

BIRD NEWS
Vol. 22 No. 2 Summer 2011

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Twinned with Cumberland Bird Observers Club

New South Wales, Australia

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Jim Fowler

As many of you will have no doubt heard, it is with great sadness that we pay tribute to our newsletter editor Jim Fowler who died of a heart attack while kayaking on Coniston. Jim was truly renowned for his enthusiasm and passion. On moving to Cumbria in 2002 and joining CBC he typically wanted to put something back into the club and offered to take on the newsletter editorship. He has also played a key role studying marsh tits for Natural England around Bardsea Wood, the results of which he has regularly published in this newsletter. Jim has led a scientific party to Antarctica, and he has also headed expeditions to Shetland every summer for 25 years to monitor the impact of the oil industry on rocky shore wildlife. Ballet was obviously another passion and Jim's blog shows a picture of a framed pair of Darcy Bussell's ballet shoes that he owned. He jokingly claimed that she gave them to him after he met her at the stage door and took her out to dinner! He was definitely a man who lived his life to the full and will be sorely missed.

Vale Dr Jim Fowler

Members of the Cumberland Bird Observers Club (CBOC) were deeply saddened and shocked to learn of the tragic and untimely death of Jim Fowler so soon after his recent trip to Australia.

I personally took Jim out birding into Wheeny Creek Reserve in the Wollemi National Park to the north west of Sydney on the morning of Monday 2nd May, the day before he departed Sydney for home. We had a good morning with great views of Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, several White-eared Honeyeaters, lots of Red-browed Finches, a Superb Lyrebird and an Australian Brush-turkey which was a "lifer" for Jim – great excitement.

Australia was one of Jim's favourite birding destinations and on past visits CBOC members have had the pleasure and privilege of hearing him speak on a number of topics. In 2004 he gave a talk at Sydney Olympic Park to Sydney birders on "*Seabird population monitoring near the North Sea Oil Terminal in Shetland – a 26 year study*". He also gave a brief overview of the study into "*The House Sparrow decline in the UK*". A few years later Jim gave an illustrated talk at a CBOC Club meeting on the importance of banding/ringing studies, moult and ageing individual birds and recruitment, to get an understanding of population dynamics for formulating meaningful conservation strategies.

Jim's editorship of the Cumbria Bird Club (CBC) *Bird News* in recent years has kept us in touch with CBC activities and ornithological events in Cumbria. We will greatly miss not seeing him out here.

We extend our condolences to Jim's family and friends and to the Cumbria Bird Club and its members in their sad loss.

Tony Dymond Vice President, CBOC

Club News and Announcements

Annual General Meeting Friday 7th October 2011

The AGM will be held at Penrith United Reformed Church on Friday 7th October 2011 at 7.30pm. The business of the AGM is intended to be as brief as possible and will be followed by a talk entitled 'Wind farms, fisheries, alien predators, climate change: can we conserve seabirds?' by Bob Furness. See the meeting programme overleaf for full details of Bob's talk.

Vacancies on Council: Secretary, county bird recorder and two ordinary members.

According to the terms of the constitution the above posts will become vacant at the AGM though there is a proviso that the current incumbents may remain another year.

This note is to seek nominations from members to fill these posts. According to the terms of the constitution, nominations should be submitted to the secretary not later than seven days before the AGM (i.e. by 30th September). Please contact Dave Piercy (address on inside front cover) for a proposal form and further details on what is involved.

Newsletter editor, outings and talks organisers.

Would anyone interested on taking on one of the above please contact the secretary. All vital roles in helping to run the club. Volunteers please.

Bird records for the Bird Report and Archive

It is still not too late to submit your records for 2010. All your records are valuable so please take the time to submit them either electronically or on written record cards. See the Winter 2010 newsletter for details or contact the secretary.

Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria – outcome of CNU meeting and the future.

Council are pleased to announce that Cumbria Naturalists Union (CNU) agreed to all CBC proposals in full at their last meeting. The membership fee for CNU is to increase to £50 (plus insurance) which will be used to pay for the production of the bird report. Member societies will receive five copies of the report as part of their membership. This income plus our advance payment for our members' reports should guarantee that the report can be paid for on production. CNU also agreed that the report would move to a larger B5 format with a reduced print run of 400 copies. This will mean that the next report will have much more room for an improved layout and more content and photos. It was also agreed that the overall editor of the report will always be appointed by CBC.

Proposed changes to the CBC newsletter

Council are proposing to produce future newsletters in an electronic format that can be e-mailed out to members. We would like to reassure members who do not have computers that we will continue to post you a printed version as in the past. The advantages of producing an e-mailed newsletter are:

- Savings in the time and cost of printing and postage
- Savings to be invested in an improved “Birds & Wildlife Report”
- Colour photos can be used throughout
- Improved production of photos, charts, graphs etc
- Improved layout and flexibility

For the next few issues we intend to send all members a printed copy and an e-mail version. We would certainly welcome all feedback as soon as possible. It is envisaged that from the start of the next volume (Spring 2012) we will stop sending a printed version to members with a computer and e-mail. You will of course be able to print off your own copy of the e-mail version on your own computer. The cost saved should be quite considerable and we hope will go some way towards funding a larger format and improved “Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria” as detailed elsewhere in this newsletter. Please contact the secretary if you have any opinions on this change in the way we communicate as a club.

Photographs

Please submit your photos for inclusion in future newsletters and the web site. Apologies for the likely poor production of photos and charts in this newsletter. This newsletter is somewhat experimental with a view to producing the e-mail version in which the photos will appear in colour and good quality. We will endeavour to work with the printers to improve the production of the photos in black and white in the printed version.

Records Panel – Amended Description Form

The Records Panel is conscious that a number of descriptions they receive fail to gain acceptance simply because the observer does not provide sufficient information. In an attempt to alleviate this problem, a revised description form has been produced that includes bullet points intended to encourage observers to provide as much detail of what they saw as possible. Whilst this is aimed primarily at those who are inexperienced at submitting descriptions, we hope it will also serve as a reminder to everyone to include all the details of their observation. Description forms can be downloaded from the Bird Club website at www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk or requested from Regional Recorders.

