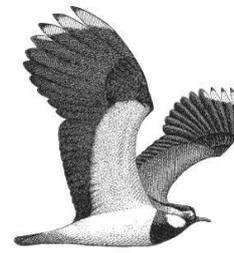


# Newsletter

## March / April 2020

### Update



**Fylde**  
**Bird Club**  
**LANCASHIRE**

Registered Charity  
Number 1102961

### Introduction

The covid 19 pestilence has forced the suspension of our monthly meetings and, for a time, most of our Fylde birding was restricted to where you could walk or cycle to. Despite this, many great birds were found, if not enjoyed by all! As I write, spring passage is winding down (cue rush of rarities) and, we hope, so is this damn virus. It appears to be dying out and eventually we should be able to re-start meetings and get back to near normal. Until then we plan to try and stay in touch with occasional newsletters and, of course, there are the Club's Website Sightings Page, Flickr site, Twitter account and WhatsApp Group to share information. If you have any articles to contribute, please e-mail them to [news@fyldebirdclub.org](mailto:news@fyldebirdclub.org).

Paul Slade, Ian Walker and I have cobbled together a few articles that we hope you will find of interest. Stay safe and enjoy all the birding you can get.

We are investigating the possibility of running the Photographic Competition, that was scheduled for April 2020, using an on-line platform. Therefore, if you have not already done so, please forward your entries (taken in 2019) to Paul Ellis ([paul.ellis24@btopenworld.com](mailto:paul.ellis24@btopenworld.com)) by 21<sup>st</sup> June. We will then upload your photographs and commence voting. Voting will be open during the following week.

*Paul Ellis, Secretary, Fylde Bird Club.*

### March and April Recent Reports Highlights

#### March

A strong of passage of Stonechats began on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The first returning Avocet was on Warton Marsh on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

The last Purple Sandpiper of the winter was at Blackpool North Shore on the 5<sup>th</sup> when the first Sandwich Terns were seen.

Mediterranean Gull passage peaked between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> with best counts of 6 at Todderstaffe on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7 on Cockerham Moss on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

6 Water Pipts at The Heads on the 13<sup>th</sup> was the best count of the month.

The 3 Snow Buntings wintering at Fleetwood remained until the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Spring migrant Chiffchaffs arrived from at least the 13<sup>th</sup>, possibly overlapping with wintering birds.

The first White Wagtail dropped in at Cocker's Dyke on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

3 Manx Shearwaters passed Starr Gate on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

The first Wheatear arrived on the 17<sup>th</sup> at Cocker's Dyke and, on the same day, the first Sand Martins passed through Marton Mere.

A **Shag** was recorded off Blackpool on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Remarkably, what may have been the Egland Hill **Purple Heron** was seen at Marton Mere on the 19<sup>th</sup>. However, no observer has attributed an age to the Mere records. Also, the 9<sup>th</sup> was the last day Twite were recorded when one was at Knott End.

**2 Cattle Egrets** appeared at Warton on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 2 Spotted Redshanks were on Warton Marsh.

A **Black-throated Diver** flew north past Starr Gate on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

A Marsh Harrier passed Knott End on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Single Green Sandpipers were at St Michael's & Sowerby Hall on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> **2 Common Cranes** flew north over Marton and then Poulton-le-Fylde.

The first **2 Ospreys** were seen on the 31<sup>st</sup> and a **Puffin** flew past Norbreck.

## April

An additional **14 Ospreys** were logged moving north during April.

The Warton **Cattle Egrets** relocated to Freckleton and increased to 6 by the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A **drake Green-winged Teal** was on Newton Marsh on the 4<sup>th</sup>.



**Green-winged Teal** Ian Walker



**Cattle Egret** Ian Walker

Also on the 5<sup>th</sup> a **Spoonbill** flew over Fairhaven Lake, the first Tree Pipit flew over Rossall and the first Willow Warblers arrived at four sites.

A Water Pipit was at Freckleton Marsh on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

Also on the 6<sup>th</sup> the first Whitethroat arrived at Warton, which preceded a very strong arrival and passage of birds during the rest of the month.

The **Purple Heron** was seen again at Marton Mere on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.

A **Woodlark** was heard and sound recorded flying south over Knott End on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The second Fylde record, ever! 3 Ring Ouzels were recorded in April; one on the 5<sup>th</sup> at Fleetwood, and singles at St Annes and Knott End on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The first returning Blackcaps overlapped with wintering birds but on the 7<sup>th</sup> there was a strong arrival. The first Reed Warbler was singing at Marton Mere on the same day.

