



Fylde Bird Club

Lancashire

JUNE 2009 NEWSLETTER

Apologies for the slight delay in the newsletter this time, due to the unavailability of various officers due to various holidays.

Whilst the rarest bird of the period in the area was the Laughing Gull most keen local birders will remember the Ortolan more fondly as it was twenty years in coming. The finder, Geoff Gradwell, has kindly written up the exciting day when he came upon this sought after bunting.

Chris Batty kindly informed me of the life history of Morven the Osprey, a bird ringed by Roy Dennis and fitted with a satellite transmitter. A summary of what we know about the migration of this individual through our recording area follows.

In the last few years the bird race team I am in with Chris and Stuart has had some good fortune when undertaking an annual bird race. This year our luck finally ran out, and a short account of what can go wrong is included in the newsletter. Having said that we still saw a decent number of species and it once again highlights the variety of birdlife that is in and passes through the Fylde.

It is pleasing to be able to include a contribution from someone new to writing in the newsletter and it would be good to be able to continue this practice. If any of you have been on a good birding holiday or want to tell everyone about your local patch I would love to hear from you, even just a few lines will be of interest to your fellow members.

SD



A DAY OUT !

It was first job of the day, there was no hot water from the tap in the Knott End kitchen of a family member and it had to be fixed... ever tried getting a plumber? (Any plumbers out there?) I'd changed taps before so off I went to do it , as soon as. It wasn't as bad as I had anticipated as I had spares with me and was done fairly quickly, but then there was the shed...

So it was mid afternoon before I left Knott End, just as the rain started and I use lots of different routes to and fro, partly through boredom or at least attempts to prevent it, and I thought I'd call and get some organic vegetables from Bradshaw Lane, it's sort of on the way home. I called in but they had nothing available, however I had a very pleasant conversation with the farmer (sorry, no name) and colleague and we talked for five minutes about birds, particularly the owls, but not before I'd accredited myself by saying I was a new member of the Fylde Bird Club, as indeed I am both. There was talk of a butty bar for all those 'twitchers' who had clogged the lane trying to view the owls! (I feel a change in career coming on).

Needless to say, it was grey, overcast with rolling clouds storming in across the Fylde from the west and raining. Not a day to be standing around outside talking birds... stood there talking, I'm thinking, 'what's that on the wire up there'... no bins, poor light, and poor eyesight... couldn't see.

Back in the car, wet, the car is going to steam up and I can't really open the windows without more rain pouring in. Headlights on (it is that dark and overcast), wipers on and reversing out, I pull up at the exit and, now do I head home, weather is awful so wont see anything... on the spur of the moment, I turn right and head off down Bradshaw Lane towards the feeding station, keeping my eyes open as I drive down the lane. In the back of my mind, I'm wondering about that Yellowhammer I'd seen four days earlier half a mile or so away and wondered if he or his mates might be about. I'd had an 'electronic conversation' on 'birdforum' website (thanks to Chris Batty) about finding yellowhammers in the previous days. Before the recent sighting days earlier, when yet again similar awful conditions and it wasn't the best view I'd ever had, the last yellowhammer I had seen was quite a few years ago near Bartle Hall, outside Preston.

I haven't been to the feeding station on Bradshaw Lane before and wondered where it is, at least if I recce it now on what has to be a quiet time, I can hopefully come back when there is better light and might see something. Needless to say a large council wagon is on the single track road and as I am in no rush I pull up outside a farm and allow him to hurtle towards me and pass where there is plenty of room. We acknowledge each other with the Australian wave. Down past the farm, driving slowly, I see what looks like the entrance to the track on the left. Approaching slowly I pull into what is a layby as I had been told, making sure I'm not an obstruction and peer out through the rain-swept passenger window – yep, there's feed on the ground, this must be it.

