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***BIRD NEWS***  
***Vol. 22 No. 4 Winter 2011***

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<http://www.cboc.org.au>

If you want to borrow CBOC publications  
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**Chairman:** Dave Shackleton, 8 Burnbanks, Bampton, Penrith CA10 2RW  
tel. 01931 713693; [d.shackleton@btinternet.com](mailto:d.shackleton@btinternet.com)

**Vice-chairmen:** Clive Hartley, Robin Sellers, Mike Carrier

**Secretary:** David Piercy, Derwentwater Youth Hostel, Borrowdale, Keswick  
CA12 5UR; tel. 017687 77246; [daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk)

**Treasurer:** Treasurer: David Cooke, Mill Craggs, Bampton, CA10 2RQ  
tel. 01931 713392; [cooke856@btinternet.com](mailto:cooke856@btinternet.com)

**Field Trips Organiser:** Vacant

**Talks Organiser:** Vacant

**Publicity :** Colin Gay, 8 Victoria St., Millom, LA18 5AS  
tel. 01229 773820; [colinathodbarrow@aol.com](mailto:colinathodbarrow@aol.com)

**Conservation Officer:** Chris Taylor

**Members:** Andy Langford  
Peter Ullrich  
Chris Hind  
Frank Mawby (Chair, Wader Study Group)  
Rob Pickett  
Stephen Westerberg

### Recorders

**County:** Colin Raven, 18 Seathwaite Road, Barrow-in-Furness LA14 4LX  
[colin@walneyobs.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:colin@walneyobs.fsnet.co.uk) tel. 01229 830517

**Barrow/South Lakeland:** Ronnie Irving, 24 Birchwood Close, Kendal LA9 5BJ  
[ronnie@fenella.fslife.co.uk](mailto:ronnie@fenella.fslife.co.uk) tel. 01539 727523

**Carlisle & Eden:** Chris Hind, 2 Old School House, Hallbankgate, Brampton, CA8  
2NW [chris.m.hind@gmail.com](mailto:chris.m.hind@gmail.com) tel. 016977 46379

**Allerdale & Copeland:** Derek McAlone, 88 Whinlatter Road, Mirehouse,  
Whitehaven CA28 8DQ [derek@derekmcalone3.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:derek@derekmcalone3.wanadoo.co.uk)  
tel. 01946691370

### C.B.C. Bird News

**Editor:** Vacant

### B.T.O. Representatives

**Cumbria:** Clive Hartley [clive.hartley304@btinternet.com](mailto:clive.hartley304@btinternet.com) tel. 015395 36824  
Assistant reps: Colin Gay, Dave Piercy & Steve Westerberg

## Club news and announcements

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### Subscriptions

The Cumbria Bird Club 2011/2012 subscription was due on 1st October. You will receive a subscription form with this mailing if your payment is outstanding. To prevent unnecessary costs, such as postage for reminder letters, please can you ensure that this is paid as soon as possible.

### Newsletter editor, outings and talks organisers.

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

### Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria

“Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria 2010” has been printed and will be sent out over the next few weeks. Please be patient as it will take me a week or two to get them all packed up and sent out. The production of this report takes a huge amount of time and effort and involves many CBC members who are listed and thanked within the report’s introduction. I would like to add to this with a huge thank you to Clive Hartley who as editor always puts in a prodigious amount of his time in the preparation and production of the report as well as writing a number of the species accounts. Clive has also been relentless in pursuing improvements year after year and I hope you will agree that the latest report is a further major improvement. All feedback on the new format is very welcome and also any offers of help in producing future volumes as detailed in the report’s introduction.

### Web site [www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk](http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk)

The Bird Club has updated its web site. It contains many new features primary amongst which is the listing of latest sightings updated daily by Ian Kinley.

Other new features include information on survey opportunities, an extensive bibliography of Cumbrian ornithology and details of past Bird Club surveys. Details of forthcoming events, contact details and guidelines for submission of records have all been updated and there are links to weather and tide times and to the Walney Bird Observatory Blog.

The site is still a work in progress with development work to be done on the “where to watch site guide” primarily aimed at visitors to the county.

The club would like to thank Chris Cant for his development of the site and Chris will continue his involvement with maintenance and upgrades.

### Armathwaite tree sparrow project grant.

This is an extremely successful project as can be seen in the annual reports which are published in the newsletter (see Autumn 2011). Council has agreed to grant £120 from the conservation fund towards the cost of feed.

### Regional recorder

Bob Jones regional recorder for Carlisle and Eden Districts has stepped down and has been replaced by Chris Hind. The Bird Club would like to take the opportunity to thank Bob for his contribution over the last few years. Chris is currently a member of CBC Council, has served on bird club committees elsewhere in the past and was BTO Regional Representative for Yorkshire North for a number of years, as well as being widely travelled as a birder.

