



Fylde Bird Club

Lancashire

FEBRUARY 2009 NEWSLETTER

The period covered by this newsletter has been an exciting one in Fylde birding. Cattle Egret has been a widely predicted addition to the Fylde list, and Ian Latham was fortunate enough to find a couple in November. An account of this is included in the newsletter.

November also saw some other very good Fylde birds occurring, particularly Little Bunting, American Golden Plover and Surf Scoter. Chris Batty and Stuart Piner have kindly provided finder's accounts for the first two of these, and the finder of the latter Maurice Jones has submitted his 2008 birding highlights including the clown faced seaduck.

Barry Dyson has kindly supplied a piece on the changing nature of his local patch at Singleton. Barry's contributions to the newsletter are always absorbing, and for newer members I hope this one highlights the potential benefits of having a regular 'patch' to cover. My own patch of Starr Gate enthralled me not just because of the birds, but other benefits like watching porpoises in my lunchbreak.

I have also included an article on potentially vagrant Canada Geese, as the BBRC are now considering these and it would be a shame if potentially acceptable records from the Fylde were lost to the historical records.

It is good to be able to include articles by a number of members but it would be particularly good to hear from newer members about their birding experiences. Whether it is a patch you cover, or the birds you have seen on a trip elsewhere in Britain or abroad the rest of the membership would love to hear from you.

Good birding,

Stephen.



CATTLE EGRETS – A NEW SPECIES FOR THE FYLDE

Following on from the rapid increases in Little Egret and, to a lesser extent Great White Egret, there has been a significant increase in the number of Cattle Egret occurring in Britain. A particularly marked influx during the winter of 2007/8 led to several turning up in Lancashire and it was widely anticipated that one of the next new species to occur on the Fylde would be this species.

Last autumn saw a number of Cattle Egrets in striking distance of the Fylde. In particular there were three together not far over the Ribble on Downholland Moss, one just across Morecambe Bay at Urswick and two at Milnthorpe, South Cumbria in the adjoining Lancaster recording area.

It was presumably the latter two birds which Stalmine birder Ian Latham was the lucky finder of on 30 November 2008 in fields east of back lane in the village. He was able to get some pictures of them before they soon flew off east. One of these is reproduced below, with apologies for a slight reduction in quality to reduce the file size.

It was a couple of days before the news made the news information services as the birds had been present in the Lancaster recording area for some time and the Fylde significance was not fully appreciated. Searches subsequent to this drew a blank so at the time of writing Ian is the only person to have seen this species in the Fylde, though if national occurrence patterns continue 'unblocking' may not be too far away. Do give all egrets you see on the Fylde more than a cursory glance, particularly if they are field feeding as whilst this is not unheard of with Little Egret it is much more likely with Cattle.



My changing local patch – NW Singleton 28/10/08, Barry Dyson

Bad weather had made me miss a week on my local patch and I was eager to see the change in bird numbers and species since my last visit. The day was cold, clear and grey with some brightness to the northeast as I made my way over the farm railway bridge to the north of Brockholes wood. The views from just before here are almost uninterrupted with all the mountains, fells and hills from Black Combe to Winter Hill in sight and are guaranteed to perk me up regardless of the weather.

From the bridge I heard a Robin singing its autumn song, and several Blackbirds chattering amongst the heavily laden hawthorn bushes. 10 Redwings were also berry picking before zooming off skyward at the steep angle they always seem to take. I could see that on the other side of the main dyke the fields were waterlogged with 60+ Black-headed gulls wading in the submerged grass, taking insect prey. 2 Mute Swans were lazing about in the adjacent field.

I crossed the footbridge which spans the main dyke and climbed over the farmer's fence to walk due south following the main dyke. I should explain at this stage that once again I have had to change the route of my local patch. The 20 acre arable field to the east of Long wood was sold some time ago. No longer is it a winter feeding site for Linnets, Meadow Pipits, Reed Buntings and finches. It went under the hammer and was sold to the horsing fraternity. Now there are stables, paddocks, caravans, chickens and pasture from which I have seen very little as I have passed by. Alas there is now only a 10 acre and a 15 acre arable field to the north of the footpath that bisects my patch, instead of the 100 arable acres pre 2000.