Clear the windscreen with the wipers as best I can, the car is, and the windows are a little misty, I open the nearside window as the rain is forty-five degrees from the right... only the odd spot falling inside the car. Straight away there are one or two birds on the feed. Bins to the eyes and I can see a couple of female chaffinch. The rain has eased a little, wow a few tree sparrows drop in, a couple of male chaffinches, hmnn and then yep, a yellowhammer. Excellent. No time at all. I scan the surrounding area, telegraph poles and wires, can't see much to the left because of the perimeter hedge, behind me the road and boundary hedges cut off any view, the field to right is wide, open and flat. I can't se much through the other car windows anyway. The rain begins to ease.

Out in the field there are two male mallards and an oystercatcher. Further back there appears to be three or four pheasants. Four collared doves are sat by the telegraph poles. A moorhen is walking the track. Swallows are covering the hedge line and ditch. Meanwhile a few more birds return to the feed. Tree sparrow, yellowhammer, chaffinch, collared doves join the fray and the pheasant and mallard seem to have overcome my arrival and are heading towards the track across the field. Two dunnock and a male reed bunting land. Birds come and go from the



adjoining hedge. Three male blackbirds are in the field and suddenly two pigeons land in the long grass... they pop across and begin feeding, only they are not pigeons!

Raising the bins, they really aren't good enough, my eyes need testing and I have to squint to view through one eye. Focus isn't great and the rain and moisture haven't helped. I can see now, they are not pigeons, but stock doves, yes definitely stock doves... a confirmed lifer for me, can't be bad. A woodpigeon has alighted... but what's that behind, a smallish critter is it a young chaffinch? The males are losing their breeding brightness and this bird's colours look muted. Can't be a young male chaffinch. It has some colour in its chest, pale orangeish. Its head is a 'bit grey', which leads me to chaffinch, but no it has a bunting type beak... and it's pink! Pink beak? Hmmnnn... It also appears to have a yellow 'striped moustache' below the eye and around the beak.. young yellowhammer? Nah can't be. Odd. Young stonechat? I start to rack my brains (doesn't take long). Nah, this is a bunting. I need a better look. Focusing the bins as best I can, this bird doesn't seem as active as the chaffinches or sparrows and seems 'subdued' but happy enough. Its back is brown and barred and not unlike a reed bunting, hang on there are different species everywhere, at least 8 so far. The pheasants from the field join the fray. The stock doves et al.

Distracted I return to this oddball. I have a feeling this bunting is not from 'there 'ere parts'. Nah, I can't be THAT lucky. Clocked my yellowhammer with some good views and the stock doves are a confirmed first. Not bad. I've rattled off a number of shots with the digital camera, but I'm having trouble with the settings and the moisture. Focus isn't great and I try different focus and zoom settings, even the 'viewfinder' isn't great and 'camera-shake' is evident. (Mental note, put small tripod in the car in future...I could do with a cable shutter release too really). I'll have to see just what I have taken when I get back home... not promising.

Downloading always far far too long when you want to see just what it is you have. They are not great. I still have to sort many of them while I am writing this... usually takes me a week or two to really be objective and bin the rubbish. I need to confirm my stock doves as a lifer so up it goes onto 'birdforum' (as advised and thanks to Chris Batty, again). Best throw up that mystery bird... a reply is almost immediate... oh my word... oh my word. I need confirmation of this... no telephone numbers, could take ages, can't rely on email. Fylde Bird Club Report...telephone numbers for Paul Ellis and Paul Slade. It's only the latter I get through to. I explain. The excitement for both of us is contained. Paul gives me Chris Batty's numbers and I try calling him, while sending out emails to Fylde Bird Club Members. I can't get hold of Chris, I leave messages. I check the web again and the confirmation and congratulations are coming in. Gosh the whole world and his mother want to know where and when. I need confirmation before looking a complete idiot! It arrives. Half the Fylde lads have gone out to check it out. Confirmations keep on coming, Yes it is an Ortolan Bunting. YEP that's what I said an Ortolan Bunting.

Wow. I guess this is the reward for 'keeping my eyes open' all those years, look right, look left, keep peripheral vision, seeing any movement, wherever I am, looking short, looking long, looking up and looking down... keeping my eyes open. An Ortolan Bunting a real rarity in the UK and Lancashire... I am just so pleased as a Fylde Bird Club member I was able to share it with other members, I feel 'I've paid my dues' for all the kindness and assistance everyone has provided to a complete amateur like me. Thanks Fylde Bird Club.