Ian Kinley, CBCRP Secretary

CBC Indoor Meeting Programme Winter 2011/2012

Friday 7th October (AGM): Penrith UR Church 7.30pm

“Wind farms, fisheries, alien predators, climate change: can we conserve seabirds?” - Bob Furness.



Guillemot with sand eel - Bob Furness

Bob Furness has been obsessed with seabirds ever since he was taken to Foula on a ringing expedition by Peter Mawby in 1971. He wrote “The Skuas” in the Poyser series in 1987 and has been Professor of Seabird and Fishing Interactions at the University of Glasgow until this year. He recently moved from the university to work part-time for an environmental consultancy specialising in renewables. He is also employed part-time by Scottish Natural Heritage as a member of their scientific advisory committee, and is on the Council and Ringing Committee of the BTO. Bob is particularly proud of having ringed 1000 kittiwakes in one day in arctic Norway, and of helping to discover a new species of storm-petrel, Monteiro’s Storm-petrel, in the Azores.

Britain holds internationally important populations of many seabirds, and most of these now have strong protection of breeding colonies through EU designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). However, after many decades of growth, populations of most of our seabirds are now in decline. Wind farms, fisheries, alien predators, and climate change are all significant threats to our seabirds.

In this talk, Bob will discuss how these threats affect seabird populations, and will outline some of the new tools becoming available to researchers that may help to identify which populations are at particular risk and may identify possible mitigation measures. These new techniques include the ability to track precisely the migrations and foraging trips of seabirds with GPS loggers, to use “forensic” analysis to identify the diets and behaviour of seabirds while they are away at sea, and to study the detailed behavioural responses of seabirds to offshore wind farms and tidal turbines.

Friday November 4th: Cockermouth United Reformed Church 7.30pm.

‘The Langholm project 2 - is there hope for Hen Harriers ?’ – A talk by Aly McCluskie of the Langholm project and featuring stunning photography by top Scottish wildlife photographer Laurie Campbell.

Friday 2nd December: Penrith UR Church 7.30pm

‘From the Tyne to the Solway’ - Dave Fairlamb RSPB Warden Mersehead
All the reserves and various bird species Dave has encountered through his work in conservation over the last 30 years and he will concentrate mainly on Mersehead in the second half of the talk.

Wednesday January 4th 2012: with Carlisle NHS at Tullie House 7.15pm

‘The Wildlife of the North’ - Edmund Fellowes. Edmund is a renowned photographer and an excellent speaker from Dumfries. Past winner of British Birds photograph of the year. The “North” includes at least as far as Norway!

Monday 27th Feb: with Kendal NHS Friend's House Stramongate 7.30pm

‘Sea birds of North West Scotland’ - David Mower
David Mower is now the warden of Leighton Moss RSPB reserve. His slide show is based on his time on Handa Island in the 1970s.

Outings

Saturday 20 August 2011, 10.00am – Grizedale Forest, South Lakes

An outing in the company of Forestry Commission staff to look at raptor management and general conservation within this commercial forest environment. It is anticipated that there will be an opportunity to view the new batch of Red Kites involved in the current release scheme, as well as Barn/Tawny Owl nest box schemes etc.

Meeting at Grizedale Forest Centre (Grid ref: SD335943) (outside café) between 09.45 and 10.00am. Please bring packed lunch.

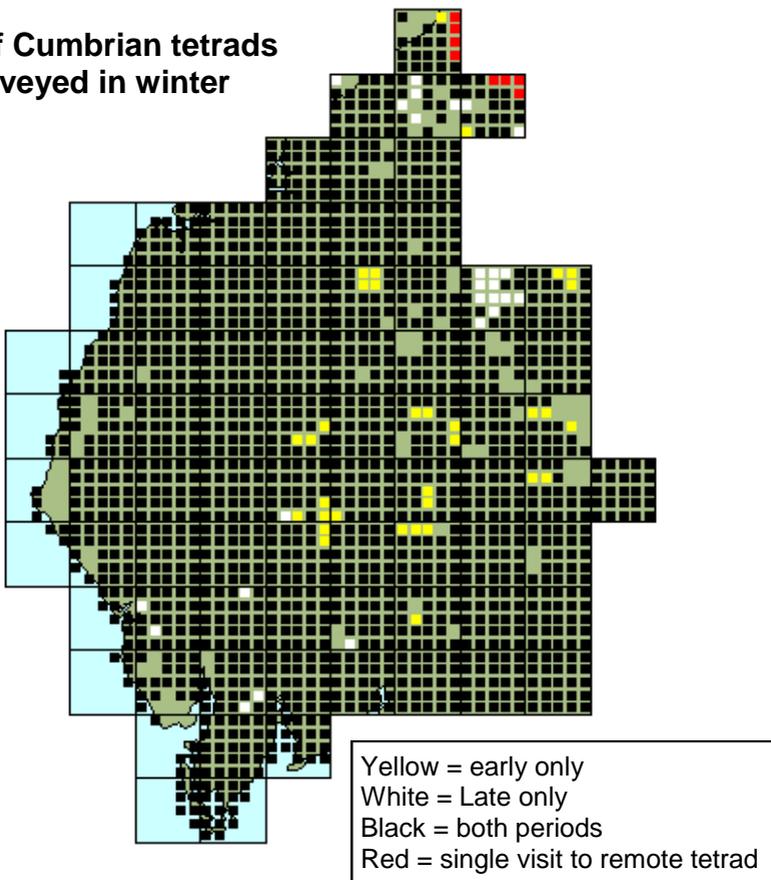
Contact: Clive Hartley clive.hartley304@btinternet.com tel 015395 36824

Cumbria Bird Atlas: Council agrees to survey for an additional year

Winter survey work for the Britain and Ireland Bird Atlas ended on 31 March 2011. Breeding season survey work comes to an end on 31st July 2011. Here in Cumbria, the Bird Club Council recently took stock of what we have achieved so far.

