

BIRD NEWS
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Club news and announcements

Subscriptions

The Cumbria Bird Club 2015/2016 subscription were due on 1st October. If you receive a subscription form with this mailing then according to my records we have not yet received your payment. Please let me know if this is not the case. Please pay overdue subs as soon as possible. Thanks.

AGM report

At the AGM of October 2nd 2015 Malcolm Priestly was elected to Vice-Chair. All other council members were re-elected (see inside cover for details). The Chairman and Treasurer gave full reports on the year's activities and Malcolm Priestly gave a short presentation on the Goosander survey. Full minutes are available on request from the secretary.

Meetings programme winter 2015/2016

Wednesday 6th Jan 2016: Tullie House 7.15pm Joint with Carlisle NHS 'Ethiopia - Disappearing Paradise' *Angus Hogg*

Monday 25th Jan 2016: Friend's Meeting House Stramongate 7.30pm Joint with Kendal NHS, 'Hen Harriers' *James Bray of the RSPB*

The annual Cumbria bird club bird race will be held on Sunday the 10th of January 2016, and will finish at 5.30 pm at the Anglers Arms, Haverthwaite, Nr Ulverston.

New teams are always welcome, so why not give it a go! It's fun and exciting. To enter or for more information about the race see the next two pages. Good luck to everyone taking part and let's hope for good weather on the day.

Phil Evans

Submitting records

Please submit all your records for 2015 to your regional recorder (contact details on inside cover) as soon as possible. You can submit written records on cards (available from recorders) or electronically on a downloaded spreadsheet available at www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk/reporting/guidelines which also has guidelines on submitting records (guidelines also available in the 2013 Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria).

Editor

Cumbria Bird Club Winter Bird Race

Sunday 10th of January 2016

Finishes at 5.30pm at the Anglers Arms, Haverthwaite, Nr Ulverston, LA12 8AJ

Object of the race – To gain the greatest number of species of wild birds within the borders of Cumbria County between early morning and 5.30pm on January 10th 2016.

Rule 1 Three out of four or two out of three or both if only two in a team, must hear or see each species claimed.
If you want to do the race solo then that's ok too.

Rule 2 Start time is from when your team is fully assembled on the day.

Rule 3 For late arrivals at the finish a penalty of one species per five minutes of lateness will be deducted.

Rule 4 Only true wild birds count! (no budgies or dodgy wildfowl)

Food and drink

Consists of steak and ale pie, chips and mushy peas with a veggie option of vegetable lasagne includes tea and coffee.

Cost £10 per head payable on the day.

Closing date for entries is Sunday 3rd of January 2016.

This is so the Anglers Arms can order in the food as it is all freshly prepared in their kitchens.

See the entry form for details overleaf.

CBC Winter Bird Race - Sunday January 10th 2016

Entry Form

Name of Team

--

Name of the Team Members

Please indicate how many members of your team will want steak and ale pie, chips and mushy peas or the veggie option of vegetable lasagne. £10 per person and includes tea or coffee.

Steak and ale pie, chips and mushy peas	
Vegetable lasagne	

Entry forms to be returned before the 3rd January please.

Via Email to philevans64rbp@gmail.com

or phone Phil Evans on 07837769359 with your details.

or via post

Phil Evans
64 Row Brow Park
Dearham
Maryport
Cumbria
CA15 7JU

Cumbria Willow Tit survey 2016

Background

From 2010 the Willow Tit has been monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), however there are very few Cumbria records submitted, to pass on to the panel. The low number of records does not portray an accurate picture of the species in the county, hence the need for a more comprehensive survey for Willow Tits in the county.



Willow Tit, Bowness, Roger Ridley

Willow Tits have a preference for wet, young woodland or scrub and a shrub layer between 0-2 m is important. Territory size is large, about 4 - 5 ha and Willow Tits excavate their own nest hole, standing dead wood and/or dead limbs for the nest site are important. In a Midlands study, the most frequent tree species used for nests were willows, silver birch and elder; alder, hawthorn, hazel, wild cherry and a conifer species were also used (Lewis et al. 2009).

