<sup>th</sup> a Mistle Thrush was present, while about 150 Pink-footed Geese flew over the east fields. There were about 175 Pinkfeet present the next day, along with 11 Pintails. A Merlin was seen on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 160 Wigeon on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Little Egrets were on the reserve or in the east fields throughout January – March, with a peak of nine on 11<sup>th</sup> February.

There were high counts of Snipe in February (23, 18 and 50 on 10<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> respectively), while the Iceland Gull visited again on the 16<sup>th</sup>. On 18<sup>th</sup> February there were 186 Wigeon, with counts of three Cetti's Warblers on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. A Barn Owl was present on the 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>, with a Kingfisher on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

On 4<sup>th</sup> March there were three Whooper Swans, while on the 8<sup>th</sup> an Otter graced the reserve. There have been a maximum of two Long-eared Owls seen in this period and several sightings of Little Owl. However, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, we had a real "owl fest", with Short-eared, Barn and Little Owls in the area. The Short-eared was seen again on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. On the 14<sup>th</sup> a Mediterranean Gull visited, while three Curlews flew north-west. Eleven Pied Wagtails were on the east field flood on the 14<sup>th</sup>, while another Fox was seen on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Goldeneye numbers peaked with 10 on the 17<sup>th</sup> March, with 140 Fieldfares also seen on this date. Another Curlew and 100 Pink-footed Geese flew over on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A Shelduck flew north on the 24<sup>th</sup> and there were 24 Snipe and a Jack Snipe on Lawson's Marsh on the 26<sup>th</sup>. A flock of some 750 Starlings was present on the 27<sup>th</sup> and a Barn Owl was present on the 29<sup>th</sup>. At the time of writing there have been no summer migrants (not surprising as we have had cold easterly winds) but hopefully they will all arrive soon.

***Ellen Pemberton***

## February to April - Round Up of Birds on the Fylde

### February

February highlights included the reappearance of the Lesser Snow Goose Over Wyre between 18<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, Great White Egret at Warton Marsh on 11<sup>th</sup>, Green-winged Teal on the Wyre Estuary at Fleetwood on 1<sup>st</sup>, Willow Tit at Cottam Brickworks 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, Smew at Glasson and Thornton ICI Reservoir/Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 1<sup>st</sup> and Iceland Gulls at Marton Mere on 16<sup>th</sup> and Rossall Point on 24<sup>th</sup>.

Seawatching at Rossall Point produced Velvet Scoter, Black Guillemot and eight Scaup, whilst elsewhere in Fleetwood Water Pipit, Long-eared Owl, Purple Sandpiper and Snow Bunting were all recorded. Snow Buntings were also logged at Cockersand and Fairhaven and two Purple Sandpipers were at Blackpool North Shore.

Marton Mere hosted three Long-eared Owls, three Cetti's Warblers and two Bitterns, the Long-tailed Duck lingered at Fairhaven Lake and the Over Wyre Pink-footed Goose flocks contained both Barnacle and White-fronted Geese. Several Waxwing flocks were recorded on the Fylde, with the maximum count of 90 in Preston.

### March

Two star birds were discovered in March, but sadly neither proved to be twitchable – Phil Slade trapped a Little Bunting during a ringing session on Rawcliffe Moss on 13<sup>th</sup> and Stephen Dunstan recorded a Surf Scoter off Starr Gate on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Elsewhere a Willow Tit visited a garden in Ingol, an Iceland Gull was on Glasson Marsh, at least six Scaup were logged off Starr Gate, a Snow Bunting was on Cleveleys Beach, two Purple Sands remained at Blackpool North Shore and Avocet records comprised 14 on Warton Marsh and singles at Freckleton Naze Pool and Cockerham Sands.

Water Pipits were logged at The Heads (6), Conder Estuary (2) and Fleetwood, Marton Mere hosted a Bittern and three Cetti's Warblers and several Waxwing records included a peak count of 50 at Warbreck Hill.

In Fleetwood a Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, Black-throated Diver, Snow Bunting, two Scaup, Great Northern Diver and two Purple Sandpipers were recorded during the month.

### April

Highlight of the month was an Alpine Swift discovered at Marton Mere by Dave McGrath and Mick McGough on 14<sup>th</sup>, only the second Fylde record.