Looking firstly at the winter position, a full set of 2 x 2 hour timed tetrad counts have been returned for a remarkable 1,692 tetrads out of a potential 1,900, with 67 of the remainder receiving 1x 2 hour visit. This means that by adding a fifth winter to the survey period there is no reason why we should not achieve complete 100% coverage of all tetrads in Cumbria with our present pool of volunteers.

Map of Cumbrian tetrads surveyed in winter



The map above indicates the enormity of what has been achieved so far and the Bird Club Council would like to pay tribute to all those who have been

involved. The map also shows the relatively small but wide scattering of tetrads for which we still need to complete timed tetrad surveys. If you consider that you will be in a position to cover any of these this coming winter please get in touch with one of the area organisers below. This will ensure that Cumbria Bird Club has the data required to comprehensively map at tetrad level, for the first time, the distribution of species which winter within the county. If there are no tetrads near you that require a timed visit, you can still participate for another year by sending in casual records (either on Roving Recorder forms or online via *Birdtrack*). All winter records of difficult to find species, such as the owls, are particularly valuable.

It is too early to fully assess progress with regards to the breeding season survey work. However, it currently appears that about 80% of all tetrads in the county have received timed visits. On this basis, the Bird Club Council are hoping for a final substantive push during the 2012 breeding season in order to achieve complete 100% coverage of all tetrads. Details of this will be announced over the coming winter when the current level of breeding season coverage is clearer. In this respect, it would be helpful if all survey workers could submit their returns as soon as possible after completion, either on paper to one of the area organisers or online using the BTO's Bird Atlas website (www.birdatlas.net).

In recognition of the Bird Club's proposal to survey for a further year, the BTO has kindly agreed to keep in place until 31st December 2012 the online facilities for submitting timed tetrad counts. This facility is only available in those counties where there are plans to produce local atlases or avifaunas. The BTO does not intend to draw on the results of this additional fifth year of work so far as the Britain and Ireland Atlas is concerned and it has, therefore, set a deadline of 31st December 2011 for submission of all outstanding 2007-2011 records for the national atlas.

We would again like to express a huge thank you for everyone's efforts so far. With your continued help, we look forward to bringing this landmark project to a highly successful conclusion. If there is a vacant tetrad near you don't assume that someone else will cover it. Please offer your assistance to one of the area organisers.

Stephen Westerberg: NE Cumbria Stephen.Westerberg@rspb.org.uk;

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Colin Gay: SW Cumbria colinathodbarrow@aol.com; 01229 773820

Dave Piercy: NW Cumbria daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk; 017687 77909

Clive Hartley

Champagne moment

While going to work in Kendal on 29th May, at 8.50am in the car park on the Industrial estate, I came across what looked like a miniature swan. A white bird with head tucked under its wing. I walked up to it in the car park, it didn't move so I spoke to it. It reared its head and it turned out to be a mature Gannet!!!! Pure white/black wingtips, creamy at the back of its head.

The bird still did not move. So I grabbed its head and picked it up (not before it gave me a jab to my hand which drew blood). Still, what a beautiful bird. I carried it down to the riverbank where I placed it down on the floor. As I let it go it sat there, then took a stab with its dagger bill at my boot. I left it there, where no dog would dare to go near it.

I returned after work 4.30pm to find it gone. The day before was very windy, I presume it had been blown off course and perhaps thought the climbing wall was a cliff at night. My first Gannet of the year too.

Martin Oldham, Kendal

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Mixed Fortunes

The situation here is of very mixed fortunes - just one or two examples: Great tits have had a reasonable year with many good broods including one of twelve which all fledged.

Blue Tits have had a disastrous season with few young and high mortality. For the first time since I started ringing Pied Flycatchers there were no successful broods in the area !! In one wood close to here I could guarantee ten broods 15 years ago. This year - none.

Redstarts have been average with several nest boxes occupied and a good number of singing males.

Tree Sparrows have done exceptionally well ! 99 occupied boxes produced 420 fledged young . I'm in the process of ringing second broods.

Mike Carrier, Armathwaite

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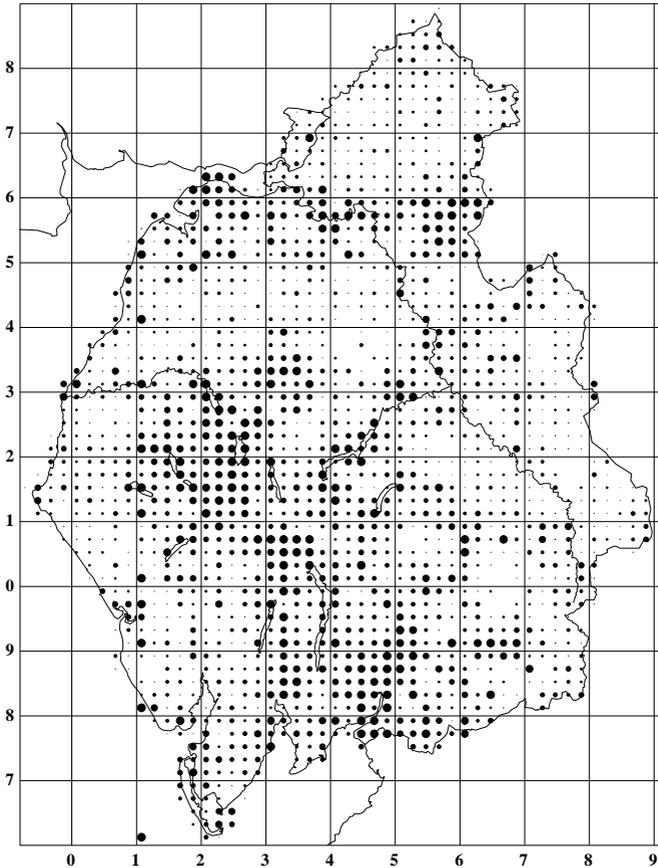
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E-mail: focalpoint@dial.pipex.com; **Website** <http://fpoint.co.uk>