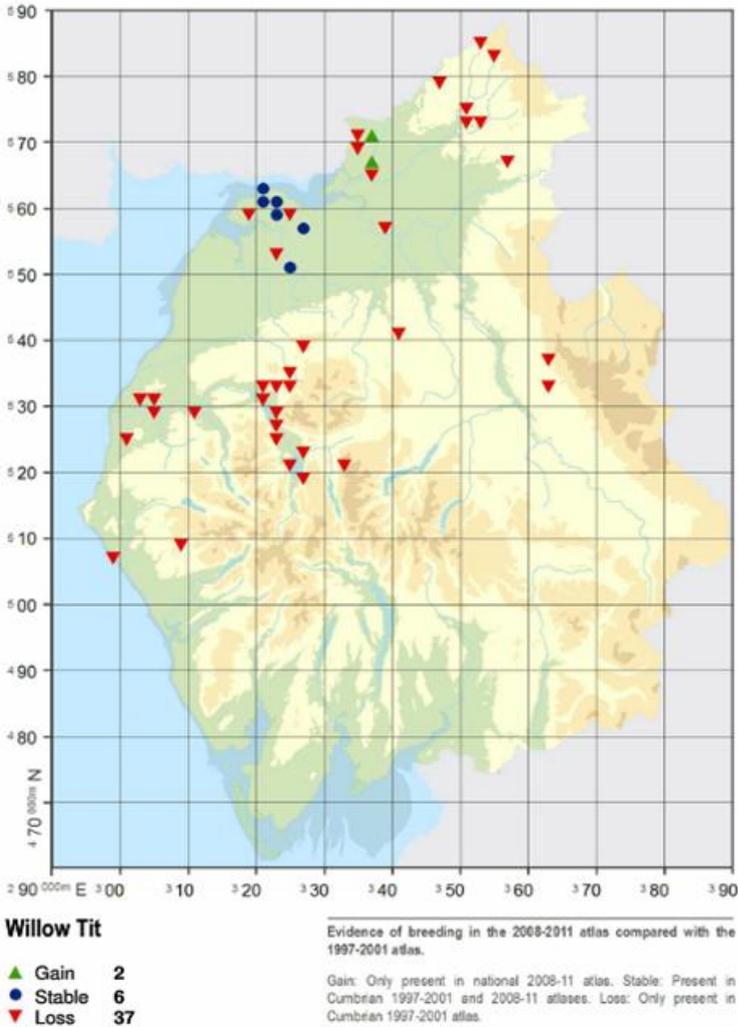
The Willow Tit is now a scarce breeder in Britain with a reduced range. It is a Red List Bird of Conservation Concern and nationally there has been a significant decline in Willow Tit distribution; a 50% reduction in the breeding range between 1988-91 and 2008-11. It is now very localised south of a line between the Severn and the Wash; its core distribution area is the Midlands and parts of the north of England, Wales and south-west Scotland. In 2000 there were estimated to be 8,500 territories (Baker et al. 2006) in the UK, this is now considered to be too high by Holling & RBBP (2012) and they suggested a population of 1,500 pairs; however Musgrove (2013) gave a population estimate of 3,500 territories.

In Cumbria there has been an even greater decline, the reduction in range between the 1997-2001 tetrad atlas and the 2008-11 atlas has been 80%, see the map right. On a 10km scale there has been a reduction in range in the breeding season of 85% since the 1968-72 national atlas and a 66% reduction since the 1988-91 national atlas.

This species has now a very restricted breeding range in the county and is fairly likely to become extinct here in the near future. Now it is only regularly encountered around the inner Solway. During the winter atlases however they

WILLOW TIT Ten Year Breeding Distribution Change

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were recorded in 19 tetrads (compared to 8 in the breeding season). Seven of these winter tetrads were in the North Lakes in former breeding ranges. Given this species is very vocal outside the latter part of the breeding season it will be more detectable during the winter. The low population density of this species will also add to the problem of locating them. To address this, the survey will use playback of calls to locate them.

Survey methodology

Willow Tit is a resident species and largely sedentary, so birds will be present within, or near, breeding territories during the winter when they can be easier to detect. Song starts early in the year (from February onwards) and is a good way to detect birds on territory.

Playback of songs and calls is an effective way to elicit a response from territorial birds and so confirm presence. The methodology will consist of two surveys per site between February and March along a walked transect, stopping every 100 m to play calls and listen for Willow Tits responding. In other counties where this methodology has been carried out, Willow Tits have been found in areas where they have previously thought to have been lost, so any suitable habitat will be worth checking out. The main aim of the survey will be to target sites with recent records of Willow Tits, but will be open to anyone wanting to look at their local patch.

If you are interested in taking part in this survey, please get in touch - tel.07818 806991 or email swesterberg@btinternet.com to receive the full survey methodology. Anyone taking part will need some form of sound playback equipment (smart phones seem to work). As it is important to use the same sound file as there can be variability in response to different calls, the sound file will be supplied to those wishing to take part.

Sight records

For this species, it would be very useful if all records can be submitted to the regional bird recorders in the usual way. See www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk/reporting/guidelines

References

- Baker, H., Stroud, D.A., Aebischer, N.J., Cranswick, P.A., Gregory, R.D., McSorley, C.A., Noble, D.G. and Rehfisch, M.M. 2006 Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. *British Birds* 99, 22-44
- Gilbert, G., Gibbons, D.W. and Evans, J. 1998. *Bird Monitoring Methods*. RSPB, Sandy, UK.
- Holling, M. & Rare Breeding Birds Panel. 2012. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2010. *British Birds* 105, 352-416.
- Lewis, A.J.G., Amar, A., Charman, E.C. & Stewart, F.R.P. 2009. The decline of the Willow Tit in Britain. *British Birds* 102, 386-393.
- Musgrove, A., *et al*, 2013. Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. *British Birds* 106, 64-100.

Stephen Westerberg

A Cumbria Wood Warbler survey

At a recent CBC council meeting a proposal to undertake a county-wide Wood Warbler survey was considered.

On a national scale, the 2007-11 Bird Atlas revealed a 37% contraction in the range of Wood Warblers since the 1988-91 Breeding Atlas. Furthermore, records from the Breeding Bird Survey indicated a 65% population decrease between 1995 and 2010 resulting in the current red UK conservation status of the species. The greater proportion of British birds is found in Wales and Scotland but Cumbria remains one of the most important strongholds of Wood Warblers in England. The national decline is mirrored in Cumbria where the first county tetrad atlas (1997-2001) identified 269 occupied tetrads whilst Wood Warblers were recorded in only 135 tetrads during the recent atlas period (2008-12).