A Dotterel at Cockersand on 16<sup>th</sup> was the first Fylde record for 13 years. Other April highlights included a flock of at least 18 Crossbills which lingered in Lytham Crematorium and the Little Bunting trapped on Rawcliffe Moss in March was re-trapped at the same site on 30<sup>th</sup> April.

Scarce migrant passerines included Ring Ouzels at Poulton-le-Fylde (2), Rossall Beach, Carleton, Fluke Hall Lane and Fleetwood; Pied Flycatchers at Marton Mere (2), Lytham Hall and Fleetwood and Wood Warblers at Blackpool Zoo, Herons' Reach Golf Course, Marton Mere and Fairhaven. Seawatching at Starr Gate produced Black Guillemot, Long-tailed Duck, two Dark-bellied Brent Geese and Great Northern Diver. In addition to the aforementioned records, the Fleetwood area produced two Pomarine Skuas, Black-throated Diver, Hooded Crow, two Velvet Scoters, two Garganey, Osprey, Slavonian Grebe, Pied Flycatcher, Crossbill and Iceland Gull during April. Wood Sandpipers visited Sowerby and Catforth, a Waxwing was at Grange Park, a Yellow-legged Gull was logged in Staining, 26 Avocets were counted at Warton Bank and Marton Mere hosted Long-eared Owl and three Cetti's Warblers in addition to flyover Red Kite and Ospreys.

**Stuart Piner**

## Lancashire and Fylde Birding 50 years ago

In January and December 2010 we experienced severe weather and as I write in late March 2013 we have experienced the coldest March for 50 years. I recently had occasion to refer to the 1963 Lancashire Bird Report which marked its 50<sup>th</sup> year of publication by the Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Committee (now Society). January to March of 1963 proved to be the coldest winter in the entire century with temperatures below freezing in the entire period. A look at the bird records will, I hope, be interesting to members. I will limit these to the present recording area. In 1963 the area included Furness and what we now call Greater Manchester. I've also included some records that do not relate to the extreme weather. In an introduction Ken Spencer listed the effects of severe weather in approximate order of seriousness on such widespread birds as Wren, Lapwing (I personally saw none from January to late March!) Snipe, Grey Wagtail, Redshank, Song Thrush, Curlew and Meadow Pipit. The more restricted Stonechat and Green Woodpecker were badly hit. Oystercatcher flocks were seriously depleted and freshwater ducks resorted to the sea. Heron nests at Claughton totalled only 25 compared with well over 100 ten years later.

From the main list the following may be of interest.

Species	Record
Slavonian Grebe	One in full summer plumage, early morning of 28 <sup>th</sup> April, Fairhaven Lake
Scaup	100 off Morecambe 27 <sup>th</sup> January to 3 <sup>rd</sup> February. Two flocks of 120 each off Rossall 16 <sup>th</sup> January
Tufted Duck	100 off Morecambe 27 <sup>th</sup> January. 17 off Rossall 13 <sup>th</sup> February
Pochard	30 off Morecambe 27 <sup>th</sup> January (a record 500 on Coniston Water in February)
Goldeneye	150 off Morecambe 27 <sup>th</sup> January
Smew	Up to 4 males and 3 females off Morecambe in January. Female Skerton Weir, Lancaster 17 <sup>th</sup> February
White Fronted Goose	38 at Cockerham 17 <sup>th</sup> March
Whooper Swan	Not a single record from Fylde or S.W Lancashire – how times have changed!
Bewicks Swan	Three off Blackpool 1 <sup>st</sup> January. 1 at Freckleton 12 <sup>th</sup> March and 6 there mid-month. 9 over Marton Mere on 23 <sup>rd</sup> March was the first for the Mere.
Marsh Harrier	One at Leighton Moss 12 <sup>th</sup> May was the only record for our present area!
Hen Harrier	No records!
Osprey	No records!
Spotted Crake	Two at Marton Mere all of September and late bird on 6 <sup>th</sup> November.
Coot	Several Sea Records January to March
Kentish Plover	One at Lytham 19 <sup>th</sup> August
Woodcock	Two dead of starvation, Lytham 31 <sup>st</sup> January
Long billed Dowitcher	One at Freckleton 6 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> October
Temminck`s Stint	Singles at Freckleton 19 <sup>th</sup> May and 11 <sup>th</sup> to 20 <sup>th</sup> October
White rumped Sandpiper	One at Freckleton 12 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup> October
Bairds Sandpiper	One at Hutton Marsh 22 <sup>nd</sup> September and later at Freckleton from 5 <sup>th</sup> to 11 <sup>th</sup> October
Grey Phalarope	One at Fairhaven 19 <sup>th</sup> October
Turtle Dove	One at Marton Mere 19 <sup>th</sup> June
Collared Dove	After 2 at Lytham in May 1962 there were 2 at Marton Mere in May and Fleetwood in July and 3 at latter site 1st November - <i>the first Fylde records.</i>
Shore Lark	One at Fairhaven 8 <sup>th</sup> to 24 <sup>th</sup> December the first Fylde record and 4 <sup>th</sup> for Lancashire – the last one being in 1920
Nuthatch	Only 1 record in County at Caton, Lune Valley!