I had fears of worse to come when 132 acres of arable fields to the south of the footpath also went up for sale. With my heart in my mouth I was elated when I found out that Richard Smith from Todderstaffe Hall had bought the land and would continue to farm it. I paid a visit to Todderstaffe and in his absence spoke to Angus his son who was happy to allow me access to the land providing I kept to the borders, except in winter when I could walk anywhere that had not been seeded.

They quickly put the land to the plough with roughly 50 acres of potatoes and 70 acres of spring barley. I could hardly believe my eyes when on my first visit on the 16/4 I saw a Corn Bunting. Sadly there have been no further sightings.

Returning to my present visit, no sooner had I climbed over the fence when Skylarks started to rise from the stubble field chirruping as they chased one another. A female Sparrowhawk was no doubt the culprit of their disturbance as it did its best to catch one. I however put up more as I made my way south to my new boundary, passing the Mute Swans on the way. I counted 115 skylarks during my visit, down on the 170 seen the previous week. As I made my way slowly south, skeins of Pinkfeet were flying in all directions and the feel good factor started to bite. Looking toward Carr wood 2 Roe deer were keeping an eye on me and I on them. Both were hinds with one noticeably smaller than the other. A patch tick in the form of 9 Pintail flying high overhead was a bonus and put a smile on my face. 2 Buzzards appeared out of the wood and played havoc with the perching Woodpigeons as they made their way in and out of the canopy.

As I approached the boundary hedgerow a further 3 Mute swans all juveniles were making their way through the flooded field and I could feel several spots of rain. The forecast had been for strengthening northerly winds but they did not materialise with only a breath of wind being felt. I turned round to see the most threatening of clouds, of which I have seen their like only twice before. They were mammatus clouds, bubbling, pouch-like, but descending rather than rising. Google "The cloud appreciation society" website if you would like to see pictures of them and enjoy the rest of the site for the beauty and grandeur of clouds.

I reached the hedgerow and checked the main dyke, but only 2 Herons were to be seen. From there I headed east and counted just short of 1,000 B H Gulls in the next field along. With them were 205 Lapwings, 40 Starlings, 2 Pied Wagtails and a Snipe. I would have scrutinised them carefully but with the floods about to overlap my wellie's my attention was drawn to my way ahead. A gap in the hedgerow betrayed my full presence and they all went up, but perhaps a nearby Buzzard had also been a factor.

The land began to rise and I left the floods behind. A Brown Hare appeared from a rut in the stubble field and shot off. I rounded another hedgerow leading to Carr wood where several more hares took off and made for the wood including an almost invisible one as it crouched low in the ploughed field. 7 Pheasants scarpered noisily the same way but without taking flight. It was now



that the only appreciable amount of rainfall came my way and with it the wind got up before dropping away as quickly as it arrived. 3 ponds lie near to the wood and I visited them all. The first was almost overflowing and only a few Mallard took flight from the surface. The surrounding trees and shrubs held 6 Blackbirds and 2 Song Thrushes which flew off as I rounded the pond and made for the next one where 12 Chaffinches, a Reed Bunting, 2 Moorhens and several Blue/Great Tits were flushed. The third pond was devoid of life but in the past I have seen not far short of 100 teal there. It was here that a skein of 120 Pinkfeet flew low and directly over me. Had I been a wildfowler goodness knows how many I could have taken out. Even raising my arms to the sky made no difference to their flight direction. Are they becoming too trusting I wondered and worried.

I made my way back to Carr wood and continued to the end where a buck Roe deer stood in the middle of a field. It must have picked up my scent as it soon bolted away out of sight. Making my way to Long wood 10 Linnets undulated in front of me and more Skylarks took to the air. The large pond inside the wood held 70 released Mallard which shuffled around as I made my way round it. From here I followed the footpath to Knowle wood. The pond here held a further flighty 36 Mallard and 2 Mandarin. A cautious approach could see that they were aware of my presence and one of the Mandarins scaled a fallen tree as if going up to a crow's – nest to act as a look out. Unexpected and most amusing.