Just for the record there was at least, apart from this excellent Ortolan Bunting (male), 6+ Swallow, 4 Collared doves, 2 Dunnock, 6 Chaffinch (3 male, 3 female), Moorhen, 4 Tree sparrow, Yellowhammer, Oystercatcher, 2 Mallard (male), Reed Bunting (male), 2 Corn Bunting, 4 Pheasant (1 male, 2 female, 1 juvenile male), 2 Stock Dove, 4 Blackbird (3 male 1 female), Greenfinch (and a partridge in a pear-tree – that's just a joke!).

Geoff Gradwell



MORVEN THE OSPREY

Thanks to Chris Batty for providing details of a satellite tracked Osprey which passed through the Fylde this Spring, part of a fascinating wider life history.

Morven was wintering on the Mauritanian coast in February and March. In mid March she began to move north, and on 25th March crossed the Straits of Gibraltar.

Passing through Spain during the next fortnight and headed over the Bay of Biscay from 7th April. On 9th April she roosted at a fish farm in Barnstaple, Devon.

The following quotes of her progress from then are direct from the website:

"10th April – Morven flew across the Bristol Channel and arrived in Wales to the east of Swansea; at 2pm was flying N at 62km/h over Sennybridge, and then flew north over Mid Wales past the Elan Valley and to roost for the night in a wooded hillside facing the North Wales coast at Trelogan between Prestatyn and Holywell.

11th April – Morven left early - she was determined to get home - at 6am she was flying N at 52 km/h 102 metres above the sea 5 mile west of Hoylake. She tracked up the coast and at 8am was perched in the middle of Morecambe Bay. At am, she was flying NW out of the bay, and an hour later was flying N over Esthwaite Water in the Lake District. At 11am she was skirting the eastern side of Carrick Fell. and heading over Carlisle for the Scottish Border. At 1pm she was flying over Headshaw Loch, SW of Selkirk where Beatrice roosted, and at 2pm she was flying N at 0km/h over Newlands Gardens, Libberton on the south side of Edinburgh. She crossed the Firth of Forth and the last GPS position was at 3pm as she circled between Auchtermuchty and Ladybank. Non GPS signals came in later and at 6.18pm she was in Moray."

Morven was seen by Ian Gardner at Rossall Point at around 6am, and then by Jean Roberts passing Heysham, before resting in Morecambe Bay as noted above.

At the last update Morven was ready to lay eggs with her partner.

Further details can be found at Roy's website:

<http://www.roydennis.org/morven.htm>

This excellent website also includes maps and the satellite tracking details for some other species, including fascinating insights into less easily observed species. Particularly interesting are some of the Woodcock satellite tracking studies.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ribble Estuary North WeBS Counts

If you would to help with the Ribble Estuary, North WeBS counts, please contact Ken Abram at k.abram@btinternet.com.

Meeting Change

There has been a change to the November meeting, which is now John Lodor speaking on 'The RSPB Birds of Prey Campaign'.

Whooper Swan records from the Lytham Moss area

As part of a potential Whooper Swan biological heritage site destination all records of Whooper and Bewick's Swans using the Lytham Moss area are required which include specific information on which field(s) were being used. If you have information of this nature, please forward to Paul Ellis (paul.ellis24@btopenworld.com). Ideally, please provide 6 figure SD grid references from OS maps or the website www.magic.gov.uk

Similarly, for any rare or scarce breeding species away from known sites, it is helpful to record exact locations because the records may be of significance in the event of future, unwelcome planning applications.