Reed Warbler	At least one Summered at Marton Mere!
Great Grey Shrike	A 1962 bird seen again at Lytham-Marton Moss 6 <sup>th</sup> March to 7 <sup>th</sup> April and October into 1963 (and again 1964-65 and 66)
Twite	Three at Marton Mere 16 <sup>th</sup> February (no doubt due to the severe winter)
Lapland Bunting	Singles at Lytham Moss (recorded as Marton Moss in the report) (site now built over)
Snow Bunting	80 at Marton (Lytham) Moss 3 <sup>rd</sup> February numbers gradually dropping to 7 on 20 <sup>th</sup> March

It is interesting to compare the sharing of information in the 1960`s with the situation today. I knew nothing of Lytham Moss Snow Bunting flocks despite their month long stay though it would not have been easy to get about in this super severe weather. There were few birds at the Mere in January to March – the ice was 18 inches thick.

**Maurice Jones**

### **Alpine Swift – Marton Mere Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2013**

I arrived at the mere around lunchtime with the intention of first walking along the embankment to see if there were any newly arrived Wheatears and White Wagtails on the muddy corner of the field to the east.

Just after crossing the bridge an ominous looking heavy shower drew in and not wanting a soaking I turned round and scurried for the shelter of the Fylde Bird Club hide where I found Mick McGough who had been there a while and not yet seen anything of particular note.

The threatened rain arrived and with it the largest flock of Sand Martins we'd seen so far this year. Looking through them for a not yet year-listed swallow I spotted a Swift low over the north end of the island and called the directions to Mick.

Immediately both of us went through the options of a very early swift with Alpine Swift high on our list of possibles.

Watching it intently it was hard to see any detail as it was distant and against the poorly contrasting sky most of the time. Eventually we both saw that it had a large white belly, making it an aberrant Swift or an Alpine. Its size compared to the nearby Sand Martins strongly suggested the latter but we couldn't clinch it. As neither of us had a field guide Mick made a call to Chris Batty to check what 'jizz'\* features we should be looking for; but within minutes the extremely hard to see white chin and throat were seen and the wider winged structure and bulky body were quite evident ruling out any thoughts of an unusual 'normal' swift – an Alpine Swift it was.

We put the news out and stuck with the bird, not an easy task as it jinked from one end of the mere to the other but fortunately it stayed in sight most of the time. At one point as the rain eased it did head off to the north a ways but turned back as another shower came in allowing several other birders to get to site to see it.

Mick left the hide to walk round to the north side of the reserve to try to get some photographs while we stayed in the hide to help arriving birders connect with it.

It left early-mid afternoon when the weather improved and was part of a small influx across the country.

*\* Jizz is a term used by birders to describe the overall impression or appearance of a bird garnered from such features as shape, posture, flying style or other habitual movements, size and colouration combined with voice, habitat and location.(source: Wikipedia)*

**David McGrath**

## Clown in Town

At the end of February a period of calm conditions enabled me to establish that up to 6000 scoter were feeding off Blackpool North Shore. At the same time I was seeing smaller but significant numbers at Starr Gate, where Dave McGrath was also seeing reasonable numbers. On 2<sup>nd</sup> March I therefore decided to spend the day walking from Starr Gate north to Cleveleys scanning any scoter flocks as I went to get an aggregate count and hopefully even find something else among them.

