



Fylde Bird Club

LANCASHIRE

Reg. Charity No.1102961

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September Newsletter 2013

We have had an excellent success with the Common Terns at Preston Dock, Paul Ellis, Paul Slade and Stuart Piner spent time earlier this year putting out more painted tyres and gravel on the pontoons. Unfortunately, a late storm, washed away much of the gravel but the Chairman arranged for more gravel to be delivered and Preston Council workers, including Andrew Newsham, replaced what was lost. The results have had an excellent with about 120 pairs of Common Terns nesting, producing over 73 young to the fledging stage. One pair of Arctic Terns also attempted to nest but was unsuccessful, despite incubating one egg for two weeks.

We have had flyers printed to advertise our Club; Knott End and Poulton Library have agreed to stock them. I visit the Libraries once every few weeks to top them up; I aim to have 6 on display at a time. If anyone visits their local branch and would like to include a copy of the flyers please let me know by email or telephone.

We also have **Free** adverts in the Over Wyre Focus, Link-mag and Wyre Local List, so I am looking for more outlets in which to place an advert, these must be free magazines and in the Fylde or Wyre district and free to place an advert in.

Barry Dyson visited Spurn Point recently (near Hull) and if we take our membership card there will no charge for access to the nature reserve.

We have updates on the Champion Birds, so please send in your news. I have seen young Goldfinches in June, July and August. During July Pete's Greenfinches, including a young bird, have visited my garden.

The Club 2014 Calendars will be on sale at the September Club meeting, the cost is **£5.00**

A copy of a Standing Order form is included, which can be used to pay your subscriptions if you wish to make renewal automatic. We have also introduced another means of paying subscriptions via our Website at <http://www.fyldebirdclub.org/existing-member-renewals.html> However, traditional cash or cheques at meetings or by post will still be accepted as before.

We are putting together the Bird Report for 2012, and we have vacancies for two advertisements, one full page in colour which cost £60.00, and one half page for £30.00. Please let me know if you would like further details, my phone number is 01253 810889.

Thanks to all members who have contributed to the newsletter. Please keep items coming in. Your favourite bird, favourite birding sites or any other articles linked to bird life. If you have any suggestions as to other things we are not covering let us know and we will try to remedy it.

Jean Wagstaff

Report from Marton Mere April – June 2013

This may have been a cold, wet spring but it certainly hasn't put a dampener on the goings-on at the reserve. 4 adult Mediterranean Gulls were present on 3rd April and 2 were present on the 4th. A Woodcock was also seen on the 4th and the first singing Chiffchaff of the year was heard on the 6th. Goldeneyes lingered into April, with 4 on the 6th, 2 on the 12th and 3 on the 15th. There was considerable action on the 7th, with Redshank, Mediterranean Gull and Jack Snipe on the reserve and Skylark, Red Kite, Peregrine and Osprey flying over. Ospreys were also seen on the 8th, 9th and 12th April.

On 10th April the first hirundines of the year arrived, 2 Swallows and 20+ Sand Martins. However, as well as the Goldeneyes, another winter visitor was lingering; a Redwing was still present on the 12th. On the 13th there was an Otter and the first Willow Warbler of the year. The star bird of this quarter was undoubtedly the Alpine Swift, which was seen flying over the reserve from roughly 1220 to 1400 hours, on 14th April. This came almost 4 years to the day since the first Fylde sighting (15th April 2009).



Common Sandpiper – Ellen Pemberton

A Jack Snipe was seen later that day on the island. Hirundines continued to pass through on the 15th, with over 50 Swallows and 80 Sand Martins seen. On the 16th there were 4 Arctic Terns and a Common Sandpiper, with 5 Wheatears on the south-east field. Common Sandpiper sightings continued during the 2nd half of April, including 2 on the 20th. A Barn Owl was also present on several dates in this period, into May and June. The first Sedge and Grasshopper Warblers arrived on the 17th, with the first Whitethroat on the 18th. The 19th saw a Jay and 4 White Wagtails grace the reserve, while on the 20th there were 4 more Wheatears, a Peregrine and the year's first Common Swift.

Migrants continued to arrive in late April, with Redstarts seen on the 21st, 24th and 25th and over 100 Sand Martins on both the 21st and 24th. Also present on the 21st were 3 Whooper Swans (2 adults and a juvenile), a Greenshank and a Little Owl. 2 Pied Flycatchers (male and female) dropped in on the 26th, as did a Black-tailed Godwit, while on the 27th a Little Egret flew over. There were over 120 Swallows on the 28th. Stock Doves were present throughout April in the east barn area, with a peak of 6 on the 3rd.