Atlas listing

A couple of editions of the newsletter back I described how I was keeping a Fylde Atlas list, i.e. birds seen only on two hour timed tetrad visits. At the time I was up to 109. This has now increased by 11 with the following:

Ruddy Duck	- Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park
Pintail	- Winmarleigh
Manx Shearwater	- Starr Gate
LRP	- Cockerham
Knot	- Rossall Point
Little Gull	- Bispham
Arctic Skua	- Starr Gate
Little Owl	- Cockerham Moss Edge
Golden Plover	- Ballam
Reed Warbler	- Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park
Whinchat	- Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park

A total of 120 species recorded so far during pure survey work shows just how diverse the birdlife of our recording area is, and highlights that you don't always have to be chasing it frenetically to see a lot of different species. - SD

Next Fylde Bird Club Meetings

23rd June: Business Update

28th July: The BTO Ringing Scheme with Seumus Eaves



7:45 pm upstairs in the River Wyre Hotel Breck Road, Poulton le Fylde



WHEN BIRD RACES GO BAD

As a bird race team (Chris Batty, Stuart Piner and myself) we have generally been quite fortunate with both weather and birds. The current record for the Fylde bird race is ours, 133 set in 2006 which may well take some beating. Other good tallies have included 130 by ourselves twice last year, once as part of a Lancashire bird race total of 147. It was always likely that one day the weather would be particularly challenging, and 2009 saw the worst conditions we had ever faced.

The forecast was so grim that we started at 3.30 rather than our customary midnight. It was disconcerting to find that the rain hadn't come in at that point, but it quickly started. Fortunately this wasn't insurmountable and we picked up Barn and Tawny Owl Over Wyre and also Gropper. We left Water Rail for the evening in the unlikely event that we were still on for a big score by then.

When we arrived at the crucial site of Rossall the weather was grim, the sea was barely visible and there was clearly going to be no visible migration. There was a Wheatear on the beach, and persistence produced some seaducks including the lingering Velvet Scoters, which were a first for us on a birdrace. Basically though with no seabirds and no scarce passerines we knew our number was up and discussed abandoning. In a rare instance of me being more positive than Chris or Stuart, I argued we should persist and try and get to 100, as there was only one day in a year we would ever do this. We ploughed on.

A few good birds were picked in the Marton and Mythop area, notably what is becoming a regular single Whooper at the Mere. I suggested we then head to Starr Gate as the weather had lifted and we might get a few seabirds. So it proved with Gannet, Kittiwake, Manxie, Razorbill and the like added to the list, though a probable skua distantly was frustrating.

By mid afternoon the weather began to further improve and in the end it became quite a nice day. This enabled us to pick up some decent bird race targets and bonuses, including LRP and Spotshank at Conder Pool, Pale-bellied Brent Goose with the Pinkfeet on Pilling Marsh and perhaps the best of all in this day and age a Cuckoo at Winmarleigh.

Overall it was well worth ploughing on after the hammer blow of the bad early morning weather. We finished on 116 species, which though low in modern Fylde bird race terms was very respectable in the weather.

It was also time for our rival team to have the run of the weather for once. It was a shame to lose but we had a good day out and the total scored shows just how much is out there even on a decidedly mediocre spring day.

A final thought to ponder – is it likely that the golden era of bird race high scores is beginning to be behind us. Are the Med Gulls (though we didn't see one) and Little Egrets not compensating enough for the dearth of Yellow Wagtails, Cuckoos (though we did see one) these days).

SD



WHEN BIRD RACES GO (ALMOST) TO PLAN

On Sunday 26th April our depleted team, comprising just Ian Gardner and I, set out on our annual Fylde Bird Race. The event hasn't been a true competition for several years owing to the fact that no more than two teams take part and they can never agree to do it on the same day. The lack of entrants resulted in the Club's official sponsored event being changed to the collective Christmas Bird Hunt. So why do some of us persist with racing birds in spring? Well simply: it's the best day's birding of the year on the Fylde.

Choosing the date is a bit arbitrary but the idea is to do it before all the ducks have left and after all the migrants have arrived. The weather is down to luck but it can make or break the day. Rain is obviously a nuisance but fall conditions for migrants and good sea watching weather are what we hope for.