I parked up at Starr Gate and went to the shelter behind the tram shed. It was soon clear that there were a lot of scoter on view. I did a quick scan and there were c500 reasonably close and c1000 birds to the north west. I decided to stay put and scan through them.

I had a couple of false alarms where female Common Scoters pale cheeks were 'glinting' in the sun but then picked up a distant bird or birds that were interesting. There was a bird that clearly had a white nape. There was also a bird that face on had a very distinctive bill, with a large apparently orange area. This was clearly interesting, but aberrant Common Scoters with white feathering were not unknown and I was also aware of 'Daffy', a scoter seen in Aberdeenshire that was an apparent hybrid with a striking bill. I was also not completely certain that the two features were being seen on the same bird.

The tide brought the relevant group of scoter a little closer. The bird with the white nape was soon picked up again, and it was quickly evident it was the bird with the large and colourful bill face on. I tried to ring Chris Batty at this point but got no reply. For a period the bird was bizarrely being 'picked on' by an immature Herring Gull whenever it resurfaced. This went on several times over several minutes, I have no idea what was going on but perhaps the bright markings meant the gull spotted it surfacing quicker than other scoter and tried to rob it of food.

I rang Paul Slade and told him I had an almost certain drake Surf Scoter, and that I hadn't been able to get hold of Chris. Paul said he would try and get down between jobs as he was working. Soon after this the scoter flock was disturbed by a jet leaving Blackpool Airport. Fortunately I was on the bird at the time and tracked it as it flew in an arc with other birds closer to shore and then south. This completely clinched the identification as the bird came a lot closer, and also confirmed that it was an adult drake with a white forehead and no pale belly. I rang Paul and advised him of all of this, we agreed I would put the news out. A number of birders turned up but unfortunately the bird was not seen again during the day or subsequently.

It is tempting to believe Surf Scoters lurk unseen off our coast every year, but many years of trying to find them suggests to me this may be over optimistic. I think it is more likely that this was one of the several birds that had wintered off North Wales, which is clearly visible from Starr Gate, that was beginning to migrate. Not that it matters, having missed the bird Maurice Jones found in 2008 it was brilliant to see my own 'clownface' after 13 years of serious effort trying.

***Stephen Dunstan***

## Common Terns at Preston Dock

Following a productive meeting with representatives from Preston City Council, Preston Dock the RSPB and Fylde Bird Club in February 2012, Paul Ellis, Stuart Piner and Paul Slade visited Preston Dock on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013 to provide more nest material for Common Terns. Paul Slade acquired and painted the used tyres and gravel was bought. These were used to construct new nest sites on the wave breakers at Preston Dock.

Fylde Bird Club would like to thank Preston City Council, particularly Andrew Newsham and his colleague for their help with nest site construction and their enthusiastic approach to the Common Tern project.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> May, Paul Ellis along with Jon Carter from the RSPB held an information morning. Jon had brought some leaflets with some soft toys and the Bird Club put some flyers out on display. With the aid of telescopes, members of the public were shown the terns.

Two information boards describing the Common Terns were designed, procured and installed by the Bird Club. Two were attached to the dock railings: one nearest to The Green Frog butty bar with the other on the opposite side of the dock. The signs cost a total of £113.00 for four. The RSPB made a contribution of £50.00 and the balance was paid by Fylde Bird Club.



## Species Champions

What are species champions? The idea is simple - each Species Champion represents and promotes the recording of their chosen species. It is an idea that is in use elsewhere such as Butterfly Conservation.

We are asking each Fylde Bird Club member to become the Species Champion for one species. This need not be an onerous task, nor will it involve too much time or effort - members can make as much out of the project as they wish. The only commitment is that Species Champions will be expected to write their species' account for the annual Fylde Bird Report. It is hoped that in addition to enjoying their everyday birding each member will focus particularly on their favourite species. All participating Species Champions will be listed on the Bird Club website and members will be encouraged to report their sightings of the relevant species to them.

Some ideas of how to make the most of the project are:

- Pick a common resident, breeding or wintering species rather than a scarcity
- Produce breeding reports, fact files or just snippets of information for the newsletter
- Collate records provided by members and add them to the sightings page.