Chris will be dealing with the processing and adjudication of records for 2011 so submissions for 2011 should be sent to him either on the Bird Club recording spreadsheet to [chris.m.hind@gmail.com](mailto:chris.m.hind@gmail.com) or by post to 2 Old School House, Hallbankgate, Brampton, CA8 2NW.

### Future Surveys

Council has decided that we need to plan for future surveys for when the Atlas work has been completed. It was agreed to initially plan for a Rook survey in Spring 2013. Rooks were last surveyed in Cumbria in 1996 see [CBC Rookery Survey April 1996.pdf](#)

### Changes to the CBC newsletter

Members with access to e-mail are no longer receiving a printed copy of the newsletter. This will save the club a large amount of money on postage and printing. If you do have access to e-mail and still received a printed copy could you please let the secretary know and forward your e-mail address to Dave Piercy at [daveand-kathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:daveand-kathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk)

If you do not have access to e-mail please be reassured that we are happy to continue producing and posting you a printed version.



*Bittern, Siddick, Craig Shaw*

### Photographs

Please submit your photos for inclusion in future newsletters and the web site. There are very few contributors at present so please forward any photos to the secretary.

## Outings

# Cumbria Bird Club

## Winter Bird Race 2012

Sunday 8th January 2012

Object of the race.

To gain the greatest number of species of wild birds within the borders of Cumbria county between early morning and 5pm.

### Rules

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 that's ok too.
2. Start time can be whenever your team is fully assembled on the day - finish time is 5pm at the:

**Hawkshead Brewery Hall, Mill Yard, Staveley, Nr Kendal, LA8 9LR**

This venue is only 10mins from the M6 so Northern teams can join in!

**Pie, Chips & Peas (Veggie option available)**

Will be available at the finish. Please indicate requirements for your teams on the entry form (cost a mere £6 per person).

3. For late arrivals at the finish a penalty of one species per 5 minutes will be deducted.
4. Only true wild birds count (no budgies or dodgy wildfowl).

This race is now a well established annual Bird Club event. We still need more teams; you don't need to be front runner to compete. The race is just for fun after all, and it gets you to areas you would normally not visit.

If you fancy having a go just give Colin Gay a ring on 01229 773820 or email [colinathodbarrow@aol.com](mailto:colinathodbarrow@aol.com) . I will send your team a species list. Please can I have numbers for the food asap or prior to if possible by 15th December 2011.

COME ON ALL YOU MEMBERS HAVE A GO you will enjoy it!!

### **Solway Dawn Flight of Geese - Sunday 26th February**

Meeting at Border Marsh Gate at 0600 hrs. A true Cumbrian spectacle!  
Full details from Frank Mawby [FrankMawby@aol.com](mailto:FrankMawby@aol.com) tel: 016973 51301

### **Gretna Starling Roost Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2012**

Bird club outing to see the spectacular Starling roost with potentially several hundred thousand Starlings in the Gretna area. There will also be the chance to see birds of prey attracted to this large number of birds. Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine and Merlin are frequently seen around the roost.

As the roost moves around the area in the season, final details and meeting place will be arranged nearer the time. Meeting time will be 3.30pm in the Gretna area and we should be finished by 5pm.

Phone or e-mail Stephen Westerberg (tel 016977 42652, mobile 07818 806991, e-mail [Stephen.westerberg@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Stephen.westerberg@rspb.org.uk)) if you are interested in the outing and you will be contacted nearer the date with a meeting place. Lifts from Carlisle/Brampton may be available.

### **Hawfinches at Sizergh Saturday 31st March**

Meet at Sizergh at 8.30 am, with Hawfinch watching to be followed by a trip to either Arnside Marsh or Foulshaw/Meathop Mosses, depending on what is about. Because of timing issues a packed lunch would probably be better than the NTS cafe.

Contact: Clive Hartley [clive.hartley304@btinternet.com](mailto:clive.hartley304@btinternet.com) tel. 015395 36824

### **Minibus trip to the new Lancashire WT reserve at Brockholes Saturday 12th May**

The old gravel pits by the M6 on the Ribble valley turn off to Preston have been turned into a great site. The visitor centre floats on one of the lakes and there are two or three areas of water with plenty of hides and viewing points. Lots of good breeding waders and other species in the spring.

See web site [www.brockholes.org](http://www.brockholes.org). LWT will provide us with a ranger to see us around.

Cost £10 for the minibus, payment in advance to Frank please. No other entry fee.

Meet in Carlisle at 0800 at Rosehill where there is a free car park. Would also aim to pick up at Penrith probably the Auction Mart. Other pick ups between Wigton and Carlisle can be arranged and suitable pick up points in South Cumbria by arrangement.

People can take a picnic lunch or they can use the very nice cafe at the 'floating' centre.

Bookings: Frank Mawby [FrankMawby@aol.com](mailto:FrankMawby@aol.com) tel: 016973 51301

## Indoor meeting programme winter 2011/2012

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**Wednesday January 4th 2012: with Carlisle NHS at Tullie House 7.15pm**  
'The Wildlife of the North' - Edmund Fellowes.



