



# **Fylde Bird Club**

## **Lancashire**

### **AUGUST 2008 MEMBERS NEWSLETTER**

Welcome to the August newsletter. I think I promised this one would come out in July, so thank you for your patience. In my defence I was spending large amounts of time on the National Breeding Atlas. There are still some gaps in the Fylde and adjoining areas for this important survey, so if you are considering it I am sure your help would be greatly appreciated. Details are included in the newsletter. Personally I find it very rewarding to cover areas that I wouldn't normally visit, one highlight this summer was four Green Sandpipers on a pool at Whinbrick that I didn't even know existed never mind visited regularly. It has also been striking to me just how widespread species like Buzzard have become when you go the roads and paths less travelled.

I asked if anybody would consider penning a review of the county avifauna. I haven't had any takers and would still welcome views from any members willing to put their view forward.

There will always be sites that are 'honeypots' which attract more than their share of birders because they are easily visited, they have good visitor facilities (not so many in the Fylde!) and so on. This newsletter includes a suggestion to one or two areas that might repay increased attention during the forthcoming peak of the autumn migration and in some cases other times of year. Rose coloured Starlings have graced at least three Fylde back gardens this year showing just what can be out there off the beaten track.

Whatever you get up to this autumn I hope your birding is rewarding, and if you are able to share your exploits in a forthcoming newsletter that would be greatly appreciated.

Good birding,

Stephen.



## **UNDERWATCHED?**

Over the last month or so Stuart Piner, Chris Batty and myself have had some discussion on birding sites in the Fylde that are potentially underwatched. Clearly this is subjective, but here are suggestions of a 'top ten' places or areas where increased coverage may provide people with some deserved reward...

### **Winmarleigh Moss**

There is nowhere else in the recording area with similar lowland heath habitat. Whilst the site is private there is a footpath right across it giving excellent views. In terms of what might turn up here Great Grey Shrike would seem possible in winter, and raptors could include Hobby and potentially Red-footed Falcon. As Cuckoo numbers continue to decline this is likely to be one of the last strongholds for the species. Other wildlife interest here includes the declining Large Heath butterfly, Banded Demoiselle damselfly and Roe Deer.

### **Naze Point**

It doesn't have the convenient access of Newton Marsh or Fairhaven. It doesn't have the crowd-pulling appeal of regular scarcities that Warton Bank has with its Water Pipits. As well as good numbers of waders at many times of the year it also has one of the largest late summer – early autumn egret roosts in the county that may pull in a Great White or Cattle, and there is a regular movement of gulls which has included Sabine's in the past.

### **Inner Ribble estuary**

This part of the Ribble is not as accessible as the outer estuary, with general access only by footpath along the southern bank from Penwortham out to Clifton Marsh a little way upstream of Naze Point. There are waders and wildfowl in the winter, in lesser numbers than downriver but with a corresponding lack of coverage. This area has also in the past been demonstrated by Alan Porter to have inland seabird migration in the spring.

### **Waterside Farm**

Like the inner Ribble access is less straightforward than other sites downriver and therefore more coverage would undoubtedly produce rewards. Wader roosts can be large, particularly on high tides as birds get displaced from other areas as the Great Knot showed a few years back.

### **LSANR**

When Maurice was the warden here coverage was clearly better than most near coastal sites in the area. These days that is no longer the case. The track record of the site speaks for itself – both the Fylde's Subalpine Warblers, Barred Warbler and Hoopoe among others. Certainly worth checking during the autumn, especially when conditions are favourable for grounded overnight migrants.

### **Cocker's Dyke to Fluke Hall**

This area has a track history, including a memorable autumn in 1996 that produced Red-breasted Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Warbler and Firecrest. Fluke Hall Wood is private but on the other hand much of it can be covered from the road. The seawall at Cocker's Dyke has also had Black Redstarts. The hedgerows and fields around Ridge Farm have potential, and the stubble fields east of Fluke Hall can be very productive when flooded. Potentially a great alternative to Fleetwood, especially if you live the 'wrong' side of the Wyre estuary.