The number of observers in tetrads and their effect on the number of species recorded

The Atlas surveying methodology is set up to survey a 10km square efficiently. However we are using this methodology to survey the county on a tetrad basis. Given time constraints and number of observers in the county, this is the only practicable way to map bird distribution in Cumbria. Carrying out eight TTVs in a 10km square has been shown to find 90% of the species in that 10km square. Robin Sellars is looking at how many hours of survey work in a tetrad will take to produce a similar result in a TTV. In the meantime



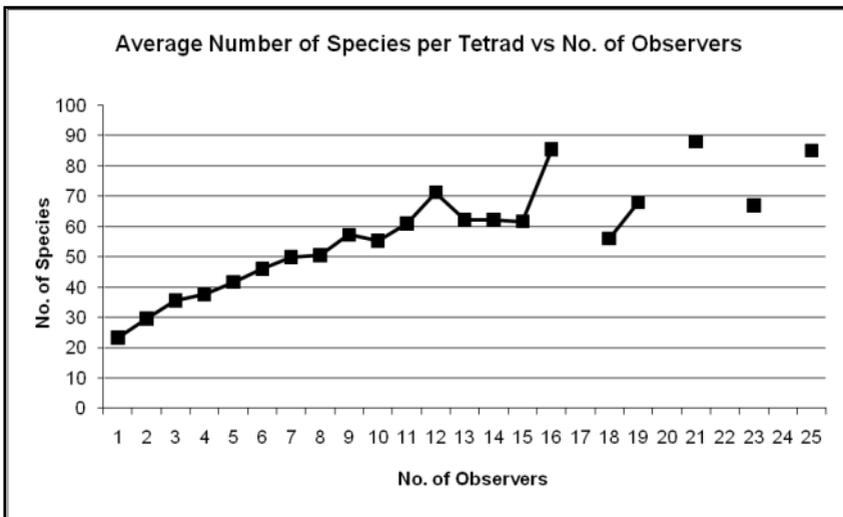
Map of the number of observers per tetrad

(The largest dots have records from more than 15 observers (max 25) and the smallest one observer.)

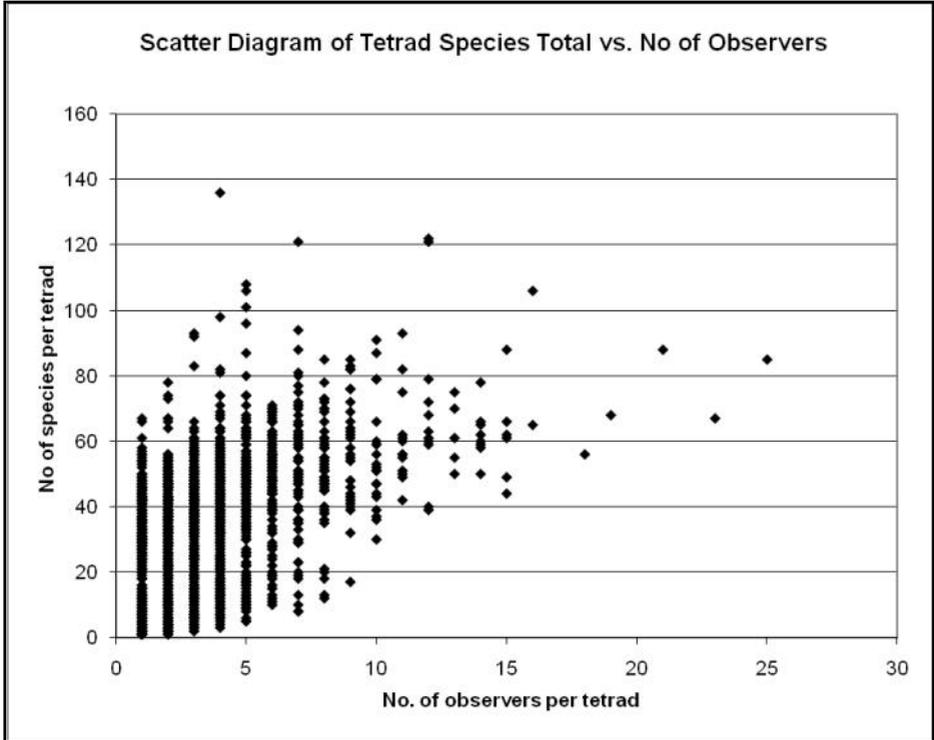
I have looked at the most up to date Atlas data we have received from the BTO (data from the breeding season 2008-10) and compared number of species recorded in a tetrad with the number of observers in that tetrad. As this brief analysis is using provisional data, there is an immediate bias as we are not looking at comparable data, many of the tetrads with a low number of species will not have received at TTV. In addition, the data has not been verified, two tetrads with over 120 species also include records for Paddyfield Warbler. Not all the species included in the species lists are breeding, that analysis of the data has not been carried out at this stage.

Mapping the number of observers per tetrad in the county illustrates where there are most recorders. The largest dots have records from more than 15 observers (max 25) and the smallest one observer. Not surprisingly these areas are around popular birding sites such as Bowness, Bassenthwaite, Derwent Water and Borrowdale, Haweswater, Windermere and the Kent Valley.

1730 tetrads in Cumbria have records from the Atlas survey for the first three summers. Using this data to look at the average number of species seen in each tetrad, classed by the number of observers in each tetrad, it can be seen in the graph below there is a steady increase in number of species as the number of observers increase. This can be explained by the increasing amount of time spent in each tetrad with increase in observers. However the tetrads with most observers will include good birding sites with more species.



Looking at the range of species recorded with each tetrad vs. number of observers in the tetrad the same effect of increase in number of species recorded can be seen, see the scatter diagram below.