The rest of the wood was oddly quiet that is until I reached the southern end where I flushed a Buzzard, which alerted a screeching Jay to my whereabouts. Stood still I became aware of movement in the Sycamores. Busy feeding but making little sound were Chaffinches, Goldfinches and 2 delightful Goldcrests. A male G S Woodpecker made up for their lack of noise while 2 Treecreepers inconspicuously went about their business oblivious to my presence. Autumn leaves drifted groundwards, a degree faster than snowflakes, rolling over and spinning around before touching down. Manna from heaven for the worms and invertebrates but a necessary move for the trees as they conserve their strength for the winter month's ahead. A rattling wren trembled as it delivered its partial song.

Outside the wood I laboured my way back to Long wood sucked under by the squelchiness of the badly drained soil. 3 Song thrushes and several Blackbirds moved along the hedgerow while a Mistle thrush flew away. 5 more Pheasants showed and imitated Roadrunners in their manner of escape. Entering Long wood there was a deathly silence which remained all the way through. A Sparrowhawk must surely have preceded my arrival, although it was unprecedented that I never saw a single bird throughout the entire length of the wood. Also missing was any sign of a conker fall. Had the Horse Chestnut trees fallen foul of "bleeding canker" a virulent new disease that is widespread in the south east and has spread as far north as Lancashire, Glasgow and Fife. Let's hope not and to be fair I could see no signs. Probably just a bad year for them, it happens.

Climbing over the stile into 'Stanah feeds' land the rye fields too were devoid of birds. I approached the hawthorn hedgerow that has been allowed to mature since arable farming ceased there at the end of 2001. At the time I was concerned about its future but it has been allowed to remain getting taller and bushier year on year. Instead of walking alongside it to the main dyke I stayed with the hedgerow that took me back to the public footpath putting up Blackbirds, Chaffinches and Linnets along the way. By now the sun had broken through and the day was warming up quite nicely. I reached the footpath but chose to walk on the other side of the adjacent hedgerow now that I had permission to do so. The 2 Mute Swans I had seen earlier were pigeon-toeing to the far end of the field where 3 Whooper swans had since arrived. The Skylarks were still active and clearly concerned as two Kestrels in tandem flew over them.

My attention was drawn to the sky as 20 Rooks and several gulls could be seen riding the thermals. The Rooks were probably first year birds engaging in pursuit flights but I had spotted them too late to be entertained by their antics as they drifted east towards Singleton lodge rookery. 3 Curlews called as they passed overhead. They were to be the last new species of the day which on checking my records tied with the 26/10/04 as the highest total of species seen in one visit, 48 in all. With notable absentees such as Teal, Stock Dove, Grey Wagtail, Long-tailed Tit and Fieldfare the half century must surely be in my reach and my next visit usually sees the arrival of Woodcock.



Once again my local patch came up trumps, but how does yours compare? Let's hear about it.



Little Bunting at Knott End by Chris Batty

In autumn 2004, after having worked from home for over a year, I decided that I was missing out on a potential birding opportunity. I was spending my working week by an office window overlooking a small car park with little chance of seeing any usual birds - things needed to change!

I discussed this problem with my partner, Bryony, and we set off to hunt down a new house, with one overriding selection criteria - it must have a room with a view. It wasn't going to be enough for me to live near a productive birding location, I had to be overlooking it.

We searched around the Fylde (I would be staying on the Fylde, of course!), and our budget soon dictated that we wouldn't be moving to Lytham. Glasson seemed a tempting option but we just couldn't find the right house there. Our attention turned to Knott End, our local end of the road retirement village. The first house we looked at didn't quite suit our needs (but I have since seen a Common Rosefinch in the garden opposite!) but the second property sold itself to me the moment I saw the view over Preesall Sands and Morecambe Bay.