On 1st May an Otter was on the reserve and on the 2nd there was a high count of 6 Cetti's Warblers. Garganey and Whimbrel were seen in early May, with 2 of the former on the 6th. Most of the Whimbrel sightings were of birds flying over, although 2 landed briefly on the scrape on the 7th. A female Redstart and a Whinchat were present on the 5th and 7th respectively. 10 Black-tailed Godwits flew south-east on the 9th and a Weasel was at the feeding station on the 12th.

A pair of Garganey were seen again throughout the 2nd half of May and into early June (3 were seen on 8th June) while an Arctic Tern graced the reserve on the 24th. There were 7 Stock Doves on the 25th, with a Tree Sparrow and over 150 Woodpigeons seen on the 26th. Sightings for June included a Stoat with 5 kits near the Container Hide on the 4th, 3 Tree Sparrows on the 6th and Peregrines on the 12th and 25th. Water Rails were also heard on the 6th, 9th and 24th, while 7 Crossbills flew south on the 29th. A pair of Blackbirds have once again been nesting in the Fylde Bird Club Hide – the caravan owners and birders aren't the only ones who keep coming back!

Ellen Pemberton

Quarterly Records Round Up

May

On 17th Paul Ellis and Paul Slade discovered the bird of the month when they watched a Bee-eater fly over their heads at Todderstaffe.



Temminck's Stint on Conder Pool - Stuart Piner

A Temminck's Stint was seen in flight for a short period over the Conder Pool and adjacent Conder Estuary on 27th, but it was not pinned down on the deck until the following evening, when it showed well on the muddy margins of the Conder Pool.

An excellent passage of Pomarine Skuas resulted in at least 30 recorded off Rossall Point, four at Blackpool and a single off Knott End. Migration watches at Rossall Point also logged Long-tailed Skua, two Puffins, four Pale-bellied Brent Geese, two Garganey, two Great Northern Divers, Black Tern and Black Guillemot, whilst a Cetti's Warbler, two Garganey, Pied Flycatcher, two Redstart, Hooded Crow and Hobby were also recorded in the Fleetwood area. The best of the rest included a Blue-headed Wagtail at Thurnham, Redstart at Marton Mere, at least two Crossbills at Medlar Woods, Wood Sandpipers at Newton Marsh and Wesham Marsh, Turtle Dove at Sowerby, Dark-bellied Brent Goose at Cockersand, Wood Warbler at Stanley Park, Scaup at Conder Pool and a Red Kite at Cockerham Marsh.

June

A quiet month produced a Hobby over Elswick and three Garganey and seven flyover Crossbills at Marton Mere.



Garganey at Marton Mere - Paul Ellis

July

A spread of Crossbill sightings comprised a total of eight over Fleetwood, eight over Shard Bridge, two over Marton Mere, Marton and Carleton and a lone bird over Myerscough Quarry.



Curlew Sandpiper at Skippool Creek - Paul Slade

Elsewhere Curlew Sandpipers were on the Conder Estuary and at Skippool Creek, a Quail was heard in Pilling, a Common Scoter visited Preston Dock and five Little Terns were logged off Blackpool. A Red Kite flew over Kirkham Prison and Warton, an Avocet visited Glasson, a Dark-bellied Brent Goose lingered at Cockersand and a Garganey was noted in Fleetwood. A Wood Sandpiper was located on the Conder Pool and two Ruddy Shelducks paused briefly on the Lune Estuary at Glasson.

Stuart Piner

SPECIES CHAMPION - GREENFINCH. *Carduelis chloris*

The drop in numbers of Greenfinches in my garden has been quite dramatic which is why I picked it as my species Champion. From November 2001 till July 2008 Greenfinches were absent 23 out of 340 weeks that I counted. From August 2008 till August 2013 Greenfinches were absent 186 out of 241 weeks that I counted. The drop is very marked although 3 weeks ago I registered a count of 6, the highest for 10 years.



According to the Breeding Birds Survey Greenfinch numbers have dropped by 17% over the last 18 years due largely to the disease Trichomonosis.

It really is a beautiful bird with its black eye patches and vivid green and yellow flashes as it flies. The sawing call and butterfly like display flight are part of spring to me, a part I see less and less.