Of note here, is all tetrads with more than 12 observers have more than 40 species recorded. However the tetrad with the largest species list has only four recorders. The four tetrads with over 120 species recorded are all nature reserves, two tetrads at South Walney, Campfield Marsh and Geltsdale. The tetrad with most observers is at Bassenthwaite, presumably as a result of visitors to the Ospreys also adding a few Atlas records.

Stephen Westerberg

Atlas Highlights

As a favour to a fellow 'hard pressed' fieldworker, I offered to take a difficult tetrad from him. It was difficult because it spanned both sides of the river Derwent, and involved a 15 mile car journey to get both sides done. Before the floods of November 2009, it would have been simple, as a footbridge crossed the river, but this was destroyed at that time.

Nevertheless I was happy to do it, because it was a place where I had spent my early childhood, and where I had learned and seen many of the things that I still enjoy and cherish today, floods apart it still looks much the same as I remember.

Half way through my first visit in April, and as I approached a large shingle bank that had been left by the flood at the elbow of the river, I saw two white shapes, whirring and twisting in the sky. Uncertain of what they might be, as they were not instantly familiar to me, I went closer and saw them to be Little Ringed Plovers. As they settled I saw another two already on the ground. I watched for several minutes as they displayed, then off they went again in fantastic aerial display.

As I continued my fieldwork I came across, newly arrived Common Sandpipers, Goosander and Red-breasted Merganser, excavating Sand Martins, Blackcap and Garden Warblers singing in the Hazel Wood, Whitethroat in the scrub by the long gone railway track, Reed Bunting in the soft rush and Kestrel on the church tower. As I conclude my two hour stint and returned to my car, I wondered who had done the favor !

Footnote--- I secured a Schedule 1 License and later visit the site to check on the Plovers, they had successfully nested and had chicks in attendance.

John Callion

NY51Q. Cuckoo calling, Black-headed gull colony in Shap Blue Quarry, small Sand Martin colony & Oystercatcher with chick in the aggregate works there.

Rod Muncey

Five redstarts, a whitethroat and a wheatear within an hour. *Shaun Donockley*

Failed to find nesting woodcock - found first atlas pied flycatcher instead!

David Bruin

My highlight was seeing a tree sparrow for the first time and since then having up to three coming every now and then to my bird feeders.

Rachel Nicholson

Red-throated Divers - Bowness on Solway 14th April 2011



Red Throated Diver, Solway 2008, Dave Shackleton

Whilst much larger numbers are regular in Outer Solway (Skinburness – Maryport) on a regular basis in winter and larger numbers have been seen in the Inner Solway -151 on 18th April 1992 *** – the flock of birds seen 14th April 2011 I felt was exceptional.

I was sea watching to west of “The Viaduct” at Bowness at 7.30 am with the weather being dry but with low cloud, visibility was good. The sea was almost flat making it easy to view/count birds on the surface.

I noticed some medium/large sized birds apparently descending from the cloud base on the Scottish side of the estuary and gliding toward me making it hard to identify them – large waders, cormorants, gulls or even skuas (but too early for them in such numbers?) but when they turned into the wind (SW) it was clear that they were Diver species. I then watched them drop onto the water between myself and Campfield. Unusually in my experience on the Solway they then remained in a tight raft and a count showed that there were approximately 100 birds.

Although they were probably 700m away from me it was clear that these birds were Red Throats and I was able to watch this flock for about 20 min-

utes as it drifted in on the tide with individuals being as close together as one sees in a Scaup flock for example. Unfortunately before it got close enough to make a detailed study of each bird the flock got up and I was able to count 107 birds (using 20x scope). The flock all flew off west with some dropping further west but with some continuing into the Outer Solway. At this time there were another eight Divers flying west further out in the estuary making a minimum total of 115.

Thereafter small groups kept getting up, gaining height before flying east but in most cases they soon returned west, low over the water – the usual pattern seen on the Solway at this time of year with birds on migration. Although I was able to have a good look at a number of birds both on the water and in flight I was unable to see any that were clearly **not** Red Throats.

I have never seen such a tightly packed raft of Divers. The norm in my experience being for birds, perhaps in twos and threes, to be spread over a much larger area. I estimated that perhaps 5% were in winter plumage although the light wasn't good enough to be absolutely certain of this figure

Whilst "Flocks numbering up to 40-100 birds are not unusual on peak days at sites where this species is regular on migration" ** this flock was probably at least 50% larger than maximum numbers I have seen in the past in migration flocks and almost 3 times what I would regard as the "norm" on the Inner Solway and those seen previously have tended to be loose flocks of high flying birds that were well spread if and when then dropped to the water.

It is interesting to note that on the same date a flock of 46 Red Throated Divers as well as 92 individual Great Northern Divers were reported (P Berry) **** in Luce Bay, Dumfries & Galloway. Clearly there was a significant movement in progress in the North Irish Sea.

The Solway never ceases to surprise. Perhaps the diver passage needs more concentrated observation, with probably most birds in spring in recent years being picked up by those observing skua passage. This doesn't really start until the fourth week of April and probably after the peak diver passage, which appears from records in Cumbria Bird Reports, to have already gone through by that time.

Bob Jones

References

** Blomdahl, Briefe and Holmstrom – "Flight Identification of Seabirds"

Helm 2003

*** Birds in Cumbria 1992

**** Dumfries & Galloway Birding

Exceptional congregations of waterbirds on the Cumbrian side of the Outer Solway in the winter of 2010-11

High numbers of Goosander, Cormorant and Great Crested Grebe were present on the Outer Solway Coast from early December 2010 into early February 2011. The exceptional numbers were presumably a result of the prolonged period of extremely cold temperatures from late November until early January resulting in the freezing of many inland lakes and rivers. All three species normally occur on the Cumbrian coast but not normally in such numbers.

High numbers were first noted on 5th December when 182 Goosander, 64 Great Crested Grebe and an estimated 500 Cormorant were present in Allonby Bay between Maryport and Dubmill Point. Unfortunately the coast to the south was not counted. By 24th December 340 Goosander were present in Allonby Bay but only 14 grebes and a solitary Cormorant. The coast to the south was again not counted but subsequent counts suggested the Cormorant were mobile and their distribution probably dictated by food availability. Hence it is likely the bulk of the population were to the south. This was unlike the Goosander where site counts suggested more faithfulness to particular locations entirely to the north of Workington.