We moved in at Christmas 2004 and I soon started work on a house list. A westerly gale within the first week brought Little Gulls over the lawn and flocks of Pintail crossing a dramatic sea – I knew I was in the right place.

2005 proved quiet until the Fylde's first Chough flew over the garden in August, Leach's Petrels passed in the autumn gales and a Velvet Scoter appeared offshore. In 2006 an increasing autumn tern roost brought with it Little then Roseate and Black Tern before, in 2007, a magnificent Caspian Tern spent over an hour on the sands. Winter gulls included Iceland on two occasions and spring skua passage started with Arctic and Great and finished with Pomarine. By November 2008 I had recorded 125 species from my office window.

The lack of passerines on the list had played on my mind from soon after I had moved in, and I hatched a plan. I had long intended to train for a ringing licence but now I had added impetus. By the time my training permit arrived I had already planted lines of willows that would soon mature and form a perfect mistnet ride.

I began trapping in the garden in January 2008 and by the autumn I had ringed 388 birds of 21 species with highlights including Sparrowhawks, Lesser Redpolls, Tree Sparrow and 122 Long-tailed Tits. The obvious lowlight had been the lack of 'true' migrants, just three Swallows and four Chiffchaffs, and a single Willow Warbler that managed to free itself before I reached the net!

Reed Buntings had been frequent in the garden during the winter months and the return of a couple of ringed birds on 25th November had me intrigued so the following day I opened a mistnet alongside the willows and played a sound recording of Reed Bunting. Half an hour later and a 'Reed Bunting' was in the net, directly above the speakers. Pleased that my plan had worked, I walked out into the garden.

As I approached the net I could see sharply defined narrow black flank streaks and, as I reached into the pocket of the net, a rufous ear-covert with a pale spot, a white eye ring and straight culmen - a Little Bunting!





I immediately placed the Little Bunting safely in a bird bag, broadcast the news on Rare Bird Alert and set about preparing the garden for its release. I furled the mistnets, took down the spring traps and potter traps and liberally scattered seeds and grain around the borders in an effort to keep the bunting interested on release.

I ringed and processed the bird, taking all the necessary biometrics before releasing it in front of a hastily gathered crowd of Fylde birders.

The Little Bunting went to ground on release and it wasn't until early afternoon that it reappeared, flicking around in the unkempt flowerbeds like a Dunnock. More local birders began to converge and a steady stream of around twenty enjoyed excellent views of the bird from the conservatory until the light failed.



The 27th dawned wet and windy and despite almost daily coverage since, the Little Bunting has not been seen again.

This was the second record of Little Bunting for the Fylde, following one at Jameson Road, Fleetwood on 9th January-24th March 1994.

Chris Batty



THE AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER AT COCKERSANDS

STUART PINER

The time had come. The eleventh day of the eleventh month. My days of freedom were about to come to a sudden end. No longer would I be able to spend all my free time searching for the next Fylde rarity. No more chasing goose flocks from dawn until dusk, no more days-on-end gazing into coastal bushes. On the 11th November 2008, I moved in with my girlfriend.

Josephine and I had chosen Glasson Dock as the location of our first home; an ideal option for me, I hoped that having an area with bags of birding potential literally on my doorstep might in some way compensate for the fewer opportunities I'd find to go birding. I'd spent quite a bit of time exploring the northern limits of the Fylde whilst living at my family home in Catforth, but aside from a second-summer Ring-billed Gull in April 2007, my visits to the area had drawn a rarity blank.

The first week in the house was predictably filled with cleaning, sorting and worst of all, spending money, so aside from a quick glance at Glasson Basin I hadn't devoted any attention to my new patch. By the following week however the move was complete and with Josephine focussing on finding a job, I allocated Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday to focus on my new patch. The best Monday and Tuesday could offer was the lingering Long-tailed Duck on the Lancaster Canal Glasson Branch, but I'd settled into my new routine and I was optimistic that if I kept wandering around such a great area for birds, I'd eventually bump into some great birds.