The first Sedge Warblers arrived at Warton Hall and Lytham Moss on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

Three **Red Kites** were seen over south Fylde between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

A Brambling which flew over Lytham St Annes Nature Reserve (LSANR) on the 9<sup>th</sup> was the first record of 2020. On the 10<sup>th</sup> the first Common Sandpiper of the year was on the Wyre at Little Singleton. On the same day the first Grasshopper Warbler was singing at Staining Nook and the first Little Ringed Plover arrived at Lightfoot Green.

The first Whimbrels returned on the 12<sup>th</sup> when 8 were on the Wyre. On the same day, the last 5 Whooper Swans of the month flew north over Warton.

8 Redstarts were found between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, all were close to the Ribble except for one on the sea wall at Blackpool North Shore.

The first Lesser Whitethroat was singing at Poulton on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

The first of April's 14 Yellow Wagtails was at Wesham on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

The first of 14 Whinchats seen in April was at Blackpool Airport on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Single Garden Warblers were recorded in Stanley Park on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>.

A female **Pied Flycatcher** was at New Ridge Farm, Preesall on the 17<sup>th</sup> and a **Wood Sandpiper** was at Wesham.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> single Cuckoos were seen at Dam Side and Marton Mere followed by 3 more before the month's end.

2 Black Terns were reported off Fleetwood on the 19<sup>th</sup> and another passed St Annes Beach on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> the first 2 Swifts were seen over Poulton. Only a dozen more were reported during the remainder of the month.

The most outstanding record of the period by far was that of an **immature White-tailed Eagle** that flew over Lightfoot Green on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Its lucky finder, Dinesh Patel, also managed to take some photographs of the bird. It proved not to be a tagged-released individual and most likely a wanderer from the continent.



**Pied Flycatcher** Paul Ellis



**White-tailed Eagle  
and Buzzard.**  
Dinesh Patel



**Black Redstart**  
Chris Batty

A first winter **Black Redstart** was in gardens at Knott End for one day on the 24<sup>th</sup> and on the same day the first Common Tern passed St Annes Beach and the wintering Scaup at Stanley Park put in its last appearance.

A female / immature **Long-tailed Duck** flew south past Blackpool on the 26<sup>th</sup> and presumably the same bird was off St Annes Beach the following day.

A summer plumaged Spotted Redshank stopped over at Conder Green from the 28<sup>th</sup>.

The only Wood Warbler of the month was singing at Fluke Hall on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Three Marsh Harriers were recorded on passage at Marton Mere and St Annes during the second half of April.

A **Shag** was recorded off Blackpool on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

All records from the Club's Sighting's Page are on our website at <http://data.fyldebirdclub.org/sightings.aspx>

To add your sightings, log on using *Username:* **lapwing** and *Password:* **lapwing**

**Standard reminder and, for new contributors to the Club's on line Sightings Page.**

**please do not publish the following:**

- Peregrine roost or nest sites
- The exact location of any bird's nest
- Hare sightings

However, all this information will be gratefully received by e mail to [news@fyldebirdclub.org](mailto:news@fyldebirdclub.org)

## **Newton Marsh – Past and Present**

The intention of this article is to inform members of the latest news at Newton Marsh whilst also historically looking back at the same month. Hopefully, this comparison will highlight the changing trends in species and also assist members when visiting the site to understand the current status whilst also appreciating the past records of this well watched site on the Fylde. In order to offer some form of consistency I only intend to use two documents for historical data:

- Jones M (1984) Death of a Sewage Farm
- Fylde Bird Club Annual Report 1995

Of course by only using two documents, numerous other records will not be included. However, given the time constraints it simply wouldn't be feasible to research every year.

### **April**

For the last few years, Avocets have nested at the site and a notable bird arrived on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020 with colour rings. This bird was ringed as a chick at Orfordness in Suffolk in 2011 and has spent its life on the Dorset and Essex coastline. This is the first time it has been recorded in Northern England and it seemed already paired upon arrival and, therefore, may potentially stay and breed. In contrast, 25 years ago, only one sighting of an Avocet was seen at Granny's Bay in July 1995.

Another example of a changing trend is the Little Egret. An established bird on the Fylde, this species now even breeds in Lancashire and large roosts are evident at Fairhaven Lake and Freckleton Naze Pool but in April 1974 this was a rare bird. The sites second Little Egret stayed between 10<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April 1974. Even 10 years later the 1995 Bird Report still required brief notes for submission, explaining the reasons for identification of the species. At the beginning of April 2020 three Little Egrets were joined by a Great White Egret.