On 30th December there was an estimated minimum of 1200 Cormorant (possibly as many as 1400) between Nethertown to the south of St Bees and Parton to the north of Whitehaven. This included about 850 either on the cliffs or off the headland at St Bees. The coast to the north of Parton was not covered but a count on 2nd January revealed only 16 birds between Workington and Dubmill suggesting that at this point most Cormorants were south of Parton. On the 30th December no Goosander were south of Parton though 20 Great Crested Grebe were in Parton Bay. On 2nd January a maximum of 474 Goosander accompanied by 24 Great Crested Grebe were between Workington and Dubmill.

By 22nd January this had increased to 567 and 42 respectively but with very few Cormorants here and it is not known how many may have been to the south. Five hundred Goosander and 13 Grebes were still present on 11th February when many more Cormorants were present. A day later on 12th a night roost count at St Bees Head totalled 1060 birds, at least 710 of which (and probably more) came from the north. By 6th March only 3 Goosander and 3 Grebes were counted between Workington and Dubmill with much reduced numbers of Cormorant and on 8th April immediately preceding the high tide, no birds were present here other than a handful of Cormorant around Workington Harbour as is usual.

For Cormorant and Goosander these kinds of numbers appear unprecedented for the Solway though substantially higher counts of Grebes have occurred. Cormorant achieved the internationally important site threshold of 1200 birds and far exceeded the 230 needed for national importance. Goosander also well exceeded the national threshold of 161.

Dave Shackleton

Wetland Bird Survey – counters vacancies

The Wetland Bird Survey is run by the British Trust for Ornithology and monitors the status of waterbirds in the UK. Waterbodies are counted once monthly on or near an appointed date. In Cumbria we have good coverage of sites with most of the major inland waters counted. However at present Buttermere, Crummock Water, the River Kent in Kendal, Longlands Lake at Cleator and Ormsgill Reservoir (Barrow) are not counted. The ability to identify waterfowl and a telescope are all that is needed for the survey and if you think you can help contact Dave Shackleton on 01931 713693 d.shackleton@btinternet.com

There is also a vacancy for a WeBS counter on the Morecambe Bay Coast. The site comprises the whole of the Upper Leven Estuary from the Viaduct up to Greenodd and needs to be surveyed from a series of vantage points over the high water period. Use of a telescope will be essential in order to accurately estimate the wildfowl and waders that utilise this fascinating, under-recorded site. If you are able to devote approximately three hours each month to this task then please get in touch with the WeBS Organiser for Morecambe Bay

There are also vacancies for counters on sections of the Duddon and the Solway estuaries.

Count organisers:

Morecambe Bay	Clive Hartley
Duddon Estuary	Rosalyn Gay
Solway Estuary	Norman Holton

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Recent Reports

The period covered is March to May 2011. Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review by the Club Records Panel or British Birds Rarities Committee. Species order and nomenclature follow that used in *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria*.

Wildfowl to Quail

Whooper Swans on the Inner Solway included 136 at Whitrigglees in March while northbound passage was evidenced by a total of 163 past Walney and 55 at Derwent Water, flocks of 48 and 22 at Killington Reservoir, 25 on the Duddon Estuary, 22 over Shap, flocks of 20 and 17 at Haweswater, 16 on the Kent Estuary and 14 at Mawbray in March followed by 24 at Elter Water in April. Late individuals lingered on the Irt Estuary and at Longtown well into May. **Pink-footed Goose** flocks included 5200 near Whitrigg while the adult **Ross's Goose** continued to consort with large numbers of **Barnacle Geese**, being seen intermittently on Rockcliffe Marsh to 16th April. Some 13000 **Barnacle Geese** remained on Rockcliffe Marsh early in May while, away from the Solway, up to 25 remained throughout March at Walney where **Brent Geese** included 121 pale and three dark-bellied birds. Meanwhile, a dark-bellied **Brent Goose** accompanied 328 **Greylags** at Kents Bank on 21st March, three dark-bellied birds flew east at Bowness-on-Solway on 17th April and a late dark-bellied was at Bowness-on-Solway on 30th May. An **Egyptian Goose** frequented Soddy Gap from 28th to 30th April. The drake **Green-winged Teal** continued to be seen intermittently at Campfield Marsh to 13th March. An early pair of **Garganey** appeared at Ulpha Meadows on 27th March, followed by a pair at Sandscale Haws from 23rd to 25th April and single drakes at Old Sandsfield, Watchtree and Walney in May. **Greater Scaup** were not particularly numerous but included 15 in March off Newbiggin outlet in Furness. The **Long-tailed Duck** remained on Windermere to 10th April. Two **Velvet Scoters** were at Walney on 2nd April while **Common Scoters** included a maximum 303 there in April. Three **Smew**, two drakes and a red-head, lingered at Tindale Tarn well into March. A **Common Quail** was heard calling at Finglandrigg on 31st May, the first of the year.

Divers to herons

Red-throated Diver totals at coastal locations included 21 in Allonby Bay and 16 at Walney in March; an exceptional 115, including a flock of 107, at Bowness-on-Solway, 42 at Walney and 12 in Flimby Bay in April and 20 at Bowness-on-Solway in May. A **Great Northern Diver** at Bowness-on-Solway on 21st May was followed by three more there on 30th. The first **Manx Shearwater** was logged, at Walney on 2nd April with subsequent site maxima including 750 at Walney and 50 at Bowness-on-Solway. The first



Curlew Sandpiper, Bowness Railings, Darren Robson

European Storm Petrel of the summer was a single off Walney on 24th May followed by two off Workington on 29th. **Northern Gannets** included a maximum 745 at Walney in May. Up to four **European Shags** were seen at Walney

in March with five there in April and one in May. **Little Egrets** consisted of six at Walney, three on the Kent Estuary, two in the Lyth Valley and singles on the Inner Solway and at Haverigg in March. Numbers dropped in April with just two at Walney and a single on the Kent Estuary. Three on the Kent Estuary were the only ones to be recorded in May. A **Great Egret** was reported flying southwest over the A590 near Ayside on 7th March while Hodbarrow hosted a breeding plumaged adult on 21st May; A **White Stork**, believed to be of captive origin, flew over Tebay Services on the M6 on 27th March, followed in April by one that flew northwest over Thacka Beck N.R., Penrith on 9th and another, or the same, circling over Loughrigg Fell on 22nd.