Wednesday 19th dawned drizzly and grey, but as I'd promised to spend the afternoon with Josephine, I decided I'd brave the inclement conditions. Things got off to a good start when a third-winter Yellow-legged Gull paused off Glasson for less than a minute, before soaring off inland with a handful of large gulls. After scouting around Glasson I made my way to Cockersand, where I pulled into the parking area by the caravan park entrance at about 11.30am. It was still drizzling, but I was relieved that the sun was not shining in my face; a problem that so often hampers viewing at this site. I began to scan through the excellent numbers of Wigeon, hoping to see some dull-pink flanks and a green and yellow head. As I was doing so, I noticed a flock of around 500 Golden Plovers on the mud across the Cocker, about half a mile from where I was stood. The wind was fierce, so I walked west towards the ruined buildings to find some shelter from where I could 'scope the flock.

I remember thinking as I began to scan through the plovers that we must be due another American Golden Plover on the Fylde - we get so many wintering Golden Plovers - but I knew the same thought had drifted in and out of my mind every time I had looked though Golden Plover flocks, and the American Golden Plover day had never come.

At 11:40, just as my mind was beginning to wander from the job in hand, I panned onto a wader which was noticeably smaller and greyer than the surrounding birds. At first I was unsure whether it was a *Pluvialis* or perhaps a Knot. The bird then conveniently shuffled and revealed itself as a golden plover - but so small and grey toned, such an obvious white supercillium behind the eye, so long-winged. This bird clearly knew how to announce itself - as my brain was beginning to compute what I was watching it lifted its wings, revealing beautifully smooth brown-grey underwings. An angelic chorus of



Halleluiahs rained down with the drizzle - this was an American Golden Plover! I excitedly phoned out the news before trying to locate my camera on my person. As I fumbled around I continued to watch the bird - it walked a little and showed its comparatively dainty build, longer legs, long primary projection and smoky grey underparts (lacking the contrasting white belly of its surrounding European congeners). Then, just as suddenly as the day had turned terrific, it rapidly became worse again – the flock flew, splitting in two, some heading towards Pilling Marsh but some flying closer to where I was stood.

I frantically scanned through the closer flock, but the bird was not with them. Panic began to set in – I'd watched the bird for little over a minute at a considerable distance, I had no photographs and nobody else was present to support my claim.

Chris Batty was first to arrive on the rarity-less scene, but several other quick movers soon followed. I continued to scan and scan but I just couldn't see the bird. By 1pm there was still no further sign. When the others had arrived I'd joined the gathering of birders by the cars, but with no luck detecting the plover I decided to return to the ruined buildings where I had made the discovery. Panic had morphed into despondency – I knew that reputations could be made or destroyed on hinge moments like this – I simply had to re-find the AGP. I knuckled down and started to scan through one of the closer (although still pretty distant) flocks across the channel. I panned onto a small, grey golden plover. It fitted the bill, it must be the AGP. But I told myself to hold back, if I announced that I had relocated the bird when wishful thinking and desperation had caused me to make a mistake, that would be it – nobody would believe I'd ever seen an American Golden Plover that day – I had to be 100% sure. Then, just like over and hour earlier, it raised its wings as if to conduct the re-commencement of the Halleluiahs – the chorus duly began. I phoned Chris who was stood with the others near the caravan park. Two or three nervous minutes and some terribly indecipherable directions later, the others were watching the bird, albeit distantly. Panic and desperation made way for relief and joy. The bird showed until about 1.50pm, but then we lost it amongst the swirling flocks of Golden Plovers, and there was no further sign as darkness began to take hold of an already grey day. As I made the short journey back to my new home a satisfied smile was glued to my face – perhaps living with the girlfriend won't be too bad after all.

Stuart Piner



POTENTIALLY VAGRANT CANADA GEESE OF THE FYLDE

It has long been suspected that some of the Canada Geese that turn up with Pinkfeet flocks in Lancashire and elsewhere are vagrants from wild populations and not escapes of feral birds. This was proved when a bird from Maryland in the United States with a neck collar was seen with Pinkfeet in Scotland some years ago.