This year we executed a now established plan. We started before dawn in the Hardhorn - Singleton area collecting Barn Owl on our way to St Ann Church Wood for a calling Tawny Owl. An encouraging start. Lytham Moss was next where the target was calling Grey Partridge, which performed as hoped. A Grasshopper Warbler singing in the dark at the Radar station was a bonus addition.

Snipe is always tough at this time of year but we were hoping Mythop Grange Flood would still have one. It was still not really light, so we took the opportunity to head there for this crepuscular tick and found one straight way. Teal and Shoveler were added at the same stop.

It is important to get to a coastal migration watchpoint shortly after dawn to maximise chances of recording passerines moving overhead. Although it's called visible migration (vis mig) this is a game of call recognition where half or more of the birds recorded are never seen. Our chosen spot is Rossall Point, which is also an excellent sea watching site at any state of tide. We used to believe that it was essential to be at the coast during high tide but have since learnt that isn't the case and that being there early for vis mig is far more important. We arrived there via another visit to St Ann Church Wood where the formerly noisy Nuthatch was either silent or departed. We also went via the Wyre at Larbreck, where a pair of Goosanders saved us from a lengthy drive to the Ribble at Frenchwood, Preston.

At Rossall we met Paul Slade and John Barker who helped find us even more birds while we were there. Vis mig was excellent and the highlights were a male Yellow Wagtail, 7+ Tree Pipits and 10+ Redpolls. The Golf Course provided a Whinchat (increasingly hard to see in the Fylde) and Wheatears. The resident Stonechats were at home near the tower and a White Wagtail was also present but not countable. Paul Slade had a calling Siskin on his way from the Car Park but we didn't connect with it. They often fly over very high and can be impossible to see.

The sea watch was above average with 2 Red throated Divers, a Little Gull, Red breasted Merganser, Guillemots, Gannets, Common Scoters, Arctic and Sandwich Terns being added to the tally. 20 or more auks were too distant to identify although some were probably Razorbills. Our only Wigeon of the day flew past here. The highlight though, was 2 female Velvet Scoters close inshore with the Eiders, which had been around for a few days. The beach provided a good boost to the wader list with Sanderling being particularly important. This wader can be hard to find at this time of year and Rossall is the best bet.

It's always hard to know when to pack in seawatching because that Pomarine Skua, Kittiwake or something might come by in the next 5 minutes. There were still a number of likely seabirds that had not come our way, so we resolved to get back to the coast if time allowed.

A quick scoot round Fleetwood Cemetery added a fly over Siskin to compensate for the one we missed at the Point.



Next, a very quick pit stop at Ian's house for a bacon butty. The house reverberated to the excited squeals of his three young daughters who were explaining that their chicken's eggs were hatching! Sometimes when chasing round on bird race folk will ring you with gems of info about scarce birds they've just found. That didn't happen much this time but throughout the day we did get an endless stream of updates on the chicken egg hatchings, not much use really and we couldn't even tick the chicken!

Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park was next on itinerary. Expected species were added but nothing we wouldn't see again. The resident Ruddy Ducks kept hidden in the reeds, there's no doubt that these birds have changed their behaviour since war was declared against them. The next stop at Bispham Marsh was also a waste of time, although we didn't know that then. We stormed over the road and found the expected drake Mandarin with ease. After the event we learned that he is wearing a white plastic ring and is therefore an escapee !!!!

Our next move was more productive as we went twitching on receipt of news of a Wood Sandpiper at Mythop Grange. This was a bonus bird, which was well worth the detour on our way Over Wyre. This and the Velvets were the only local scarcities of the day. In contrast to last year when Ross's Gull and Glossy Ibis were bagged, this year was short on staked out rarities!

At Eagland Hill we collected some arable farmland birds with Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer, Tree Sparrow, Red legged Partridge, Whimbrel, Buzzard and Little Owl added to the tally.

Moving on to Pilling Lane Ends produced 1750 Pinkfeet on the saltmarsh. Not many years ago Pinkfeet were hard to come by at the end of April but increasing numbers have also resulted in more staying later. We did expect to find a Brent Goose in the flock but it remained invisible to us. However we later learned that it was still there – a bad dip indeed.