The last national Wood Warbler survey was organised by the BTO in 1984. Subsequently, atlas projects and BBS records have produced the best estimates of trends in the population and distribution of the species. However, atlas fieldwork, mainly based on timed tetrad visits, is unlikely to give an accurate picture of a bird whose habitat is often relatively inaccessible and is difficult to detect outside a fairly short window of time at the height of spring. In addition, the number of BBS sites which include suitable habitat gives a very limited sample size in Cumbria.

A Cumbria Wood Warbler survey would have four principal objectives.

1. To update the current distribution of Wood Warblers.
2. To establish a population estimate for the county.
3. To record the breeding status of birds holding territory.
4. To investigate environmental factors which may be affecting Wood Warbler populations.

It is proposed to conduct a pilot survey in May/June 2016 to test and refine fieldwork methodology and to offer opportunities for anyone interested in becoming more familiar with Wood Warblers and their habitats. A full survey would be undertaken in 2017 aiming to maximise visits to recently occupied and historical sites throughout the county.

Further details will be included in the spring newsletter.

Malcolm Priestly

Colour-marking scheme - Goldfinch

From an estimated population of just three pairs in 1990 there are currently around 35-40 pairs of Goldfinches breeding in private gardens amongst the urban area on the centre of the Walney Island.

However, this does not appear to reflect the increasing number of birds that are recorded or trapped annually by the observatory, particularly during passage periods.



Goldfinch, Brian Fenwick

Controls and recoveries of previously ringed birds show that there is evidence of a movement of Scottish birds through the island with recoveries southwards to France. However a significant wintering population also remains on the island. During 2011, Walney Bird Observatory submitted a proposal to the British Trust for Ornithology to implement a Goldfinch colour mark scheme on the island. This was duly approved by the colour ringing officer and in 2012 efforts began to individually mark the first of 1000 birds using the following ring sequence on the tarsus of the birds:-

Left leg - a BTO metal ring above a colour ring
Right leg- two colour rings

Colours used in the individual combinations are Red, Dark Blue, Yellow, Dark Green, Orange, Pale Blue, Black, White, Carmine and Violet.

In 2015, just over three years into the project, the last of the 1000 birds was marked. The main object of the scheme is to ascertain whether the wintering flocks that are seen regularly on the island are the local breeding population or involve birds from further afield with the local breeding population moving further south.

Individuals will be able to be identified, thus enabling their movements to be tracked across the island and further afield. This will enable a pattern of occurrence to be developed for the birds that are regularly seen and to show whether the birds involved in the autumn influx quickly move through before reappearing during spring passage as they head back north. However, an aside to this will be the monitoring of longevity amongst the island population.

Goldfinches are regular and increasing visitors to garden feeding stations throughout Britain making the likelihood of re-sightings greater. This is likely to include Cumbrian gardens therefore we would be grateful for notification, giving the full details of colour ring sequences, of any sightings to: - walneyobs@gmail.com

Colin Raven



Walney Bird Observatory is one of a network of British Trust for Ornithology affiliated Bird Observatories scattered around the coast of the British Isles and is the only accredited mainland observatory in northwest Britain.

A voluntary organisation, it receives no external funding and is supported entirely by membership subscription and donations and is at the forefront of bird conservation.

Volunteers have monitored local bird populations and annual migration through the island, using the medium of daily census and ringing activities, since being founded in 1964.

Its activities provide a wealth of long-term data on population trends for many species and continue to discover new facts about migration routes and wintering areas. Despite being located away from the majority of the Cumbrian population, on the extreme southwest tip of the county, it is still nonetheless **your** observatory. Although perhaps living too far away to get actively involved in the daily operations you can still support the ideals of the observatory and the important work being undertaken.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single: £15.00

Family: £20.00

Friend: £7.00

To request a membership form or for further details please contact: keith.parkes5@bopenworld.com

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

Tarn Bay, Eskmeals, 16th – 19th November 2015



Desert Wheatear, Tarn Bay, 16 Nov 2015, Dave Shackleton

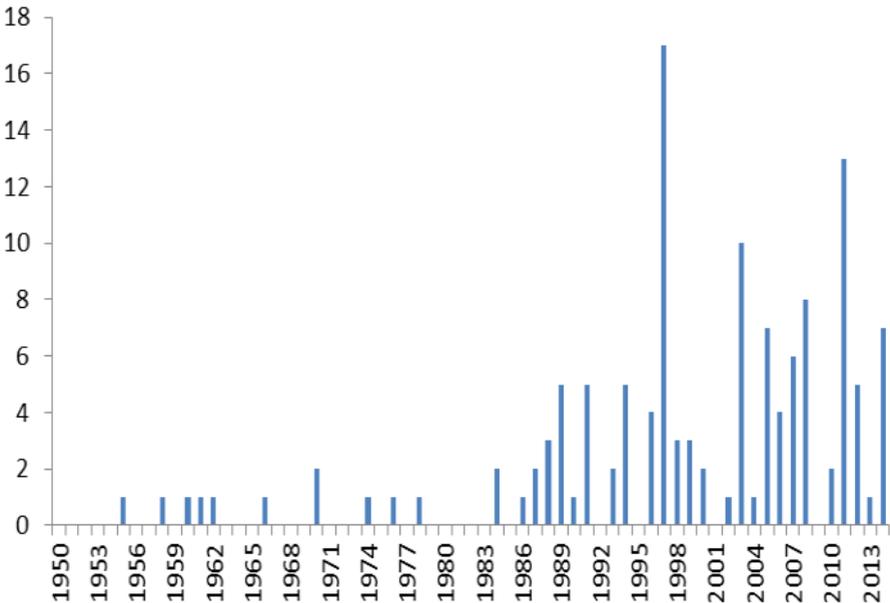
While in the process of carrying out a high tide WeBS count at Tarn Bay south of Eskmeals on the southwest coast in the afternoon of 16th November, I flushed a Wheatear from the beach edge. The weather conditions were somewhat challenging with a howling south westerly gale creating a blizzard of foam globules blowing off the sea and consequently I had my head down and was bent double ploughing into the wind. I instantly thought that it was a bit late in the year for even a very late Northern Wheatear. In mild panic I realised I had no idea where the bird had gone.