The BBRC are considering records of such potentially vagrant Canada Geese. Not surprisingly as a stronghold of wintering Pinkfeet the Fylde has had a good number of possibly vagrant Canada Geese over the years. These are listed below. The taxonomy of Canada Geese is the subject of debate, and the approach below is that Chris Batty and others have used in reviewing records of Canada Gees in Britain.

Where known observer's initials are given below. If you saw any of these birds and have field notes or ideally photographs then please forward the details to Chris Batty.

Canada goose sp *Branta canadensis/hutchinsii*

1998 1+ Cockerham Moss Edge 17th January
1991 Crimbles Lane, Cockerham 22nd November (JWB)
1991 Eagland Hill/ Scronkey/ Jarvis Carr 24th January, 13th February
[presumably probable Lesser or Todd's Canada Goose as below]
1987 Over Wyre February
1980 Cockerham 20th December (LGB, TM)
1979 Fylde (Over Wyre?) 15th March and 1st April (LGB, MJ, DRS)
1970 Cockerham 14th, 21st February (HS, PJT, MJA)

Todd's Canada Goose *Branta canadensis interior*

2002 Staynall 12th February, same Pilling Moss/Cockerham Moss Edge
13th-14th February (CGB et al)
1991 probable Jarvis Carr 24th February-10th March

Intermediate Canada Goose *Branta canadensis parvipes*

2002 Eagland Hill 5th January (CIB), presumed same Fleetwood Farm
21st**, 18th-29th January (CIB, MJ). Presumed same as 2001 (CIB)
2001 Pilling Lane 1st, 30th-31st December (FB, SD)
2001 2 Smallwood Hey, Pilling 24th November (RED)
1991 probable Jarvis Carr 24th February-10th March
1985 probable Pilling 23rd January (PD)]

Richardson's Canada Goose *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*

1982 Cockerham 11th-28th February (RAC, LGB, WJC, MJ, HS)

Cackling Canada Goose *Branta hutchinsii minima*

2002 Bond's Farm 1st January. Same as 2001
2001 Eagland Hill 31st December (PE, PGS et al)
1997 probable Bradshaw Lane, Pilling 19th January (DAB, RED, PJM et al)



Taverner's Canada Goose *Branta hutchinsii taverneri*
1984 probable near Pilling 11th, 18th, 25th March (LGB, AH, MJ et al)



Minima Canada Goose at Eagland Hill, 31 December 2001 (Paul Ellis)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Feeding Stations Over Wyre

If visiting Bob Danson's feeding stations at Bradshaw Lane Pilling & New Lane Eagland Hill, please remain in your vehicle, park sensibly and do not obstruct or walk down any farm tracks. Please make way for farm vehicles without delay. The Fylde Bird Club contributes to the cost of seed for this project.

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Upcoming WeBS Count Dates

Feb 22nd
Mar 15th
Apr 12th
May 10th
Jun 21st

Please contact Jean Roberts JeanRbrts6@aol.com or Paul Ellis paul.ellis24@btopenworld.com if you would like to assist or come and watch on Morecambe Bay or the Wyre respectively.

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Club AGM news:

Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Auditor and existing Committee re-elected.
Members voted to increase subs for Seniors by £2 to £10 and reduce subs



for under 16's to £5 from 2010. Other subs rates to remain unchanged.

Next Club Meeting 24th February.

"Aren't Birds Brilliant", Stuart Meredith.

Bird Food from the Club

Please help support our feeding station donations by purchasing your bird food through Fylde Bird Club:

20kg Wild Bird Seed (as used at Todderstaffe feeding station) £9 per sack
Contact Paul Slade 07970 986904 or Paul@winclad.fsnet.co.uk

Also the following **may** be available if there is enough interest from members to make up an order:

25kg sack of Medium Peanuts £22

12.5kg sack of Mixed Sunflower Seeds £13.60

25kg sack of Nigerseed £28

13.6kg sack of Sultanas/Raisins £18.50

15kg sack of Black Sunflower Seeds £11.50

11.36 kg sack of Monkey Nuts (in shell) £15.35

or if anyone uses any other seeds etc please contact Paul Slade.