On to Cockersands where a recently seen Pintail wasn't on show and Thurnham where nothing new was added and Garden Warbler just hadn't arrived. We were in the doldrums.

Conder Green hailed a return to ticking. We found 2 Avocets on the Conder Pool and ribbed Alan Hinchliffe for not noticing them. He was there first but had skilfully picked a 'vantage point' with a lump between himself and the birds! Little Ringed Plover also obliged, then on the River Conder: Spotted Redshank, Greenshank and Bar tailed Godwit were added in rapid succession. 4 Goosanders asleep on the bank were unexpected but not required and a Black Swan was as untickable as the Mandarin.

So far we had paid scant attention to woodland birds and Ellel Grange beckoned. This is one of the best woodland sites in the Fylde and it came up with enough to maintain its place in the itinerary: Nuthatch, Treecreeper and Goldcrest. This used to be a reliable site for Kingfisher but not in last two years. In the 90's we used to get Marsh Tit here but those days are long gone.

Still on a roll we hit the River Brock west of the A6 but crashed and burned. We dipped on Dipper and Kingfisher. This site is prone to disturbance and it pays to get there early and avoid Sundays. Dipper was seen here this day but not by us. Singing Treecreeper and 2 Grey Wagtails were nice but not required. House Martin and Sand Martin were both added here but didn't require the time consuming slogs up and down the river from two access points.

We played a gamble and went to the old Cottam brickworks site for Bullfinch, knowing the chances were probably less than even. We just managed one with a bird quietly calling and showing to me alone. The second Jay of the day was logged here.

Time was now running out so we had to pick our sites carefully and leave out a number of potentially useful but time hungry places. We left Preston and bypassed all the Ribble sites as far as Lytham Promenade. Here we were targeting a recently seen Brent Goose and Common Tern. There was no sign of either. Had we known about the Pochard on Fairhaven Lake, we would have



had that but we didn't and drove past. Ring necked Parakeet performed at Lytham Crematorium and then we returned to sea watching at Starr Gate. The light was low and against us but 10 Manx Shearwaters justified the stop. Distant auks again tested the resolution of our optics but we weren't happy enough to call any Razorbills.

Marlon Mere was our last site and it held the promise of at least 3 ticks but Whooper Swan and Ruddy Duck only, were the last ticks of the day. Gadwall was there but despite walking right round and scoping from all (the 3 or 4) viewpoints we couldn't see one. I did see it the day after and have done so during every visit for about the last two years !

So that was that with 123 species recorded. It was a fairly solid list but short on wildfowl with Goldeneyes having all left, Garganey not around and Pochard, Gadwall, Pintail and Brent Goose out there but missed. Countable Mandarins are also available and we would have seen them had we known the status of the Bispham bird.

Other birds that could have been expected but were missing included: Common Tern, Garden Warbler, Peregrine, Dipper, Kingfisher and Razorbill. However if we had seen all of them as well, we would have broken the record by 3 with 136.

A Fylde bird race list of 123 has only been bettered 6 times, so we can't be disappointed and as ever it was great day's birding. Oh! and the weather was glorious.

Paul Ellis

RECENT SIGHTINGS FEBRUARY - MAY

Stuart Piner has been unable to do the monthly sightings for this newsletter so the editor has undertaken this, and has used a somewhat different format. The choice of species included and any factual inaccuracies are entirely the responsibility of the editor. As ever, records in this newsletter are subject to acceptance by the appropriate rarities committees.

Eurasian White-fronted Goose

Perhaps just one first winter was seen at various Over Wyre sites with Pinkfeet during the period.

Greenland White-fronted Goose

At least four, minima of two adults and two first-winters, were seen at Over Wyre sites with Pinkfeet during February and March.

Tundra Bean Goose

There were records from several sites Over Wyre in February and early March, involving an absolute minimum of six individuals (as seen at Staynall on 18th Feb) but quite probably more. A very good winter for this form.

Taiga Bean Goose

One was seen briefly at Mythop on 22nd February, but did not give itself up to a number of would be twitchers later that day.