So far, including myself, 11 people have signed up as species champions. What will come from it? Well it doesn't really matter as anything will be worthwhile and interesting if it broadens our knowledge about our common birds.

- Will Paul Slade discover some new rookeries?
- Will Paul Ellis put up some nest boxes for House Sparrows?
- Will Mark Farrer find out where all our Song Thrushes are?
- Will Stephen Dunstan find a record number of Common Scoters off our shores and discover more about their movements?
- Will John Barker update the status of Long-tailed Tit to common breeder?
- Will Peter Rhind find Greenfinches in more than 68 tetrads?
- Will Kinta Beaver discover more roost sites for the Starling or pass comment on some of the calls or sounds made by this underrated imitative bird?
- Will Stuart Piner ring some Reed warblers this year and find new nesting sites?
- Will Ron Bedford come up with some interesting hitherto unknown behaviour of the Coal Tit?
- Will Jean Wagstaff find Goldfinches nesting in her garden?

And what will I do? Well for a start this article, which I hope will bring more members to the attention of this idea and if you're wondering why I chose Whitethroat it's because I previously sponsored this species in both the Atlas and Birds of Lancashire. So far this year the earliest Whitethroat record I have been able to find is one at Portland Bill on the 9<sup>th</sup> April, while the earliest in the Fylde was at Marton Mere on the 18<sup>th</sup> April, a good five days before I saw my first at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 23<sup>rd</sup> April where their distinctive song flight was observed. It just goes to show these birds don't hang about when it comes to breeding. Out of interest the median sighting for Whitethroat in the Fylde is the 20<sup>th</sup> April and the earliest ever the 10<sup>th</sup> April.

Please do consider signing up for this initiative, preferably sooner rather than later. To become a Species Champion please first select a species that has not already been chosen and then e-mail your chosen species to [news@fyldebirdclub.org](mailto:news@fyldebirdclub.org). If you are not an e-mail user then you can send a notification by post to Paul Ellis, 18 Staining Rise, Staining, Blackpool FY3 0BU.

For more information visit the Fylde Bird Club website at [www.fyldebirdclub.org](http://www.fyldebirdclub.org). From the Home page click on 'More'. From the drop down menu click on 'Conservation Projects', from there click on 'Species Champions'. Here you will find information about this initiative and will be able to see which species have already been selected by Species Champions

**Barry Dyson**

### **Species Champion – Song Thrush**

Why I chose Song Thrush? I have been giving this some thought. I can remember from being a youngster, being interested in birds and their habitats, how they differ in size, shape and song.



There were plenty of green areas in and around Fleetwood. Song Thrush was quite common and wide spread, not just Fleetwood but throughout the country. This was also before the use of insecticides/pesticides. There was plenty of land that was available for development. That has now disappeared. I can remember plans for the laying of Amounderness Way, which now runs through Parr's field from Norcross Roundabout. I have seen many houses, schools and colleges being built over the years, on what was once green land, in and around

Fleetwood. Farmers/Landowners began using insecticides/pesticides and farming was becoming more intensified. People began wanting to rent allotments and it wasn't long before they started using insecticides/pesticides to kill slugs and snails. Slugs and snails were now pests and people didn't want them ruining their fruit and veg. They didn't want them in their back gardens. CHANGE! This has come at the sacrifice of nature and wildlife, birds in particular.

Thanks to Atlas Surveys and RSPB Garden Birdwatch Surveys, the Song Thrush is now on the RED list. This means the bird is now in danger of becoming extinct, not just in Fleetwood but throughout the country. This saddens me - to think that one of the countryside's much loved song birds is declining in population. I could get controversial, but I am not going to. What's happened? Intensive farming, development of land, businesses/property development, the use of insecticides/pesticides and land management has resulted in the loss of habitat and food for the Song Thrush.

*Song Thrush* Family Turdidae, *Turdus philomelos* resident.

Nests and lays eggs February – July. Feeds on slugs, snails, worms, grubs, insects and berries. The bird smashes the snail shells on a stone, which is known as the anvil. I have been told they like mealworms. Visits parks, woodland, fields and gardens.

Members! Please keep your sightings of Song Thrush coming in. Thank You!