### **Carr House Green Common**

When it was regularly watched this site produced Richard's Pipit and Yellow-browed Warbler. Since then a Wryneck has demonstrated the continued potential of the site for scarce passerines. A good general habitat that has also produced wintering Hen Harrier and Green Sandpiper in recent years.

### **Blackpool green spaces**

The track record of some of the sites in this category are already known, thanks largely to the efforts of Ed Stirling. The sites with a track record are well known, notably Watson Road Park and the Pleasure Beach railway bushes. However Pallas's Warblers by the football ground and in Gynn Gardens show what must go undetected. Look at a map for green spaces and cover one before going to the shops / cinema / gym / Mere.

### **Marton Mere**

To finish a site which would not be conventionally thought of as underwatched. However it is still possible to walk round the Mere some times of the year (probably not winter) and still not see any other birders. Compared with sites viewable from the road like Mythop flood the Mere is harder work but the track record remains outstanding as the outstanding combination of Bonaparte's Gull and Ross's Gull has shown this year.

### **Summary**

This is clearly not intended to be a definitive list. If you have views on sites that should have been included then feel free to put pen to paper for a future newsletter, or alternatively put the time in at an underwatched site and deliver results. From apparently uninspiring train lines in the west to disused quarries in the east such areas in the recording area have proved their worth to the dedicated and persistent local birder.

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## **NEW TEXT ALERT SERVICE EXCLUSIVE TO FBC MEMBERS**

The Fylde Bird Club operates a rarity text alert service. Membership is open to all current members of the Fylde Bird Club, one number per member.

Messages may be sent at any time of day but will only be sent after the news has been broadcast by Rare Bird Alert.

The service is not designed to be a replacement for a pager or SMS service as offered by Rare Bird Alert as there will be no updates following the initial alert.

Messages sent will be at the discretion of the operators, and generally only sent when it is thought likely that the bird will prove to be 'twitchable'.

The text will arrive from Chris Batty 07775-775103, Stuart Piner 07976-201755 or Paul Slade 07970-986904. Due to the process by which the messages are sent, the text alerts can not be replied to. Please do not reply to the text message.

To ensure rarities are reported on the Fylde Rarity Text Alert system as soon as they are found, please contact Rare Bird Alert on 02070-382820, or alternatively telephone Chris Batty on 07775-775103 or Stuart Piner on 07976-201755 with any breaking news.



## **NATIONAL ATLAS - SITUATIONS VACANT (FROM JEAN ROBERTS)**

Looking for somewhere different to go on a walk? Want to combine a leisurely stroll with birdwatching? Like your bird records to be mapped for posterity? Then why not help out with the BTO Atlas in your region?

The squares listed below are available for the BTO winter Atlas/winter stroll recording the birds you see/hear in a 1-2 hour period on two occasions. For further information or to book any of the tetrads listed below contact Jean Roberts (BTO rep for Lancs North West) by phone: 01524 770295 or email [jeanrbts6@aol.com](mailto:jeanrbts6@aol.com) or book online at [www.bto.org/atlas](http://www.bto.org/atlas)

### **Garstang area and Fylde**

SD44C Rawcliffe Moss  
SD44D Scronkey  
SD44G Skitham  
SD44I Bone Hill Bridge  
SD44J Moss Edge  
SD44N Winmarleigh Moss  
SD44P Cockerham Moss  
SD44S Nateby  
SD44T Winmarleigh Hall  
SD44U Lathwaite