Raptors to waders

A **Red Kite** flew over Crofton near Wigton on 28th March. **Marsh Harriers** were seen at Gilpin Bridge in April and Bowness-on-Solway in May, a poor showing.



Dunlin & Broad-billed Sandpiper, Bowness, Railings, Darren Robson

A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was seen at Geltsdale on 15th April. Both adult **Ospreys** had returned to Bassenthwaite Lake by 3rd April and, in contrary fashion, selected a new nest site. The first egg was laid on 16th and at least one young had hatched by the end of May. Another pair was seen investigating last year's nest. Meanwhile passage birds were observed at Walney, Meathop, Sellafield, the Irt Estuary, Dalton Craggs, Ambleside, Derwent Water, Wetheral, Aglionby, Talkin Tarn, Bowness-on-Solway and Fisher Tarn.



Kentish Plover, Bowness Railings, Nick Franklin

Two **Pied Avocets** were unusual visitors to Walney on 19th April. Away from known breeding sites, two **Little Ringed Plovers** were seen at Walney in April. A **Kentish Plover**, a colour-ringed male, just the fourth ever in the county and the first since 1994, was an all-too-brief visitor to Bowness-on-Solway on 9th May but was soon followed by a rather more obliging **Broad-billed Sandpiper**, the third county record, at the same location from 12th to 13th May. Passage trips of **Eurasian Dotterel** totalled 26 on

three different felltops in April. Single **Curlew Sandpipers** appeared at Walney on 25th April and Bowness Railings from 27th to 30th April. A **Little Stint** was also seen at Bowness Railing on 5th May but, much more unusually, a **Temminck's Stint** at Hodbarrow on 21st May was the first in the county since 1995. **Purple Sandpiper** counts at their favoured sites comprised 46 at Walney and 30 at Workington. A scattering of **Ruff** consisted of four at Campfield/North Plain, two at Wedholme Flow, two at Carr Beds and one at Eskmeals. **Black-tailed Godwit** numbers remained low in March with no double figure counts while a modest increase in April resulted in a maximum count of 26 at North Plain. **Whimbrel** passage was equally unimpressive with peak counts that included 41 at Walney and 40 at Port Carlisle. **Greenshank** were, as usual, initially largely restricted to Walney where monthly maxima comprised six in March, two in April and one in May, until spring passage produced three on the Kent Estuary, three at Bowness-on-Solway and singles at Old Sandsfield, Hodbarrow and the Mite Estuary. Single **Wood Sandpipers** turned up in May on the Kent Estuary, at Walney and at Thacka Beck N.R. Other wader counts in the period included 1000 **Sanderling**, 2000 **Dunlin** and 300 **Ringed Plovers**, all at Walney in May.

Skuas to auks

First skua of the spring was a **Great Skua** past Walney on 31st March followed by a **Pomarine** there on 2nd April as well as a total of four **Arctics** during the month and two **Arctics** in Allonby Bay on 8th April. However, with easterly winds and clear skies predominating, skua passage through the Solway in April was non-existent. With a change in wind direction and cloudier skies, passage finally got underway in May with relatively modest totals of 154 **Pomarine**, 64 **Arctic** and 33 **Great** that were totally eclipsed by a record-

breaking 197 **Long-tailed** that included peaks of 63 on 23rd and an astonishing 115 on 29th which largely comprised a single flock of at least 100 birds. Meanwhile, Walney logged one **Pomarine**, 18 **Arctic**, two **Great** and two **Long-tailed** during the month.

Mediterranean Gull sightings in March comprised two, an adult and the long-staying one-legged third-winter at Workington, two, an adult and a second-summer, at Hodbarrow, two at Haweswater and two at Cardew Moor. Eight **Little Gulls** at Walney on 22nd March were followed by a total of 10 there

between 2nd and 13th April and two on the River Esk at Longtown in April. May saw up to 12 first-summerlings lingering at Port Carlisle, up to five on the River Esk at Longtown and five at Bowness-on-Solway. An adult **Yellow-legged Gull** was found at Whitehaven where it lingered from 19th to 21st March before reappearing from 3rd to 17th April, with another observed



Yellow-legged Gull, Whitehaven, Craig Shaw

at Walney on 13th April. A first-winter **Iceland Gull** put in a brief appearance at Campfield Marsh on 20th March and a second-year bird visited Walney on 19th April. **Kittiwakes** included site maxima of 605 at Walney and 100 at Bowness-on-Solway in March; 145 at Bowness-on-Solway and 130 at Walney in April and 600 at Bowness-on-Solway and 235 at Walney in May.

An unimpressive passage of **Black Terns** produced singles at Walney, Bowness-on-Solway and on the River Esk at Longtown. **Arctic Terns** peaked at a relatively modest 135 at both Walney and Bowness-on-Solway in May. Some 235 **Guillemots** were logged at Walney on 22nd May. Away from St Bees, the only **Black Guillemot** was seen at Walney in May while two **Puffins** at Bowness-on-Solway on 30th April and singles at Walney on two dates in May were unusual.