Fortunately there was a huge pile of old fencing wire, a remnant of the 2013 storms, within a few yards and after a minute or so I could see movement within. The bird wasn't being particularly co-operative though, and it was difficult to get a good view from a viewpoint out of the battering wind. Eventually it dawned that this was a rare wheatear and more panic set in as I wasn't sure which one! I had seen the Walney Desert Wheatear, a first year female in 1986, and this looked nothing like it. Following a few hastily digiscoped pictures and a dash back to the car, resort to the only field guide I had with me wasn't especially helpful! A quick phone call to Roy Bottomley confirmed the salient identification features of Desert, Pied and Black-eared

and I was able to confirm from the photographs that it was an adult male Desert Wheatear. Unfortunately, it was by now mid-afternoon with little daylight left and phone calls to the few local birders I knew in the area failed to get an answer. I would have to hope that it stayed put for others to see the bird the following day, and fortunately it remained for a further four days.

This is the second record for Cumbria, the first being the aforementioned individual at South Walney in November 1986. Up to and including 2014 there have been 138 records in Great Britain. Records currently average about four per year with peak years in 1997, 2003 and 2011. There have been a further four so far this year including this bird, One was in the spring and then one on St Marys, Isles of Scilly on 21st September and one at Thornham, Norfolk on 5th November.

Records per year in Great Britain since 1950



(data from BBRC Website)

Most are in the autumn in the south and south east and there have been only seven records in the northwest of England. All except one have been on the coast.

Desert Wheatear Oenanthe deserti

Records in northwest England

Year Date	Location	County	No	Age
1986 15th-21st Nov	South Walney	Cumbria	1	1st winter female
1991 5th-19th Nov	Rossall Point, Fleetwood	Lancashire	1	1st winter female
1994 11th-21st Nov	Blackpool Airport	Lancashire	1	1st winter male
2002 5th-17th Jan	Niarbyl	Isle of Man	1	female
2007 12th-14th Dec	Crewe	Cheshire	1	1st winter female
2008 12th Oct	Crosby	Lancashire	1	1st winter male
2015 16th-19th Nov	Tarn Bay	Cumbria	1	1st winter female

Desert Wheatears breed in North Africa from Morocco to the Middle East and in the Caucasus and Central Asia from Central Iran and North Pakistan to Mongolia and Northern China. Most North African birds winter in the Sahara and Sahel regions from Mauritania east to Ethiopia and Somalia, though some remain in their breeding areas. Asian breeders winter on the Arabian Peninsula to Northwest India. Three or four subspecies have been recognised but very few British records have been assigned to sub species, though those that have include both North African and Asian birds (Knox & Parkin 2010, Hudson et al 2015).

References

- Hudson et al. 2015. Report on rare birds in Great Britain 2014. *British Birds* 108: 563-633
- Knox, D.T. & Parkin, A.G. 2010. *The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland*. Christopher Helm, London.



Desert Wheatear, Tarn Bay, 16 Nov 2015, Dave Shackleton

Bird legislation in the UK



Snow Goose with Barnacle Geese, Bowness, Nick Franklin

The laws relating to the pursuit of birds and mammals in Britain date back to at least 1124. Initially they were largely aimed at protecting hunting including falconry and persisted relatively unaltered up to the Victorian era. Such early legislation only represented a small and restricted list of species considered as “game” and there was little or no consideration given to the conservation requirements of other species.

The first legislation to govern the exploitation of birds throughout Britain was the *Wild Birds Protection Act of 1880*. For the first time this provided a measure of protection to many species not particularly designated as “game”, at least in the provision of a closed season (2nd March to 31st July). An amendment to the Act in 1886 regional administrations (county councils) were given powers to either lengthen or shorten the season. In addition they were given the authority to declare local bylaws, without recourse to the Secretary of State, to give species regional protection.

Other amendments were made during the early part of the 20th century. As a result of these amendments, ducks and waders were protected by a close season but geese were not, and could be shot or netted at any time with the landowners permission. In an attempt to clarify the situation an act called *The Wild Birds (Ducks and Geese) Protection Act of 1939* was introduced. This laid down a new hunting season from 12th August to 31st January with powers for county councils to extend the period to 20th February. No attempt was made to limit the quarry list and thus it remained legal to kill any duck or goose, however rare, in the ‘open season’.