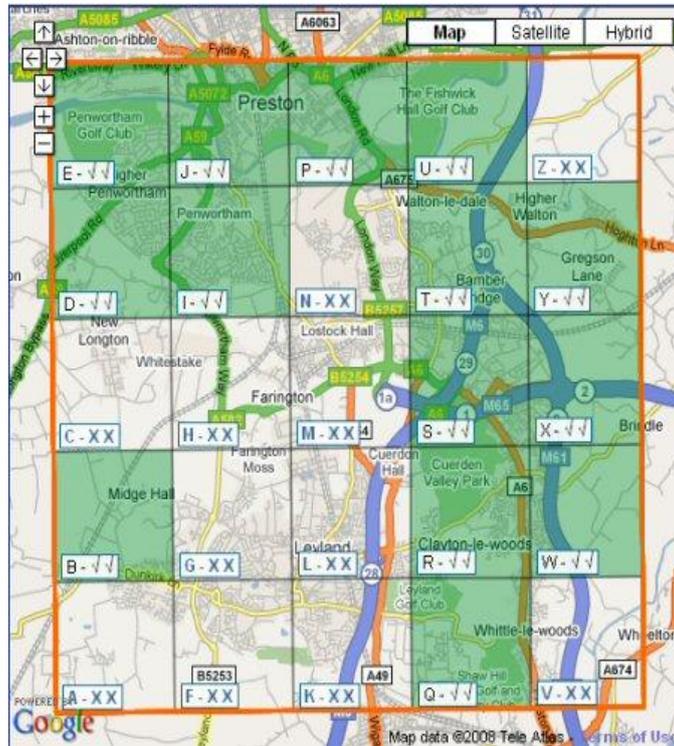
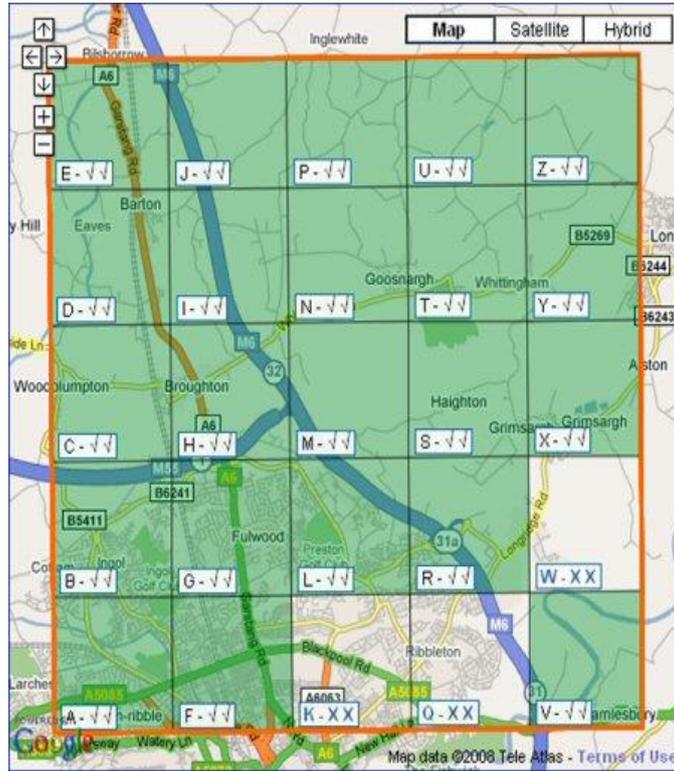
SD45F Cockerham Marsh  
SD45J Middleton  
SD45K Cockerham Moss  
SD45P Colloway Marsh  
SD45Q Crookhey  
SD45R Cockerham Village

### **Garstang and Bleasdale**

SD54F Walmesley Bridge  
SD54K Whitechapel  
SD54M Tootle Hall  
SD54P Stake House  
SD54Q Barn Fold Reservoir  
SD54T Hazelhurst  
SD54U Bleasdale Moors  
SD54V Loud Bridge Farm  
SD54W Watery Gate Farm  
SD54X Blindhurst  
SD54Y Fairsnape Fell  
SD54Z Fiendsdale

And for the squares on the attached maps not shaded green / grey (depending on whether you get to see this in colour or black and white) please contact our very own Stuart Piner.