Whilst gains are detailed above, declines are also worthy of mention. Yellow Wagtail is now very rarely seen at Newton Marsh, especially in Spring but the 1995 Bird Report states two were present on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Historically this species also bred at the site and, when the old sewage works was operating, large autumn flocks were witnessed.

This year we have seen good numbers of Ruff at Newton Marsh and this would appear consistent with the numbers in the 1995 Report.

Spring is always an exciting time in the birding calendar and in 1979 a Spoonbill stayed on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> April. This year saw a Drake Green-winged Teal stay for one day on 4<sup>th</sup> April and a male Redstart was seen on 13<sup>th</sup> April.

It was a very poor year in 1995 for records of Little Ringed Plover. However, this year a male and female are present on the entrance pool and it will be interesting to monitor this pair.



Finally, despite a period of high pressure and clear nights, a Barn Owl was hunting through the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020, which is very encouraging. Interestingly, the 1995 Report requests observers for information of this species in order to assist with Conservation work. Now a regularly seen bird on the Fylde in suitable habitat, it demonstrates how hard people on the Fylde have worked to help this wonderful bird return.



All photographs at Newton Marsh taken in April 2020 -

*Ian Walker*

## Lucky Lockdown Birding 'from the garden'

When the lockdown was announced on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, little did I know what luck it would bring me birding from my garden at home.

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March saw my work shut down and it seemed it was going to be pretty grim for a while, one of the regular wintering Grey Wagtail's around the industrial estate being the only entry in my notebook that day.

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March was a lovely clear day with constant blue sky. I was alerted by the local carrion crows mobbing a buzzard and they were quickly joined by a further four buzzards; not a bad sight over the house. The next call I heard were two croaking Raven's joining the fun; brilliant. A new 'garden tick' for me, having lived in the same house for 21 years and never before recording raven.

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March was another day of clear blue skies. Sitting at my computer I got a call from Len Blacow telling me he had just heard and seen two Common Cranes heading north over Marton. I sat in anticipation in the garden and twenty minutes later I got another call, this time from Frank Bird. He had the cranes in his scope from his bedroom window at Preston New Road, circling and drifting slowly north somewhere towards Stanley Park. He said "get yourself outside, got to be a good chance they will come over your house". I sat patiently, waiting and hoping for about another twenty minutes, surely long enough for the birds to have passed by now as I only live about two miles in a straight line from Stanley Park. Getting ready to give up, I could not believe my ears when I heard the loud distinctive call of a crane. There they were, west of my house somewhere south of Garstang Road West, slowly rising on a thermal gaining height; amazing, my second 'from the garden' tick, what a piece of luck.

Both Chris Batty and Paul Ellis were waiting at Preesall and Knott End but sadly the cranes were not seen again by anyone else in the Fylde; I think they just got too high to be seen. Interestingly, someone doing a bit of 'Nocmig' (I'll wait for someone else to do an article explaining the joys of Nocmig) near Ulverston sound recorded what appeared to be Common Crane calling at 01.30 the following morning, so perhaps they did continue very slowly north.

I must thank both Len and Frank for the phone calls, without them I would not have seen my rarest 'from the garden' birds!

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March was, yet again, a day of clear blue skies. My son was nagging me to play cricket with him in the garden. After a few minutes I noticed a large bird flying straight north towards Poulton town centre. I grabbed my binoculars and was pleasantly surprised to see it was an Osprey (3<sup>rd</sup> 'from the garden' tick), which kindly circled a couple of times, and only a minute or so later Jonny Scragg was watching and photographing the same bird looking east from his house in Carleton.

On Friday night (3<sup>rd</sup> April) I thought I would try and get in on the overland movement of Common Scoter. After only fifteen minutes I had heard three flocks calling faintly amongst the wind and traffic noise, my fourth and surely final new 'from the garden' bird of lockdown?

On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April I was stood in the kitchen talking to my wife when all the local gulls started going absolutely mad outside. Dashing outside, expecting to see a buzzard or hopefully another Osprey, I was stunned to see a Red Kite being harassed by about a dozen gulls heading South East very low over the house. Presumably the same bird was picked up by Ash Baines a couple of hours later over St Annes. Two other sightings were perhaps also likely to be the same bird: over Oxford Square Marton on 8<sup>th</sup> April and over Marton Mere on 13<sup>th</sup>.