Bird legislation in the UK

There then followed the enactment of the *Protection of Birds Act 1954*. The season was altered once more to the period 1st September to 31st January extended to 20th February below the high tide mark. The new act decreed a national list of quarry species and the provision of sanctuaries and for controlling methods used to kill or take birds. It also made provision for the protection of quarry species during periods of severe weather. In 1967 an amendment to the 1954 act prohibited the sale of dead wild geese. This the result of lobbying by wildfowlers dismayed at the exploitation of species by commercial gunners in Scotland.

In 1981 completely new legislation was enacted following UK entry into the EEC in 1972. This resulted in the *1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act* which meant the removal from the quarry list of both Curlew and Redshank, and a reduction in geese species to four, ducks to nine and the wader list to three. The 1981 Act also reduced the number of so-called pest species which may be killed by authorised persons. These included Cormorant, Goosander, Red-breasted Merganser, Rock Dove and Stock Dove. One bird was added to the list - Collared Dove.



Stock Dove & Woodpigeon, Carlisle, Roger Ridley

As in the previous act, provision was retained for the issue of licenses to allow otherwise protected species to be taken for specific purposes. The basic principle of the 1981 act is that all birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and some rare birds afforded additional protection from disturbance during the breeding season. There are exceptions to this principle, notably in respect of wildfowl, game birds and various species classed as pests and likely to cause damage.

Since the last act there have been amendments in relation to protection of the House Sparrow and the Starling. This together with the status of our birds in relation to the protection they receive will be the subject of a future article.

Mike Carrier

I am indebted to John Young of Dumfries for his permission to use material from his works on this subject.

Short Notes

Swift breeding season at Lowgill, Sedbergh

In 2015 we had 14 pairs of breeding pairs of Swifts at Railway Terrace, Lowgill, which is the highest number in the past 14 years. Eleven pairs nested in open eaves and three in hollow nest bricks built into the wall. The fourth brick was occupied but we think that the Swifts did not breed. In the previous three years we have had 12 pairs at Lowgill.

This record number in 2015 is despite what is regarded as a 'poor' year for Swifts: the cold spring and summer meant that fewer Swifts were seen.



Swift chicks, Lowgill, Tanya Hoare

Tanya Hoare



Heron eating Lamprey, River Kent, 8 Nov 15, Allan Sumner

Recent reports



Whooper Swans , Castle Carrock Reservoir, 13 Oct 15, Adam Moan

Wildfowl to Grouse

On Walney the first **Whooper Swan** of Autumn was a single logged on 27th September, numbers peaked here at 44 on 4th November. Elsewhere the first on 13th October were separate parties of ten and eight over Walton Moss and Carlisle Airport respectively. Small numbers were seen in many places but of more significance were 26 resting on the sea off Workington on 27th October, 90 at Wedholme Flow on 30th October, 54 including just one juvenile at Hodbarrow on 4th November and 62 at Blackdyke including ten juveniles. In the south of the county five were at Ulpha Meadows briefly on 20th October.

The first **Pink-footed Geese** were 15 over Bowness and ten over Walney on 18th September. A record autumn passage over Walney produced a massive southbound movement of 6130 birds logged through the morning of 26th September followed by 5115 the next morning. Elsewhere they were recorded in many places including 200 at Burgh Marsh Point, 770 going NNE to the estuary over Dalston on 31st October and 80 at Haweswater on 3rd & 9th November. Sixteen **White-fronted Goose** (race not specified) were at Sillioth on 16th November and another at Blackdyke on 16th November and thereafter there were two **Greenland race** birds at Eskmeals CWT on 19th November. A significant 600 **Greylag Geese** were on the River Esk at Ravenglass on 11th October. A **Snow Goose** was with Greylags on Abbot Moss, Armathwaite on 27th September and an adult white morph bird accompanied Barnacle Goose flocks on the south Solway from 10th November and was seen by many observers near Bowness, Cardurnock and on the Wampool estuary and the marshes on the south side. The first **Barnacle Goose** flock reported was of 800 on Burgh Marsh Point on 1st October with numbers building up thereafter on the south Solway and



Snow Goose, Bowness Viaduct, 10 Nov 15, Nick Franklin

Wampool Estuary. On 29th September the first of the wintering flock of **Brent Geese** were back on Walney with 10 pale-bellied and 3 dark-bellied birds recorded. The flock built to 140 pale-bellied and 50 dark-bellied by 7th November.

A male **Mandarin Duck** was at Talkin Tarn on 25th October. **Gadwall** sightings at Hodbarrow peaked at 35 on 4th November, there were up to four in Ulpha Meadows in the period and 11 at Sunbiggin Tarn on 25th November. Sixty-five **Pintail** were at Anthorn on 8th October, 70 on Campfield scrape on 11th and an impressive 1730 in the Duddon Estuary on 18th. **Garganey** were reported only from the south of the county with up to two at Ulpha Meadows on 9th September and various other dates, one on Walney on 11th and 12th September and a single bird was at Hodbarrow on 18th September. There were 133 **Shoveler** at Bowness on 28th September and there were a number of sightings of up to ten on Walney. On Walney a female **Scaup** stayed from 14th until 26th October, four were offshore on 25th October, a drake was offshore on 11th October and another was on the island on 28th November. Elsewhere a single bird was at Weddicar on 11th November, a female was on the River Eden at Scotby on November 21st and one was on Bassenthwaite on 24th. In the north of the county there was a drake **Eider** off Parton on 19th September. The only **Long-tailed Ducks** reported were a single at Langwathby on 25th October and two on the River Wampool at Anthorn on 23rd November.