## RECENT SIGHTINGS

*Compiled by Stuart Piner.*

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

### **May**

Paul Ellis added a new species to the Fylde list on 3rd when he located a first-winter Bonaparte's Gull at Marton Mere. Unfortunately the bird soon flew northwest before anyone else could connect – a great find, but such a shame that the bird did not linger long enough to be enjoyed by others. However, the following weekend a Bonaparte's Gull arrived at Stocks Reservoir in East Lancashire, so this could well have been Paul's bird.

Keeping on the gull theme, the long-staying adult Ross's Gull continued to linger around Granny's Bay until 16th, when it was found dead. A sad end to a bird that drew hundreds of admirers to the Fylde, but what a superb period for gulls – both Bonaparte's and Ross's Gulls simultaneously present in our recording area.

A splendid Red-spotted Bluethroat at Rossall School on 30th was the highlight of the spring on the Fylde. This one-day wonder arrived during a period of prolonged easterly winds, and coincided with the best spring fall of scarce migrants on the east coast for a number of years. There have been two previous Fylde records of Bluethroat - one in Peel Park, Blackpool in October 1997 and a female in Ingol in spring 2003 - but this year's singing male was the first to be twitchable and the first assigned to form.

A male Green-winged Teal at Newton Marsh on 15th was yet another quality bird discovered in May and the long-staying Glossy Ibis added another stamp to its passport when it visited a flood at Sowerby from 2nd-10th. The adult Ross's Goose was last seen with the Pink-footed Geese on Pilling Marsh on 4th.

A Wood Warbler in Stanley Park lingered from April and continued to sing until 3rd. Later in the month a Wood Warbler sang in Kirkham on 10th. A Garganey was at Todderstaffe Hall on 3rd and nearby up to four birds were at Marton Mere during May. Marton Mere also produced three Black Terns and a Marsh Harrier on 4th and another couple of Black Terns on 9th. A Purple Sandpiper visited Granny's Bay on 5th and nearby a Hooded Crow was noted at St Annes Pier. Redstarts were at Warton BAe Systems and Rossall Beach during the month, Wood Sandpipers visited Mythop on 9th and Bartle Pools on 12th, pairs of Avocets were seen on the ICI Tanks on 10th and Conder Pool on 28th and single Osprey flew over Medlar on 14th and Rossall Point on 25th. At Elswick a Quail was seen on 22nd, a Little Stint flew towards Glasson Marsh on 28<sup>th</sup> and a male Blue-headed Wagtail sang in potato fields at Ridge Farm with a male Yellow Wagtail on 29th.

Seawatching at Rossall Point produced a Puffin on 1st, Great Skua on 6th, five Black Terns on 8th, Black-throated Diver on 13th, and Velvet Scoter on 14th. Starr Gate logged two Little Terns on 13th and a Great Skua on 20th and elsewhere single Pomarine Skuas flew past Knott End on 7th and over Fleetwood Marine Lakes on 19th.



## June

This June it all went a bit pink when not one, but two Rose-coloured Starlings were found, both in non-birdwatchers gardens. The first visited Inskip on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> and the second was in St Annes on 23<sup>rd</sup> before it relocated to local birder Barry Dwire's garden from 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. Luckily the birds were promptly reported, and Fylde birders were delighted to add this gaudy species to their lists.

The only previous Fylde record of Rose-coloured Starling involved a bird also in St Annes (within only a stones throw of this year's bird) in July 2001, but birders only got to know about this record well after the event. This time around the owners of the Rose-coloured Starlings' chosen gardens were more than happy to let birders come in and enjoy the pink stink.

It was a good month for singing Quail, with five on Rawcliffe Moss, at least three at Eagland Hill and singles at Myerscough and Elswick. A Storm Petrel was blown into Fleetwood Docks by a strong westerly wind on 23<sup>rd</sup>, an excellent record away from coast. On 22<sup>nd</sup> the wandering Glossy Ibis briefly returned to Pilling, where it first touched Fylde soil back in October 2006 and nearby an Avocet visited Conder Pool on 29<sup>th</sup>.