Amazingly, in the space of just over two weeks, I had been incredibly lucky. Lockdown didn't turn out too bad for my 'from the garden' listing.

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May my work reopened. I won't say "roll on the next lockdown" but bird wise it was better than I expected!

Hoping everyone reading this remains safe and well during this difficult time for us all.

**Paul Slade**

## Preston Dock Common Tern Colony Update

Just before the lockdown Paul Slade and I made 50 new tern nest trays and, with the help of Jolyon Barlow, we managed to deliver them to the council staff at Preston Dock just before the travel restrictions were imposed. We owe thanks to Andrew Newsham, who works at the Dock for Preston City Council, for setting out all the nest trays, gravel and slate shelters ready for the breeding season. Obviously, this year we were unable to help.

During the past three breeding seasons, the terns have had poor fledging success owing to the ever more efficient predation of their chicks by a Lesser Black-backed Gull. Last year only about 20 young fledged from 124 pairs of terns. We searched for ideas to deter the gull(s) and discovered that networks of bamboo garden canes had been deployed at other tern colonies in Ireland and NE England.



Cane Network on Lamb Island, Ireland

The idea is that the canes present an obstacle to the gulls' tactic of snatching chicks during high speed low passes over the nests. The large gulls have a wingspan of over 1.25 m whereas the terns have a wingspan of around 0.75 m. Therefore if the canes are sited at about 1.0 m spacing, the gulls should find it difficult to fit through whereas the terns shouldn't be too inconvenienced, especially as they will be landing and taking off and not dashing through.



Common Tern chasing a Lesser black-backed Gull, showing the difference in wing span

Having decided to try out the cane network we were faced with the problem of how to mount them. On islands, conservationists had simply pushed their canes into the ground. Clearly, we did not have that option on a concrete surface! We were also not going to be allowed to drill holes in the wave breakers. The nest trays have a partial top

cover to shelter the chicks and, eventually, we realised that we could drill a hole in the top cover and push the cane into the inside corner of the box.

The next problem was to source uniform diameter 'canes' at reasonable cost. Aldi provided the answer with six packs of 11 mm diameter 1.2m long, steel garden stakes for £3.99 per pack. We bought these and cut them in half to make 'canes' for 33p each. The canes were delivered to the dock together with the new nest trays and Andrew set them out by mid April.



The first terns were reported back on 23<sup>rd</sup> April by a birder who lives nearby. However, the rest of us couldn't go to see them. Some concern was raised that the terns were avoiding the trays with canes and as a trial some were removed. Some enquiries were made and it was revealed that in the NE of England, the canes were not deployed until the terns were on eggs. After travel restrictions were relaxed, a count on 14<sup>th</sup> May recorded 22 birds in nest trays of which 4 were in trays with canes and others were in trays with canes in surrounding trays (n.b. it's early in the season and many birds are yet to arrive). It is perhaps unsurprising, that given a choice, the terns will choose trays without canes. Given that at least some were using trays with canes and with the information about deploying canes after egg laying, we have recommended that all available canes are re-fitted after egg laying and before the first chicks hatch (about the 25<sup>th</sup> May).

The use of canes is a bit of an experiment but one that all involved think we must undertake. After all, the last three years have shown what happens with no countermeasures in place. All records of terns at Preston Dock are welcomed. We particularly want to receive details about all predation events and if young are taken, whether or not canes were fitted to the wave breaker concerned. Reports can be entered in the Website Sightings page or e-mailed to [news@fyldebirdclub.org](mailto:news@fyldebirdclub.org)

***Paul Ellis***

## March and April Photo Selection from Fylde Bird Club Flickr Site

Photo's by Frank Bird ,Paul Ellis, Dave Mcgrath, Jonny Scragg & Paul Slade.

For a full selection see : <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fyldebirdclub/>

**Please** add all interesting pictures to the Bird Club's Flickr page at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fyldebirdclub>

If they only appear on Twitter or WhatsApp, it makes it hard work to find them all and edit a summary!

Logon details: Username- [news@fyldebirdclub.org](mailto:news@fyldebirdclub.org) Password- Lapwing1!



Twite



Mandarin



Sparrowhawk



Mediterranean Gulls



Jack Snipe



Yellowhammer



Reed Bunting



Whooper Swan



Raven



Wheatear



Lapwing



Chiffchaff



Stonechat



Reed bunting



Osprey over Carleton