These prices really are cheap

RECENT SIGHTINGS Compiled by Stuart Piner

November 2008

A fine array of rarities were discovered during November, including the first ever Cattle Egrets, the first twitchable Surf Scoter and American Golden Plover and a Little Bunting graced Fylde soil for only the second time.

Ian Latham added Cattle Egret to the Fylde list when he located two at Agglebys Pit on 30th. Unfortunately the birds did not hang around and Ian was the lucky sole observer. Given the recent influxes of this species into southern Britain and their subsequent dispersal further north, we shouldn't have to wait too long for a twitchable Cattle Egret – hopefully!

On 16th bird-finder extraordinaire Maurice Jones set pulses racing when he caught a glimpse of a male Surf Scoter amongst the Common Scoters off Starr Gate. Those who could raced to the site and as high tide approached were rewarded with brief views of the bird both on the sea and in flight, along with at least three Velvet Scoters. The bird was seen again on 18th, along with eight Velvet Scoters, but not since.



Maurice's superb find constituted the first modern Fylde record, following a bird shot in Lytham in 1882.

Chris Batty literally pulled it out of the bag on 26th when he trapped and ringed a Little Bunting in his Knott End garden. The bird showed well to all comers after release, but had departed by the following day. The first and only previous Little Bunting resided at Jameson Road between 9th January and 24th March.

Another brief visitor was the Fylde's second American Golden Plover, located at Cockersand on 19th. The bird was distant throughout the brief period it was on show but it was successfully twitched by some of the Fylde's top listers. The only previous American Golden Plover, a juvenile on Fleetwood Golf Course on 20th September 1988, was only seen by the finders, so this bird was a tick for all concerned.

On 22nd Colin Bushell connected with a Richard's Pipit flying south over Freckleton Naze. Other notable November sightings included a Black Redstart at Ridge Farm, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker with a tit flock along Burglar's Alley and a Cetti's Warbler at Marton Mere on 3rd, three Crossbills over Knott End and four White-fronted Geese in Out Rawcliffe on 5th, a first-winter Long-tailed Duck on Conder Pool on 9th then on Lancaster Canal Glasson Branch 16th-23rd, Purple Sandpiper at Rossall Point on 11th, three Crossbills in Ansdell on 18th, a third-winter Yellow-legged Gull at Glasson on 19th and six Crossbills over Newton Marsh on 28th.

The Fylde began to reap the rewards of a national Waxwing invasion towards the end of the month, with several large flocks recorded. Following singles at Ashton-on-Ribble and Preston on 11th, 54 arrived at the former site on 24th, rising to over 60 by 26th. A flock of 60 birds were seen in Preston on 27th with flocks of 72, 30 in the city on 29th. Additionally, a couple of birds were seen at Preston Dock on 29th, the Ashton-on-Ribble count had risen to 80 birds and, further north, 25 Waxwings flew over Galgate.

Up to four Long-eared Owls and a Bittern were seen at Marton Mere, the Glossy Ibis remained on Warton Marsh, Pale-bellied Brent Geese were recorded at Cockersand (up to five) and Pilling Marsh (up to three) and Snow Buntings were logged at Starr Gate (3), Rossall Point (2), Cockersand and Knott End.

Seawatching records not already mentioned included a Velvet Scoters past Starr Gate on 19th and 25th and Rossall Point on 24th, a Black-throated Diver off the latter site on 25th, along with three Long-tailed Ducks and further south three Long-tailed Ducks were also seen off Starr Gate. An adult Great Northern Diver was off Starr Gate on 30th.