Bufflehead, Ullswater, Roger Ridley

There were 120 **Common Scoter** off Walney on 12th September, a pair were on Ullswater on 24th October and a flock numbering about 30 birds was seen off Bowness on several dates in November.

A drake **Bufflehead** was found on Ullswater but proved to have a yellow ring and was presumably a similarly ringed escapee that had been seen on the River Lowther previously. The only **Goldeneye** reported were three at Bowness on Solway on 15th October, the first of the Autumn on Walney on 24th October where there were six on 30th and two at Talkin Tarn on 29th October. One hundred **Red Grouse** were on Shap Fells on 1st October and five on Helton Fell on 3rd November.

Divers to Grebes

The only significant numbers of divers reported were 125 **Red-throated** at Allonby on 26th September and 589 (diver species) in a five hour period on a falling tide again at Allonby on 15th October. The highest of regular counts from Walney were the 11 on 7th October. A **Great Northern Diver** was off Walney on 22nd October and one frequented Hodbarrow RSPB reserve from 17th to 22nd November. The only **Fulmar** records came from Walney with five off the island on 12th September and a single on 13th November. Another poor Autumn for **Leach's Petrel** with just a single off Walney on 15th November.

The first half of October saw 40 **Gannets** past Harrington in 30 mins on 6th October and 20 at Saltom Bay on 13th. There were 200 feeding off Silecroft on 18th October and the highest count off Walney was of 280 on 22nd October. The first **Shag** of the Autumn was off Walney on 3rd September then up to eight were logged on various dates to 22nd November. Around 1100 **Cormorant** were seen at Workington on 16th November.

There was only one reported **Great White Egret** in north of the county – at Campfield on 22nd to 26th October and again on 15th November as well as Burgh Marsh on 9th November before flying over onto Rockliffe Marsh. In the south birds were reported from Ulpha Meadows up to 11th September, the River Kent up to 28th October with two there on 27th September. One was also at Humphrey Head on 30th September and again on the Kent at Arnside on 22nd November. **Little Egret** continued to be a feature of south Solway

with amongst many records the following double figure counts at Port Carlisle 18 - 8th September, 10 - 26th October and 12 on 29th October. Other records were 16 on Rockcliffe Marsh on 4th October, five on Roa Island road on 25th October and six on the River Esk at Ravenglass on 11th October. Numbers on Walney peaked as at least 71 gathered as the light faded on 16th October. A **Bittern** was on the wetland at Brigsteer on 16th September.

A **Slavonian Grebe** frequented Hodbarrow RSPB for three days from 22nd October. **Great Crested Grebe** were reported from Bowness on Solway with 27 (in 10 minutes) on 18th September, 25 on 1st October and 57 in an hour on the falling tide on 13th October.

Raptors to Waders

Three **Red Kites** were seen in north of the county – at Linstock on 5th September, Watchtree NR on 16th October and at Moorhouse on 25th November. A juvenile **Marsh Harrier** was on Rosgill Moor on 9th September, the second-year male appeared on Walney on 10th and 18th September and a white wing-tagged bird was reported from Campfield Reserve on 8th October. At Ulpha Meadows there was a second calendar year male on 6th September and other sightings of a juvenile to 16th October also a juvenile at Foulshaw Moss. Away from the Solway Mosses and coastal marshes where there were reports throughout the period of **Hen Harrier** there was one in Mosedale above Swindale on 9th September, a male hunting on Walney on 16th October, a “ringtail” at Sunbiggin Tarn on 19th October and a 2nd year male at Ulpha Meadows on 25th November.

A female **Goshawk** was at one of the Border Mosses on 13th October. Two sub adult **Rough-legged Buzzards** were recorded, one from Cardurnock on 9th October and the other at Sunbiggin Tarn on 19th October. Late **Ospreys** were on the River Kent on 21st September and 1st October with the last south of Carlisle on 25th October. **Merlin** and **Peregrine** were recorded regularly throughout the period from the south Solway with additional records of single Merlin at Ulpha Meadows on dates from 14th October to 23rd November and at Warwick on Eden on 13th November, up to three on Walney and of a Peregrine at Cliburn Moss on 19th November.

A **Water Rail** on 30th September was the first of the autumn for Walney. An unseasonal **Avocet** was near Bowness on 14th November. The wintering **Golden Plover** flock on Askham Fell held 300 on 14th November. The flock built up at Anthorn/Cardurnock with 1500 there on 9th October – this included a leucistic bird – possibly the bird illustrated in CBC Spring 2015 Newsletter - and on 14th November a full summer plumage bird which was constantly harassed by the other flock members who were nearly all in full winter

Recent reports



Avocet, Bowness-on-Solway, 14 Nov 2015, Tony Marsh

plumage. An **American Golden Plover** was with the flock on 2nd & 19th October. The only significant number of **Lapwing** reported were 900 in River Eden Channel off Burgh Marsh point on 20th October with 119 at Carlisle Airport the same day. Up to two **Whimbrel** were on Walney from 1st to 13th September, one was at Hodbarrow on 8th September and the next day one was at Bowness but more unusual were three at Allonby on 25th November.