A couple of Garganey visited Mythop on a handful of occasions during the month and a male Garganey (probably accompanied by a female) was an unusual seawatching record at Starr Gate. Up to three Mandarins could be found at Bispham Marsh throughout the month and three Ring-necked Parakeets were still at Lytham Crematorium.

## July

Another month, another local-mega finally found its way onto Fylde birders' lists. Whilst emptying a moth trap on his local patch in Singleton on 29<sup>th</sup>, Barry Dyson located the Fylde's first twitchable Red Kite. Despite several flyover records, there had never been a Red Kite available to anyone other than the finders. However, this pristine juvenile lingered over Knowle Wood until the following day, often showing well to an appreciative crowd.

July therefore became the third consecutive month that a species occurred that had not been seen by a Fylde lister. May produced a Bluethroat, June provided Rose-coloured Starling and July gave us Red Kite. No doubt birders await with bated breath to see what August may bring.

On the final day of the month an adult White-rumped Sandpiper was found at Skippool Creek by, guess who, Paul Slade. This is the fourth time in his Fylde birding career that Paul has located a 'White-rump' and three of those occasions have been at Skippool Creek, his local patch. Given that a White-rumped Sandpiper has occurred at Skippool during three out of the last six years, all of which have been found at around about the same time of year (3<sup>rd</sup> August 2003, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2005, and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008), it seems more than likely that this year's bird is the same individual that Paul first found in 2003. Interestingly, during two of the three summers since 2003 that a White-rumped Sandpiper has not occurred at Skippool Creek, the species has been located elsewhere in the Northwest at a similar time of year to the Skippool occurrences (Isle of Man on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2004 and Seaforth LWT on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2007). Chances are all these records relate to the same individual.



Spoonbills have been thin on the ground in recent years, so a sub-adult bird found by Mick McGough at Marton Mere on 25<sup>th</sup> was a cracking find. The bird also visited nearby Mythop flood on the same day, before being seen briefly at Warton Marsh on 27<sup>th</sup>.

Marton Mere also produced a juvenile Black-necked Grebe on 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, a Mandarin and Hobby on 5<sup>th</sup> and an adult Yellow-legged Gull on 18<sup>th</sup>. July was a particularly good month for Yellow-legged Gull records, with two birds at Glasson (the returning adult and a second-summer bird), a second-summer at Cocker's Dyke from 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> then again on 31<sup>st</sup> and a second-summer at Skippool Creek on 24<sup>th</sup>. Aside from the Marton Mere record, Hobbies made appearances at Broughton, Cockerham and Lightfoot Green and Marsh Harriers were at Rawcliffe Moss and Fluke Hall. Quail were abundant; counts included four at Cockerham Moss Edge, three on Rawcliffe Moss, two at Eagland Hill and singles at Bone Hill Lane and Cumming Carr.

Strong south-westerly winds during the middle of July produced excellent Storm Petrel conditions, and records accordingly came from Rossall School and Starr Gate on 17<sup>th</sup>, with a Little Tern past the latter site on 19<sup>th</sup>. Towards the end of the month terns began to gather on Preesall Sands; four Little Terns were at Knott End on 29<sup>th</sup> and ten roosted at Cocker's Dyke on 31<sup>st</sup>. A juvenile Scaup visited Conder Pool on 31<sup>st</sup>.

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#### **GIFT AID**

Fylde Bird Club (FBC) was officially registered as a Charity in February 2004 and we have been claiming for repayment of tax on donations (Gift Aid) from this date onwards. Most of our members complete a Gift Aid form when they join FBC, either by completing the form enclosed in their new members pack or ticking the Gift Aid box when they print off the membership form on our website.

If you have not completed a Gift Aid form could you please consider doing so? The money that is repaid to FBC from the Inland Revenue is put towards valuable conservation projects such as our Tree Sparrow feeding station at Todderstaffe. If you consider that you are eligible for your subscription and any donations to be considered for tax repayment can you please get in touch and I will e-mail or post you a Gift Aid form.