I would like to monitor its numbers on the Fylde but we all report on the more unusual species and others are under reported. I am as guilty as anyone but making it my Species Champion has focussed my attention. Keep me company and report all Greenfinches.

Peter Rhind

SPECIES CHAMPION – COMMON SCOTER



Pelagic off Fleetwood July 2011 -- Paul Ellis

Whilst I am probably over exposed as a newsletter contributor I have been asked to do a piece as the Common Scoter species champion, so on this occasion you are stuck with me. I have probably watched more scoter on the Fylde more often than anyone in the last decade, so hopefully something in the following ten ‘facts’ from my experience will be of some interest.

1 – Common Scoter cannot read field guides

No surprises there then. But if your field guide shows them as a winter visitor it is fibbing. They occur off our coast every month of the year, and presumably some birds (particularly first summers) never leave for Scottish and Scandinavian breeding grounds.

2 – Common Scoter more subtle than they appear

Some people will tell you that Gadwall are subtly marked and attractive in their way. Well to a degree so are Common Scoter. The underside of the primary feathers can give a silvery sheen, particularly in sunlight, making a group in flight a surprisingly striking sight.

3 – Common Scoter can be identified in silhouette

By which I mean they have a distinctive habit of throwing their neck down and tossing it back up as they flap their wings when on the water. When you have observed this a few times it becomes a signature of the species. It can probably be used to pick them out of other duck flocks, but that isn’t really an issue in these parts.

4 – Common Scoter love Blackpool

Yes they do, so much so that they clearly prefer it even to Fleetwood. The large flocks are invariably between Norbreck and Starr Gate, reasonable numbers can be seen off Rossall but almost never the four figure groups regular just to the south.

5 – Common Scoter are very ‘highly strung’

When a group of scoter is disturbed by a ship, or sometimes a plane, they will often stay airborne for a period of several minutes. As one group appear to settle on the sea they appear to be spooked by others in the group still on the wing and so it goes on. The amount of energy they must waste in these incidents would not be insignificant.

6 – Common Scoter don't follow normal seawatching logic

Most people rush to the coast when the storms are-a-brewing. This is great for increasing your chance of seeing Leach's Petrels and Sabine's Gulls but it is rubbish for scoter. They tend to sit tight on the sea and just hunker down whereas in calm weather they move between feeding areas more.

7 – Common Scoter get up early

There are generally significant southbound movements the length of the Blackpool coastline early morning as birds leave the roost on Shell Flats and feed in groups down to Formby Point. Conversely they fly back in numbers approaching dusk, though the light is worse for observing this.

8 – Common Scoter take short cuts

Common Scoter do not spend time on freshwater, they are not even regular on Fairhaven Lake which has a track record of holding pelagic species. But during overland migration they will land on such sites, generally lingering no more than a day. Marton Mere has had several records.

9 – Common Scoter drakes can have a lot of yellow on their bills

You may have a field guide which shows barely any yellow on a drake Common Scoter's bill, possibly next to a drake Black Scoter looking like a feathered belisha beacon. In reality the amount of yellow on the bills of drake Common Scoters can be quite variable and caution is required.

10 – Common Scoter could be a Fylde rarity finder's friend

There are only three accepted records of Surf Scoter for Lancashire, two on the Fylde. Three major national rarities are also possible – Black Scoter, White-winged Scoter and Stejneger's Scoter. If a big flock comes close, as they very occasionally do, time to swing in action with scope and camera.

Stephen Dunstan

MARINELife

In early 2010 bird club members were invited to a workshop being run by MARINELife at The Solaris Centre, Blackpool. MARINELife is a UK-based charity established to coordinate and develop a growing portfolio of global cetacean and seabird research and monitoring projects. They were looking for volunteers to undertake survey work on commercial ferry routes in the Irish Sea.

On each survey, effort-based cetacean, seals and seabird surveillance work is carried out by a team of experienced volunteer observers using a standardised survey methodology from a well positioned viewing platform such as the ship's bridge. The methodology used was developed by the Cetacean Group of the Mammal Society for use from platforms of opportunity such as commercial ferries.

The data recorded is used to determine seasonal, annual and long-term population trends for individual species and inform UK and European Government Agencies, Universities and other scientific research and conservation organisations.