Pale-bellied Brent Goose

Perhaps just the one first-winter bird toured various sites Over Wyre and then lingered with Pinkfeet on Pilling Marsh through April until at least 17th May.



Dark-bellied Brent Goose

An adult was seen at various Over Wyre sites with Pinkfeet in February and March. Three flew north together at Starr Gate on 9th February. In April one was on the Ribble estuary at Lytham on the 19th. There were two Over Wyre on several dates between 5th and 19th May.

Barnacle Goose

Apparently wild birds were seen with Pink-footed Geese flocks at several sites Over Wyre and at Mythop. The peak count was three birds at Stalmine and Staynall.

Garganey

A fairly typical scattering of reports in April comprised drakes at Mythop on 6th and 7th and Marton Mere on 15th, and a pair past Rossall on 25th. A drake lingered at Myerscough Quarry for the first couple of weeks of May, and there were other May reports from Marton Mere (2nd and 23rd), nearby Mythop (30th and 31st), Newton Marsh (17th) and perhaps the same as the latter on the Naze Pool (20th).

Scaup

In a very lean period for this species the only records were of drakes at Marton Mere on 8th Feb and on Glasson Basin from 2nd to 12th March.

Long-tailed Duck

A female was off Rossall Point on 10th May.

Velvet Scoter

The period included one of the best spring showings of this species on the Fylde for several years. One was at Starr Gate on 28th March. At Rossall there were four birds on the 10th April and two lingering at the same site at the month end which were well appreciated by year listers and bird racers alike; at this time Starr Gate recorded two on the 18th and three on the 21st.



(Velvet Scoters with Eider, Rossall, April, Paul Slade)

Black-necked Grebe

One was seen at Preston Dock on 7th April. This site has a surprisingly good track record for the scarce grebe species, what is less surprising is that they generally don't hang around long.

Bittern



There was at least one bird lingering at Marton Mere for much of the period.

Cattle Egret

It was perhaps to be expected that after a long overdue first record others would soon follow. One was found on Fleetwood Golf Course on the morning of 6th April by Ian Gardener, perhaps one of those previously in the Isle of Man, but it did not linger.

It wasn't until May when one gave itself up to the masses, a summer plumaged bird found by Bob Danson and Barry Dyson at Sand Villa on 9th May, and remained the following day. It was also seen roosting at Preesall at this time and on the 19th of the month.



(Cattle Egret, Sand Villa, May, Paul Slade)

Red Kite

One was seen passing over Skitham Lane and Stakepool (both Over Wyre) on 30th May. This species remains difficult to catch up with in the Fylde and many people are grateful for the Singleton bird last year which hung around just long enough to be well twitched.

Marsh Harrier

Perhaps just one juvenile was seen on Warton Marsh in February.

Hen Harrier

An adult male and a ringtail were seen on Warton Marsh in February.

Rough-legged Buzzard

A juvenile was at Winmarleigh Moss on 20th February. It was extensively searched for the following day but had unfortunately moved on.

Osprey

The first was over Bartle on 30th March. In April birds were seen over Herons Reach on the 14th and Marton Mere on the 30th. Not a vintage spring by recent standards.

Quail

At the end of May at least a couple of males were singing, at Bone Hill and Rawcliffe Moss respectively.



Avocet

In late Feb and early March up to two were seen on Glasson Marsh on a number of dates, and one was seen on a single date in Feb at Pilling Water. In late April birds were seen in North Fylde as follows – three at Glasson on 22nd and two at Conder Pool on 26th and 29th. Four were on Warton Marsh on 26th April. In May there singles at the Naze Pool on the 10th and Warton Marsh on the 31st. Records of this species can be expected to increase with the rising breeding population in the north west.

Little Stint

There were two singles seen – at Cockersands on 3rd May and subsequently at Knott End on 8th May.

Curlew Sandpiper

Never frequent in spring one was seen at Cockersands on 18th May.