**Mark Farrer**

## Vantage Point or VPs

At our March meeting the speaker was Dan Haywood, a member of the Lancaster Group. He gave a very amusing and interesting talk about how he has a different way of birding; he sits at a point that can be slightly above ground level (a small hill) or similar and waits for the birds to come to him or fly past. He calls this Vantage Point or shortens it to VPs birding. This takes about three hours in the early morning and then three hours later in the day.

I have a similar way of birding. In the mornings I sit on the settee in the conservatory and watch the back garden where I have a bird feeder stocked with sunflower hearts, they seem to prefer this food over a mixed feed. I regularly have Goldfinches (my Champion Bird), Greenfinches, Blue Tits, House Sparrows, Blackbirds, Dunnocks and Chaffinches.

During the afternoon I move to the settee in the front room, there I have another feeder with the same food. This is a very small garden that slopes down towards the house so the feeders are close to the pavement. Children pass by walking on their way to school. I have Goldfinches (up to four,) Wren, Dunnock, Blackbird, and the greedy Collared Doves and Wood Pigeons who Hoover up the fallen seed and today I had my first young goldfinches of the year. There doesn't seem to be much crossover in the birds as I can go to the back room and see similar birds feeding. I watch through the window to see the Lesser Black Backed Gulls and Herring Gulls on my neighbours roofs, and have watched a Sparrow Hawk swoop down in search of a meal, the small birds are wise to this so quickly disappear.

Last summer during the evenings I have had some hedgehogs visit the front garden, they feed on the food that has dropped from the bird feeders. One night there were two, one spent about 10 minutes circling round and round one other hedgehog, he then jumped on her back and with much grunting that went on for about a minute. When over, he then shuffled off from where he had come from. I hope that this summer they will return with their babies.

PS The first young Goldfinches have appeared in my garden, May 26<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any news of your Champion Birds for the Newsletter please send them to me at [jean.wagstaff@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jean.wagstaff@hotmail.co.uk) or [rhind1003@btinternet.com](mailto:rhind1003@btinternet.com)

***Jean Wagstaff***

### **Parking at Marton Mere**

Fylde Bird Club members have been granted permission to park at the reception building on the caravan park at Marton Mere and use the toilets in there. To get there keep left when you drive in. We also have permission to use the toilet block in the 'touring area' which is at the NE corner of the caravan site.

However, this comes with a request from Blackpool Council to stop parking on any of the grass verges and the edges of the path to the outflow.

There is no right to drive into the caravan park, so please comply with this request.

It will be acceptable to park in front of the Ranger Station (the Rangers have been disbanded but council staff and volunteers from the park will still visit). Also, when it's quiet in the winter, I think it will be OK to park on empty caravan pitches as we have done previously.

## What Are You Waiting For?

Well, the chances are, if you are a Birdwatcher you are waiting for something. It starts on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Will the rare bird that's been around for weeks still be there on January 1<sup>st</sup> to add to your year list for the New Year?

The list is endless, you are waiting for spring migration, autumn migration and everything in between. You are waiting for westerly winds, easterly winds, high tides, even low tides for a walk over to Hilbre.

The nesting season is fraught with anxiety. Will the birds pair up, will they hatch and fledge young?

Birds don't have a timetable and arrive at quite inconvenient times. The working week has to be endured until a flexi-time afternoon is due or the weekend shopping has to be abandoned as the pager announces news of that elusive migrant in Chris Batty's garden.

Waiting can even be a complete waste of time, when after hours spent scoping a distant hedge in the corner of some irate farmer's field, Lee Evans pronounces that it wasn't the rarity that some 'expert' said it was.

Waiting for decisions on family holidays can take many months when everyone's needs are taken into consideration. The Outer Hebrides aren't always a welcome suggestion and the wait for a compromise can be a trying time. 'All Inclusive' in Majorca raises its ugly head but with some preplanning and early morning forays into the marshes the wait can be worth it. All in all birds are worth waiting for so what are you waiting for?

**Beryl Turner**

### **Forthcoming Meetings**

25<sup>th</sup> Jun: Birdwatching in North Wales with Alan Davies and Ruth Miller

23<sup>rd</sup> Jul: Bhutan with Paul Ellis

27<sup>th</sup> Aug: Alaska: The Last Frontier with Ian Newton

24<sup>th</sup> Sep: Let's do Wildlife Photography Across the UK with David Winnard