To date I have undertaken ten surveys including several with Stephen Dunstan and below are highlights from those survey routes:

Fleetwood - Larne - July 2010

My first survey and sightings included: 9 Harbour Porpoises, 7 Puffins and 4 Black Guillemots. This survey route ended December 2010 with P&O Ferries withdrawal from Fleetwood. Survey work begun with Seatruck Ferries on Heysham to Warrenpoint route in August 2011.

Heysham - Warrenpoint - September 2011 to June 2013. 7 surveys to date.

Sightings have included: Short-beaked Common Dolphins, Bottlenose Dolphin, Harbour Porpoises, Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Divers, Arctic Skuas, Great Skuas, Pomarine Skua, Little Gulls, Balearic Shearwater, Storm Petrels, Leach's Storm Petrel, and Black Guillemots.

Immingham - Brevik - November 2012

This survey was completed in force 8 decreasing to force 6 which tested my 'sea legs'!

Hull - Zeebrugge - July 2013

My latest survey was completed in mirror calm conditions allowing us to see 19 Harbour Porpoises along with good numbers of Kittiwakes, Gannets and Common Scoters.

Future surveys this year include Heysham - Belfast in September and Immingham - Brevik in October.

The current North West ferry routes surveyed include: Heysham – Warrenpoint, Heysham – Belfast, Liverpool – Belfast and Liverpool – Dublin.

If you are enthusiastic, reliable and want to make a positive contribution to the crucial work we do by becoming involved we would very much like to hear from you. Details below of a forthcoming identification course at Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Preston in October.

Nik Grounds

Marine Mammal & Seabird Surveyor Training Course

Join us, MARINELife and Lancashire, Manchester and N Merseyside Wildlife Trust, at our training day to learn how to observe and identify whales, dolphins and seabirds.

You will also find out how to submit sightings for scientific research, and how to become a MARINELife volunteer ship-based surveyor in your spare time.

Location: Lancashire, Manchester and N Merseyside Wildlife Trust, The Barn, Berkeley Drive, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 6BY

Date & Time: Sunday 6th October 2013 from 10:30am to 4:30pm.

Nik Grounds

Amendments to Maurice Jones 50 years Birding in the Fylde (June Newsletter)

Lapland Bunting: Delete "Site now built over" and add "6th March and 24th November"

Snow Bunting: Add "60 to 70 Rossall Fields early February (Site now built over = Larkholme Estate North of Rossall School"

Marton Mere Management Work

On the 1st of September members of the Club spent the day working (very hard) at the Mere, when I got there at about 10`o clock Maurice and Ellen were in the Bird Club Hide, it was disgusting, it had been used as a toilet over a long time and not to mention other things. Ellen found a large bottle of disinfectant and with a hard brush managed to clean it up. Maurice removed a used Blackbirds' nest from above the entrance door, swept the walls and cleaned up the benches to make it more habitable, much improved and more like the use it was intended for. We are considering having a key for members to open a pad lock, this will be for Fylde Bird Club members to access, so it will be difficult for entry to be made by other people not intending to use it for watching the birds. More about this in a later newsletter.

Maurice and Ellen later went to tackle the willows at the other end of the reserve. Kinta was using the only pair of waders that enabled her to get close to the edge of the reeds that were in front of the Bird Club Hide. She used a petrol strimmer which looked nearly as big as she was. She later used a scythe which looked really hard work as well. Paul Slade took over with his strimmer to the left hand side of the hide and John Winstanley worked on the right side, John had to go home early as he felt unwell, I hope that it was nothing serious. Glen Jackson escorted him back to his car and Glen then returned to the reeds, a never ending task.

Paul Ellis, Chris Batty, Stuart Piner, Ashley Bains and Johnny Scragg went over to the island to tackle the overgrown weeds, which had really shot up since our last visit, this will make it habitable for the wading birds to use. I went to the feeding station, it was so disappointing; it was so overgrown and neglected. The feeders were empty, how different from the last time I visited the site.

Jean Wagstaff



View from Fylde Bird Club Hide: Before & After

A Christmas Challenge

Every year since I joined the Fylde Bird Club two or three birds new to the Fylde are uncovered by keen birders. Is there a limit to what will turn up? What is the next wonderful wanderer to appear here?

How about a light-hearted challenge, name two or three birds that you think will be the next to be listed as “ new to the Fylde “

Go on, put your reputations on the line and nominate your new arrivals with a few lines of justification for your prediction. Even if, like me, you have no reputation to lose join in.