Turnstones, Parton, Tony Marsh

Walney held seven **Black-tailed Godwit** on 4th September and ones and twos on various dates. Numbers at Hodbarrow peaked at 14 on 8th September and there were sightings from Anthorn where there were eight on 1st September and other single birds around the Solway plus one at Eskmeals on 6th October.

An impressive 795 **Turnstone** were on Walney on 13th September. There were 100+ **Bar-tailed Godwit** at Grune Point on 22nd October. **Ruff** numbers were poor with one at Campfield RSPB reserve in early September and five there on 3rd, a juvenile was at Old Sandsfield on 1st September. Walney logged two on 3rd September. Juvenile **Curlew Sandpipers** were at Bowness Railings during September with two together on 27th, a single bird tarried on Walney from 12th to 21st September. The first **Purple Sandpiper** graced Walney on 27th October and there were six there on 16th November.

Little Stints were also present at Bowness during September with a maximum of four. The River Esk at Ravenglass supported four **Green Sandpipers** and four **Common Sandpipers** on 3rd September with three and two respectively still there on 11th October. A single **Green Sandpiper** on Keekle Flashes on 5th September was a new species for this site. Two

were also at Muncaster on 17th October and there was a single at Ulpha Meadows on both 29th September and 1st and 4th October, one on the River Waver at Waterside on 18th October and finally six on the River Eden at Scotby on November 21st. A **Spotted Redshank** was with the Redshank roost at Arnside on several dates during October as well as one at Hodbarrow on 6th October and a single bird at Tarn Bay, Bootle on 7th November. Around 1000 **Common Redshank** were in the roost at Port Carlisle on 22nd October and 1525 were on Walney on 13th September.

On 1st September there were two **Greenshank** at Old Sandsfield, one at Anthorn and three at Campfield Marsh. Walney's numbers peaked at 23 on 4th and 29th September. Singles were at Hodbarrow on 8th September and 17th November and at Ulpha Meadows on 16th September. They were also regularly seen on the River Esk at Ravenglass – nine on 3rd September, seven on 11th October and still four on 25th October. Various sites in the Rockliffe area had six on 10th September, nine on 19th, six on 29th and finally three on 11th October; there was also a single bird at Glasson Point on 23rd November. A **Wood Sandpiper** remained on Walney to 4th September. Two **Jack Snipe** were found at Cliburn Moss on 26th November and on 16th November four were amongst 100 **Snipe** on Walney where there was also a single on 29th November. An influx saw three **Woodcock** on Walney on 28th October, a single was on Binsey on 2nd November and another was on Muncaster Fell the next day.

Skuas to Gulls

Walney logged the only **Arctic Skuas** on 12th September and 13th November. Two **Great Skuas** were logged off Walney on 12th September and singles on 25th October and 20th November. The only other birds reported were two seen on the Solway at Bowness on both 10th & 16th November.



Guillemot, Bowness Railings, Tony Marsh

A timed count on 16th October at Salthom Bay, Whitehaven found **auk species** were passing north at a rate equivalent to 2,600 per hour. On 6th November there were 154 **Razorbill** off Walney. A **Black Guillemot** was off Walney on 23rd October and 14th November. Small numbers of **Sandwich Tern** were off Walney up to 23rd September and a single was at Lowca on 28th September. On 9th September a juvenile **Black Tern** was lingering to feed close offshore at Walney. Two **Little Gulls** were at Bowness on Solway on 9th November.

There was the regular build up of **Mediterranean Gulls** in the north-west of the county with singles at Silloth on 22nd September and Allonby on 10th October and the largest numbers at Workington – 27 on 22nd October and 17 on 1st and 5th November. In the south there was a bird at Roundsea on 27th October and one at Roosebeck outfalls on 23rd to 24th November. There were 11300 **Common Gulls** in the Hardendale Quarry roost. There were still **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** in the north of the county with 100 at Abbeytown on 3rd November. A **Glaucous Gull** roosted on the rising tide on Walney on 14th November. Significant numbers of **Greater Black-backed Gulls** were 84 at Workington on 5th November and 20 at Bowness on Solway on 9th.

Owls to Buntings

Welcome sightings of **Little Owl**, a declining species on Walney, were logged on various dates from 22nd September. **Long-eared Owl** was a September highlight on Walney, there were three there on 5th and singles on 1st, 7th and 30th.



Barn Owl, Newton Arlosh, Tony Marsh

Barn, Little & Short-eared Owls were all seen on St Bees North Head on 28th October with further sightings of **Short-eared** from Grune Point on 16th October and 14th November also on six dates between 26th October and 21st November from Bowness on Solway in north (a bird flying north across the Estuary) and Derwent Howe Workington in the south. Walney held up to two birds on various dates. These and a single at Ulpha Meadows on 3rd November were part of a wider influx of continental birds.

At a time when there were many other reports in the country a **Swift sps.** reported at Whinnow, Wigton was regarded as a “**probably Pallid**”. Two **Kingfishers** were on the River Eden west of Rockcliffe on 19th September and one on the River Waver at Waterside. Three **Bee-eaters** continued to be seen into early September at the Low Gelt site but at least one wandered further afield with single birds being seen at Warwick on Eden & Burnrigg.