Owls to buntings

A **Short-eared Owl** appeared at Walney on 19th March, the only record away from potential breeding sites. A **Bee-eater** was heard in flight at White Cross Bay, Windermere on 21st April. A first-summer male **Golden Oriole** lingered,

Recent Reports

albeit elusively, at South Walney from 8th to 18th May. A steady passage of **Meadow Pipits** and **Pied Wagtails** through Walney in March involved 546 and 73 birds respectively while **White Wagtail** passage included 23 alongside the Kent Estuary. Just a single **Water Pipit** frequented Walney on 19th and 22nd March. **Waxwings** continued to be seen in March, with site maxima consisting of 39 in Carlisle, 18 in Grange-over-Sands, 16 in Penrith, 13 in Kendal, five at Bowness Common and three at Heversham but April records were limited to six at Heversham and five in Kendal. **Black Redstarts** turned up on passage at Walney from 17th to 19th March and at Dalton Crags on 25th March. Passerine migration at Walney during April was typified by the early arrival of many species and included good numbers of **Willow Warblers** and **Blackcaps**. A female **Firecrest** was trapped and ringed at Walney on 30th March while a stronger than expected **Goldcrest** passage was evident there from 17th March. The enigmatic and at times elusive **Great Grey Shrike** reappeared at Dalton Crags near Burton-in-Kendal on 7th March, remaining until 9th April. **Hooded Crows** were seen at St Bees Head (where a hybrid was also present), Workington, the Irt Estuary and Walney where perhaps three different birds were logged in May. **Common Crossbills** were limited to four at Port Carlisle and two over Row in the Lyth Valley in May. Sizergh Castle continued to host **Hawfinches** with a maximum of 16 reported though a flock of 20 at Crosthwaite and one at Dalton Crags were less expected. A **Snow Bunting** was seen on Helvellyn on 24th March.



Firecrest, Walney, Walneyboblogspot.com

As ever, I'm indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list individually. Feel free to send records by e-mail to ian.kinley@btinternet.com
NB *It is important that observers also submit records to the appropriate Regional Recorder at the end of the year. Please see either the latest edition of *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria* or the Cumbria Bird Club website <http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk> for details of how to do so.*

Ian Kinley

Arrival dates of migrants in spring 2011

Below are listed (in taxonomic order) the earliest arrival dates for 2010, with locations, of the commoner summer migrants as reported at the time of writing. In some cases (e.g. Common Sandpiper, Blackcap and Chiffchaff) it is difficult to distinguish genuine migrants from overwintering birds so a bit of informed guesswork has been employed.

Species	Location	Date
Common Sandpiper	Rockcliffe	8 th April
Sandwich Tern	Walney, Hodbarrow & Silecroft	27 th March
Common Tern	Hodbarrow	24 th April
Arctic Tern	Walney	18 th April
Little Tern	Hodbarrow	24 th April
Cuckoo	Isel Bridge	8 th April
Swift	Waterside & Kendal	20 th April
Sand Martin	Longtown Ponds	14 th March
Swallow	Walney	22 nd March
House Martin	Ormsgill Reservoir	29 th March
Tree Pipit	Watchtree	7 th April
Yellow Wagtail	Longtown	8 th April
Redstart	St Bees Head	3 rd April
Whinchat	Walney	19 th April
Wheatear	Sellafield	13 th March
Ring Ouzel	Geltsdale	28 th March
Grasshopper Warbler	Kirksanton	10 th April
Sedge Warbler	Walney	14 th April
Reed Warbler	Siddick Pond	24 th April
Lesser Whitethroat	Bowness-on-Solway	23 rd April
Whitethroat	Walney & Bowness-on-Solway	17 th April
Garden Warbler	Beckermest	10 th April
Blackcap	Walney	31 st March
Wood Warbler	Miltonrigg Wood	17 th April
Chiffchaff	Watchtree	14 th March
Willow Warbler	Hodbarrow	27 th March
Spotted Flycatcher	Walney	2 nd May
Pied Flycatcher	Borrowdale	7 th April

Ian Kinley

Cogra Cormorants

Cogra Moss is a small reservoir located at the foot of Blake and Knock Murton fells on the NW edge of the Lake District. It was constructed to provide drinking water for the Arlecdon and Frizington areas, but this function has long since finished. Today its only 'use' is for fishing – I believe brown trout stocked by Cockermouth Angling Club.

As one of my WeBS sites it is fairly unproductive with only small totals of a few common species. Goldeneye and Goosander in winter (if you are lucky) and Great Crested Grebe nesting (but probably failing) are the highlights. On most visits I would find between one and four Cormorants. All a bit dull.

At the end of my May visit, I was chatting about my WeBS records with one of the anglers who knows the site and is fairly well informed about birds. "Did you see any cormorants?" he asked. "Just the one today" I replied. He then related a real fisherman's tale.

Back in late February (when the Moss was partly iced over) he had seen a flock of about 150 Cormorants fly over, heading NW (possibly from Ennerdale). Fifteen of them broke away, flew down to the Moss, swam around encircling the fish which then began jumping out of the water. He reckoned that each bird caught two fish.

The next two days a similar event took place except that there were 50 and then 30 Cormorants 'fishing'. The angler reckoned that £6000 worth of fish had been taken and had to be re-stocked.

My comment was that stocking the Moss was a bit like me putting food out for the garden birds – leading to nice meals for the visiting Sparrowhawk.

Bill Pigram

Guidance for Contributors

My aim is to produce an "inclusive" magazine that has something for everybody. All contributions, from a two-line anecdote (a "Champagne Moment") to a six-page semi-scientific article, will be considered. Where space is limiting, priority is always given to items of Cumbria relevance, but there is often space for other material, for example, members' trip reports.

I am always happy to advise or assist in preparing a submission. How to submit your offering is indicated on the back cover.

Editor

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Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is September 1st 2011

If you have a computer: please send contributions to Dave Piercy

- on disk (your disk will be returned if requested); or
- as e-mail attachments to daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk

If you do not have a computer: please send in as clear a format as possible to Dave Piercy,

YHA Derwentwater, Borrowdale, Keswick CA12 5UR; tel 017687 77246

Opinions expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of Cumbria Bird Club, its Editor, nor any of its Officers.

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