Good luck and let's hope your dreams are answered.

Please send suggestions to be in to the editors, before the end of November.

--Eds.

The Todderstaffe Bee-eater – a tale of the unexpected

On the 17th May, Paul Slade and I arrived at Todderstaffe Hall just before 2pm, to check the contents of the Tree Sparrow nest boxes. We were parked at the end of Station Road. While Paul ‘prepared himself’, I peered out over the railway line, looking east towards Singleton. Swallows and swifts were flying to and fro but I couldn’t see anything more interesting. Twice, I turned and started back towards the farm but on each occasion noticed that Paul wasn’t ready and so tuned around to stare out over the fields again. With my bins dangling round my neck, I noticed a bird flying head on towards me and I just couldn’t decide what it was. It looked a bit like a big swallow but it stayed on a direct head on flight path, revealing no further clues and its identity eluded me. Two seconds of metaphorical head scratching was all I could bear and I ‘eventually’ lifted my bins to relieve the irritation of being unable to name this bird, which was still heading straight for me.

I focused on the target, which had by now closed the range considerably, and was startled to be presented with a fantastic view of a European Bee-eater, in immaculate breeding plumage.

I instantly shouted ‘Bee eater’ to Paul and pointed up to the bird which was now rising above the gate to fly directly over us at a height of about 50 feet. It was close enough to get a reasonable view and easily identify it, without bins, even so I ran the few paces back to Paul (who’s bins were packed) and handed my bins over, allowing him a quick good look before it vanished behind the trees at the farmhouse to our west. The time was 1402 hours. The bird gave no calls during its transit.

The whole event was over in less than ten seconds leaving a surreal feeling, with internal questions of: ‘did that just really happen?’ We confirmed to each other that it really had happened and so phoned the news out as we rushed around to the west of the farm, in an attempt to relocate the bird. We had a clear view to the west and scanned wires and all other likely perches. We sorted through all the swifts and swallows feeding over the fields and filtered the sky for the missing star. Unfortunately we never saw it again.

Paul Ellis

Todderstaffe Nest Boxes

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. Nest Boxes	13	19	24	26	40	40	40	41	40	38	39
Tree Sparrows											
Nests with Eggs	1	9	7	16	18	12	18	18	27	24	11
Broods	1	9	13	32	34	22	36	47	59	50	18
Eggs	5	38	60	153	151	99	174	207	286	222	83
Fledged	4	38	53	112	94	69	92	90	200	121	56
Ringed	0	0	30	109	96	69	90	96	198	128	55
Fledged per Egg			0.88	0.73	0.62	0.70	0.53	0.43	0.70	0.55	0.67
Blue Tits											
Nests with Eggs	2	2	9	5	5	3	3	2	2	2	6
Fledged	16	20	42	28		21		All			6
Great Tits											
Nests with Eggs	0	1	2	2	3	5	7	6	5	5	3
Fledged	0	9	15	15		13		All -4			3

The table above speaks for itself. The reason was undoubtedly the prolonged cold winter, after which, only 11 pairs returned to nest. We know most of our birds winter somewhere else because only 20% of wintering birds are ringed. The cold spring also hindered productivity. - P.E

REQUEST TO SET UP NEW STANDING ORDER MANDATE

To The Manager

Bank Name:.....
(Your Bank's Name)

Bank Address:.....
(Your Bank's Address)

Customer Account Details (Account to be Debited) (Your bank account details)

Account Name.....
(Enter name(s) of account holders as on your cheque book)

Sort Code.....
(As on your cheque book)

Account Number.....
(As on your cheque book)

Beneficiary Details (Account to be Credited)

Beneficiary Name..... **Fylde Bird Club**

Payment reference
(Please enter your full name)

Sort Code..... **30-96-85**
Account Number..... **30107068**
Bank..... **Lloyds TSB,
Fishergate Preston Branch, Lloyds TSB Bank plc,
P.O Box 2000, BX1 1LT**

Amount of Payment.....
(Enter £14 single / £10 senior / £20 family as appropriate) (Enter amount in words)

Please pay this amount on 02-01-2014 and thereafter pay the same amount on the second day of each year (or nearest working day) until further notice.

Customer(s) signature(s)
(Your signature) (Second signature if your account requires two)

Date

Contact telephone number
(Your contact telephone number)

If you wish to pay your membership subscriptions by Standing Order, please complete this form and send it to YOUR Bank.