Great Grey Shrikes were reported from Bothel on 28th October, at Jockey Shield, Castle Carrock on 3rd & 4th November and at Great Langdale on 10th November.

A huge flock of 1100 **Jackdaw** were logged on passage over Walney on 15th October. Three **Raven** were over Low Heskett on 3rd September and one at Watchtree NR on 30th October.

A fogbound **Firecrest** was located on Walney on 1st November and a single was at Westfield Point the next day. **Skylark's** migration included 73 over Carlisle Airport on 29th October. Visible migration of **Swallows** over Binsey on 10th September was 50 birds with a similar number still at Low Heskett on 15th, Walneys numbers peaked at 855 on 30th September with the last a single on 27th October. There were 18 at Jockeyshield on 25th with the last reported being three at Castle Carrock reservoir on 28th October.



Great Grey Shrike, Jockey Shield, Adam Moan

House Martins were reported up to 14th October from Walney with significant numbers being 40 passing over Binsey on 10th September and 30 at Southwaite on 6th October. The last record of **Sand Martin** leaving the county were seven over Walney on 27th September. There was a large influx into Britain of **Yellow-browed Warbler** including singles on Walney on 15th, 16th and 31st October and birds at Waterside, Wigton on 19th & 21st October.



Ravens, Kelkie Fell, Adam Moan

Blackcaps were scarce on Walney with ones and twos and a last sighting on 7th November. The only **Lesser Whitethroat** reports were of one on Binsey on 10th September and singles on Walney on 7th and 29th September. A late **Sedge warbler** was on Walney on 2nd October.



Spotted Flycatcher, Bassenthwaite, Linda Lyon

There being no large scale influx into the country of **Waxwings** this year the only bird noted was one flying west over Brampton on 24th November.

A **Nuthatch** in a Whitehaven garden on 13th October was unusual there.

Single **Ring Ouzels** were in Riggindale on 11th and 29th September, two in Swindale

on 15th September and four also there on 2nd October. There were also reports of a single being hassled by Mistles near Watendlath on 1st October and a female on Corney Fell on 4th November. **Fieldfares** arrived later than Redwings but were widespread from early October with significant flocks of 300 at Loweswater on 11th October, 378 over Carlisle Airport on 29th October and 100 in Mosedale feeding on Juniper on 17th November. **Redwings** arrival was noted on 5th October at Burnbanks then the next day on Walney and they were subsequently widespread with 229 over Carlisle Airport on 29th October being significant. A **Mistle Thrush** was singing away at Armathwaite on 16th and 18th October.

Spotted Flycatcher were recorded on Binsey on 10th September, at Waterside, Wigton on 13th, Walney on 17th and the Naddle Valley on 23rd September. A female/first winter **Black Redstart** was located on Walney on 15th October and 3rd November, also one at Red Hall Farm on 30th October. **Wheatear** were seen several times up to mid October with two on Bowscales summit, Mungrisedale being of interest; however the latest was a bird that spent several days at Geltsdale RSPB reserve in the first half of November.

A winter plumage male **Desert Wheatear** was found during a WEBS count at Tarn Bay, Eskmeals on 16th November and was present still on 19th (see report p96). Two **Tree Sparrows** on 24th October at Thwaite Head were a new record for this tetrad. A **Yellow Wagtail** was on Walney on 1st and 13th September and a late one was at Campfield RSPB reserve on 30th September. Passage of **Grey Wagtail** through Walney peaked at 14 on 26th September. There was a strong passage of 840 **Pied/White Wagtail** through Walney on 30th September. **Pied Wagtail** roosts were reported from Southwaite Services (north bound) on M6 and in Carlisle City Centre with min of 100 birds there at the end of November.

The first **Brambling** was on Walney on 19th October, numbers were generally very small but widespread. There were 130 **Chaffinches** passing through Walney on 31st October, 70 were counted at Cliburn Moss on 26th November with 60 **Lesser Redpoll** at the same site on 18th November and eight **Crossbills** there on 22nd October.



Brambling, Clowsgill Quarry, Adam Moan

The Naddle Valley held 100 **Lesser Redpoll** on 16th November and 11 **Crossbills** on 13th October. There were 24 **Crossbills** at Tarn Hows on 15th October. Whilst four **Hawfinch** at Sizergh Castle on 12 November were to be expected, two over Penrith Castle on 17th October were less so.

Diurnal migration in the period at Walney was marked by peaks of 22 **Goldcrest**, 490 **Starling**, 5130 **Meadow Pipits**, five **Rock Pipit**, 630 **Skylarks**, 855 **Swallows**, 840 **Pied/White Wagtails**, 175 **Fieldfares**, 755 **Linnets**, 30 **Tree Sparrows** and 31 **Reed Buntings**.

A rarity for Walney a **Yellowhammer** on 30th October was a highlight as was a **Snow Bunting** on 16th October. The first three **Twite** arrived on Walney on 15th October with numbers peaking at 70 on 15th November.

As regards non-native species a **Rose-ringed Parakeet** flew over Penrith on 28th October.

As ever, we are indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list individually. Feel free to send records by e-mail to rjgreenacres72@gmail.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 www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk for details of how to do so.*

Bob Jones & Dave Piercy

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Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is March 1st 2016

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, Derwentwater Independent Hostel, Borrowdale, Keswick CA12 5UR; tel 017687 77246

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<http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk>

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