To be considered eligible you must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the tax year. Prior to 6 April 2008 this amount was 28p for each £1 you gave. However, from 6 April 2008, the basic rate of tax changed to 20 per cent. This means that for donations made on or after 6 April 2008, FBC can only claim back 25p for every £1 Gift Aid donation we receive. However, temporary transitional relief is available for donations made over the next three years of an additional 3p per pound.

If you are unable to remember if you completed a Gift Aid form please get in touch and I will let you know if I have a form for you on file. If you have been a member for a few years and have never completed a Gift Aid form it is not too late. Also, if your circumstances have changed since you completed a Gift Aid form and you no longer pay tax at the required level, can you please let me know as I will need to ensure that we no longer claim for repayment of tax on your subscriptions and donations.

Thank you.

**Kinta Beaver (FBC membership secretary)**  
**c/o 18 Staining Rise, Staining, Blackpool. FY3 0BU.**  
**Tel: 01253 891281.**  
**Or**

**E-mail Paul Ellis (secretary) [paul.ellis24@btopenworld.com](mailto:paul.ellis24@btopenworld.com)**



## **News from your Committee**

As reported at the June Business Meeting, the Committee have been investigating the feasibility of organising Field Trips for members. The costs of hiring buses with drivers have been investigated and in parallel, local company: Ribble Bird Tours, has been approached for prices to provide field trips. Ribble Bird Tours have offered discounted prices to Fylde Bird Club members for a range of trips. For comparative day trips, the costs of these outings are substantially lower than the Committee could offer using local bus companies. Therefore the Committee has decided that instead of the Club organising outings, it will recommend that members consider the offers made by Ribble Bird Tours. These initial offers are listed below.

**The following bird watching trips organised by Ribble Bird Tours have discounted limited availability for current members of the Fylde Bird Club  
Contact Stuart on 01253 312043 or 07954 584359 for further details**

### **Friday September 19<sup>th</sup> BADGERS Meet 5.30pm**

A visit to a Badger sett not too far away from Preston. This sett has a viewing hide with floodlights and on many previous visits over the last few years we have a 100% success rate. FBC members only. FBC members £7 includes return transport from Blackpool. Limited 6 (transport available for 5)

### **Wednesday September 24<sup>th</sup> SPURN, EAST YORKS Meet 6am**

A day on the east coast at Spurn where, if weather conditions are favourable, there'll be a birding day to remember in store. At this time of year anything can and does turn up and the peninsula has a long list of autumn rarities and scarcities. If the wind is from the east we can almost expect to see birds such as Wryneck, Bluethroat, Barred Warbler, Richard's Pipit, Red breasted Flycatcher and Shrikes. FBC members £12 plus share of travel expenses. Limited to 5.

### **Friday September 26<sup>th</sup> – Sunday September 28<sup>th</sup> SPURN & EAST YORKS**

A full weekend on the east coast where we'll be based central to Spurn and the Yorkshire coast ideally situated to explore numerous excellent sites which will be alive with numerous great birds if the weather conditions have been favourable. FBC members discounted to £219 ( full cost £249 ) to include 2 nights accommodation with breakfast and dinner and return transport from the Fylde. Depart Friday morning and return Sunday evening. Limited to 5. An itinerary is available on request. A single room supplement of £30 will apply.

### **Monday September 29<sup>th</sup> BITTERN & BEARDED TITS Meet 7am**

A full day at and around Leighton Moss RSPB where it's a great time of year to see Bearded Tits as they visit grit trays and Bitterns as they become just a little bit less elusive than they are in the breeding season. There'll be other good birds to see today too. FBC members £12 plus a share of transport costs. Limited to 5.