December 2008

You could have been forgiven for believing you heard a groan or two emanating from your local berry bushes in December - the Waxwing invasion continued unabated. A flock of up to 81 were noted in Preston early in the month, 15 visited Warton on 10th, six were in Aston-on-Ribble on 11th and 24th and smaller groups included three at Myerscough Quarry, two at Avenham Park and singles at Glasson, Stanah and Staining Nook.

Paul Slade discovered a male Green-winged Teal on the Wyre Estuary during his WeBS count on 14th; the bird was seen twice subsequently during December, on 16th and 30th. A Mealy Redpoll on Winmarleigh Moss on 11th was only the seventh to be identified on the Fylde.

Up to five Short-eared Owls were a regular feature at Bradshaw Lane Head and ten Long-eared Owls and a Bittern were logged at Marton Mere, along with a hybrid female Ferruginous Duck x Pochard. The Glossy Ibis appeared intermittently on Warton Marsh until mid month.

A female Scaup commuted between Glasson Basin and the Lune Estuary, two Short-eared Owls and two Water Pipits were located at The Heads, a Black Redstart visited Fleetwood Docks on 20th and a couple of Shags flew past Rossall Point on 25th.

The Pink-footed Goose flocks carried Greenland White-fronted Geese at Cockerham Moss Edge on 12th and 30th and Fleetwood Farm on 12th. A Pale-bellied Brent Goose was at Pilling Marsh on 14th and a Barnacle Goose flew north over Staining on 25th.

January 2009

A couple of Green-winged Teals were spotted on the 11th; the individual first found on the Wyre Estuary in December was seen again and a new bird was found by Peter Bainbridge on Freckleton Naze Pool.

Two Tundra Bean Geese in fields north of Carr House Green Common were the best of the scarce geese discovered during January, but a Dark-bellied Brent Goose on Pilling Marsh, up to two Greenland White-fronted Geese in Preesall and a single Barnacle Geese in the Cocker's Dyke roost and on Stalmine Moss were also notable.

Marton Mere hosted up to nine Long-eared Owls, two Bitterns and the female hybrid Ferruginous Duck x Pochard was seen again on 4th. Short-eared Owls were a popular feature of the month, with up to ten individuals reported, mainly from Over Wyre.

On the Conder Estuary the wintering Common Sandpiper was present throughout the month and nearby an adult male hybrid American Wigeon x Wigeon was with Wigeon at Cockersand on 13th, before being relocated at Glasson on 20th.

A series of Shag sightings at Starr Gate consisted of a couple on 2nd, single adults on 6th and 13th and four on 26th.



The last significant sighting of the month involved a couple of Crossbills in pines at Mowbreck Hall, Wesham on 31st.

2008 BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS BY MAURICE JONES

I've had a year of many highlights in the Fylde. Looking over Mythop Grange flood with Mike McGough on 26th March and a female Goshawk showed well (seen again 31st by Frank Bird, Mike and Pauline).

The joint finding of the Ross's Gull at Marton Mere on 31st March has to top all other sightings. I saw it many times at Fairhaven but finding it's corpse in the lake there on 16th May was a sad moment.

Seeing the adult Rose Coloured Starling in Barry Dwire's back garden 27th/28th June was new to Lancashire for me.

July to Sept I saw 5 Hobbies (3 in Fylde). In July I found Black Necked Grebe on Marton Mere (17th-19th) and enjoyed Mike McGough's Spoonbill there (25th) and Barry Dyson's Red Kite at Singleton (29th-30th). In August 32 Arctic Skuas off the Prom on the 19th was exceptional.

A Ruddy Shelduck flying up the river at Lytham on 4th Sep started an exceptional month. My only Lancs Honey Buzzards appeared over Lytham (8th) and Nicky Nook (19th) and on 15th I saw Osprey from Lytham Green (found by Bob Stinger) and others at Condor Pool (16th) and Marton Mere (18th).

My most exciting find came on 16th Nov when I picked out the white head patches of a male Surf Scoter off Blackpool South Prom. This was the first in the Fylde since an immature male was shot off Lytham in Dec 1882! The only other County record is the amazing male, which was on the lake at Mere Sands Wood 23rd Oct 2002.