Wood Sandpiper

There was a remarkable influx of four birds at Newton Marsh on 3rd May. Presumably just one bird was involved in sightings at Mythop on four dates between 6th and 11th May, it seems likely this was a different bird to those at Newton Marsh.

Great Skua

Just one at Starr Gate on 22nd May. This species is increasingly difficult to catch up with, Arctic Skuas were more numerous with several reasonable day counts.

Laughing Gull

Tony Sharples found an adult at Marton Mere on 25th May, where like the other one at this site it was very obliging even coming to bread on occasions. Despite a recording area bounded by two major estuaries and containing a couple of landfill sites Marton Mere appears to be the best place to look for rare gulls; in recent years only Fairhaven comes close.

Iceland Gull

In April a juvenile was at Rossall Point and then Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on the 9th April, before being relocated and more widely appreciated on the beach at Bispham the following day. Given numbers of Iceland's and Glaucs to the south one of each was perhaps a disappointing return from the return passage.

Yellow-legged Gull

A third-summer was at Glasson, one of the prime sites in the area for this species, on at least 31st March and 9th April; perhaps just one adult was involved in sightings at Fleetwood Nature Park on 21st March and at Skippool on the 22nd though the gap between the two dates could equally suggest different passage birds.





(adult Yellow-legged Gull (left) with adult Lesser Black-backed Gull, Skippool, April, Paul Slade)

Glaucous Gull

A second-winter was seen at Stanley Park on several dates in early February, and then again briefly nearby at Collingwood Avenue, Layton on the 14th. See Iceland Gull.

Black Tern

The first of the spring were two past Rossall on 25th April, and the only others were two more at Marton Mere on the 16th.

Black Guillemot

Singles were seen at Rossall Point on 11th and 18th April.

Long-eared Owl

Up to nine birds were seen in the roost at Marton Mere during the period.

Alpine Swift

Frank Bird and Alan Hinchliffe had one north east over Pilling Marsh as viewed from Lane Ends amenity area on the afternoon of 15th April. The first Fylde record, it was searched for to the north to no avail.

Water Pipit

Records in February pointed to small numbers wintering on both the Wyre and Ribble estuaries. On the spring tides there were peaks of six at Warton Bank and two at The Heads, as always it is not completely clear how far there is a spring passage at these sites.

Waxwing

There were some large groups in the Preston area during the winter and early spring, some of which were within the club's recording area. Most notable of these were up to 48 on Church Street in March. Elsewhere during February three were at Pilling on the 12th and a singleton was at Layton on the 19th.

Ring Ouzel

The only one of the spring was at Rossall School on 20th April.

Black Redstart

A female or first winter was at Fishnet Point, Glasson on 1st February.



Wood Warbler

One was seen at Cottam, Preston on 25th April. There were singing males recorded in Stanley Park on dates in early May, these were well spaced and may have involved different individuals.

Firecrest

A very popular and photogenic individual lingered at Stanley Park from 1st March for at least three weeks, and was seen in nearby Woodland Gardens on one occasion. Another was seen at Myerscough College on 17th March.

Raven

There were widespread reports and a notable increase in occurrence during the period, including two which spent a prolonged period using pylons on the fringes of Blackpool. A remarkable sign of things that may be to come was nine over Singleton on 23rd May.

Hooded Crow

One flew past Rossall Point on 25th April, a day of significant movement at this site.

Mealy Redpoll

A first winter male was trapped in Chris Batty's Knott End garden on 2nd April.

Crossbill

A very good showing, though typically none lingered. Two were seen on 15th March, one east over Fulwood a male perched at Barnaby's Sands before heading off north. One flew over Fleetwood Marine Lakes on 5th April.

Ortolan Bunting

One found by Geoff Gradwell at Bradshaw Lane Head feeding station on the afternoon of 20th May lingered until dusk but had unfortunately moved on by the next day. For full details of this sighting see Geoff's piece in this newsletter.



(Ortolan Bunting Bradshaw Lane Head, 20th May, Chris Batty)

Snow Bunting

One was on St Annes Beach on 1st March; this species has become increasingly scarce on the beaches of the Fylde in the last two or three years.