### **Wednesday October 1<sup>st</sup> MERSEYSIDE COAST Meet 7am**

A day on the Merseyside and Sefton Coast where we'll visit a few different sites that will be dictated by the best birds on the day. These sites may include Seaforth, Crosby Marina or Marshside RSPB and we'll be hoping that the weather is favourable for seeing Skua's and Leach's Storm Petrels amongst many other sought after species. FBC members £12 + a share of transport cost and small charge should we visit Seaforth. Limited to 5.



### **Thursday October 2nd – Wednesday October 8th ISLES OF SCILLY**

A superb 7 day / 6 night trip to the fantastic Isles of Scilly off the tip of south west Cornwall. These gorgeous islands are renowned amongst UK birders to be the 'place to be' during the first 2 weeks of October as autumn weather patterns always bring a variety of scarce and rare birds to the islands. The list of rarities seen on Scilly is endless but you can expect to see scarce species such as Wryneck, Yellow browed Warbler, Red breasted Flycatcher, Firecrest, Rose coloured Starling, Common Rosefinch, Barred Warbler, Richards Pipit, Jack Snipe & Red backed Shrike when its quiet !

FBC members £749 ( full cost £799 ) includes good guesthouse accommodation with breakfast, all dinners, return transport from the Fylde, sea crossing between Penzance and St. Mary's ( helicopter at c£30 supplement ), 3 inter island boat trips from St.Mary's and guiding. Single supplement £120. Limited to 5. A full daily itinerary is available on request.

### **Monday December 1st – Friday December 5th NORTH NORFOLK COAST**

A 5 day / 4 night trip to the Norfolk coast where we'll be situated near to Titchwell for 3 nights and near to Norwich for 1 night. There'll be a long list of birds to see and these should include Smew, Common Crane, Shorelark, Snow Bunting, Twite, Velvet Scoter, Hen Harrier, Barn Owl, Water Pipit, Golden Pheasant, up to 10 species of geese, Marsh Harrier, Little Egret, Avocet and much, much more.

FBC members £429 ( full cost £469 ) includes all accommodation with breakfast, all dinners, return transport from the Fylde and guiding. Not included is any nature reserve entry fees. Single supp £60. A full daily itinerary is available

A further programme of day trips will be available at September FBC meeting

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## **AND FINALLY – AGEING THE SUMMER'S ROSE COLOURED STARLINGS**

Rose-coloured Starlings can be tricky to age and sex, even in the hand. Separating juveniles from older birds however shouldn't be a problem, given the former's cold brown upper and underparts compared with the striking pink and black plumage of older birds. Rose-coloured Starlings are unusual amongst Western Palearctic passerines, being one of only a handful of species to delay their post juvenile moult until after autumn migration, so often not beginning until late in their first-calendar year. Both adults and juveniles have a complete winter moult, but due to the late onset of moult in juvenile birds, young birds can often be aged into their second-calendar year, due to the presence of both glossy black adult-type and remaining 'old' and worn dull brown juvenile wing feathers. However, after the post juvenile moult is complete, things get a little more difficult, as birds in their second-calendar year now look very similar to adults, as (usually) no juvenile feathers remain to indicate immaturity.

So, what age and sex were this summer's Fylde birds? Let's start with the St Annes individual; the intense pink underparts, long shaggy crest and dark glossy-black wing feathers all point towards this bird being an adult male – it is about as stunning as Rose-coloured Starlings ever get. The Inskip bird had paler, less intense pink upper and underparts, browner, less glossy wing feathers (especially the primaries) and a less shaggy crest than the St Annes adult male. A first-summer female would be even less pink on the under and upperparts and have even shorter, less glossy head feathers than the Inskip bird, which leaves us with two options; adult female or first-summer male. In the absence of any retained juvenile wing-feathers, it is very difficult to separate birds in these two plumages. Without in-hand analysis of the bird's throat feathers (the presence of off-white feather bases here can indicate immaturity) and extent of glossy black on the head and neck feathers, as well as assessing crest length, then it is probably best to leave the Inskip bird as either an adult female or first-summer male.