*Arctic Fox, 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 NH Friend's House Stramongate 7.30pm**  
'Seabirds of North West Scotland' - David Mower

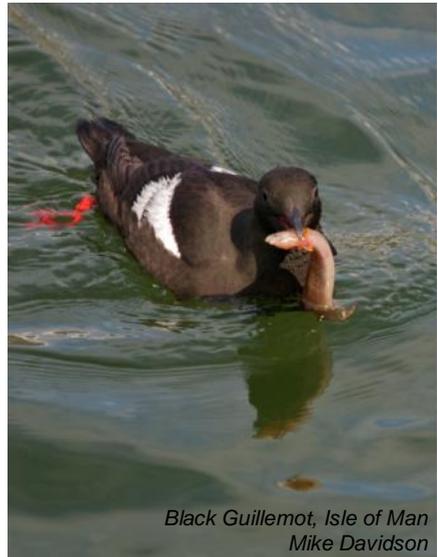
David Mower is now the warden of Leighton Moss RSPB reserve. His slide show is based on his time on Handa Island in the 1970s.

### **Photo exhibition in Workington Helena Thompson Museum**

CBC member Mike Davidson has a small (32 prints) exhibition of his photos running throughout December. Mostly Manx, mostly birds, completely free.

The museum is open Sunday to Wednesday from 13:30 to 16:30, closed Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Mike would welcome any comments, critiques or caveats more knowledgeable birders could offer.

[www.helenathompsonmuseum.co.uk](http://www.helenathompsonmuseum.co.uk)



*Black Guillemot, Isle of Man  
Mike Davidson*

## Breeding Waders in Cumbria

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In 1982 the BTO/RSPB/NCC jointly organised a survey of Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows (Smith, K.W.1983). A number of sites were chosen in Cumbria and surveyed by volunteers many of whom later became Cumbria Bird Club members. In 1995, under the wing of the Bird Club Wader Study Group, we organised a repeat of these surveys in Cumbria. Several of the original surveyors joined in and re-visited the plots they did in 1982. The survey results (Mawby & Armstrong 1995) showed dramatic declines of all four key species, Redshank, Lapwing, Curlew and Snipe. Only Oystercatcher showed an increase.

The surveys were repeated by the BTO/RSPB/English Nature in 2002 and further declines were noted including Oystercatcher, the Cumbria results were written up in a short paper by Clive Hartley and me. In 1998 again under the wing of the Bird Club we organised a conference at Newton Rigg – ‘where have all the Lapwings gone’. Several farmers attended and the conference was well reported.

By 2001 the Government’s Rural Development Service arm of DEFRA, which at that time was responsible for implementing the Agri-Environment scheme known as The Countryside Stewardship Scheme, recognised the plight of breeding waders and devised a special scheme for breeding waders. The scheme gave an incentive to farmers for re-creating wet grasslands targeting Lapwing and in 2002 also for Redshank and Yellow Wagtail (Yellow Wagtail was added because it too is a species in trouble).

Hearing about this scheme I introduced myself to the officer largely responsible for implementing it in Cumbria, Tim Youngs (yes the same Tim who a couple of years later went over to the RSPB). My main objective was to show him the Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows survey areas and results and encourage him to target these areas, especially since despite the dramatic declines they were the best areas remaining in Cumbria. I also suggested that the volunteers from the Bird Club would be willing to undertake monitoring of the scheme areas. Tim liked the idea and used his innovative skills to bring monitoring in as part of the scheme. He also managed to build in an expenses element for surveyors to cover transport and admin expenses.

We commenced surveys on 6 farms in 2003. The surveys were conducted to the same methodology as the original BWWM surveys; three visits spread over the season mid-April to early June. In 2005 I suggested that we should also find out how these sites affected wintering birds. As result the survey was extended to add three visits between October to March. By this time Tim had moved to the RSPB and thanks to Bob Timmins taking on the main co-ordinator role the scheme expanded to cover land on 17 farms in 2004. This year (2011) 20 volunteers are surveying on 26 farms in the Eden Valley, North Cumbria, West Cumbria, the Levens valley and SW Cumbria.

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**Summary of results**

<b>Lapwing</b>	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Total farm surveys</b>	6	17	18	19	18	20	23	26
<b>No of Farms present</b>	3	7	5	8	5	7	7	11
<b>Total pairs</b>	9	16	11	18	9	12	11	19

It is very difficult to determine a trend; however I would like to interpret what I see here as no overall decline. I originally thought Lapwings were reasonably site faithful, but over the years I have perceived them to be very adaptable to farm cropping regimes. Several farmers have switched to maize, spring barley and wheat as an alternative to silage since the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak in 2001. This has created a significant acreage of recently sown arable fields in April, which seems to have attracted the Lapwing. They appear to do quite well on these fields because the cryptic colour of the eggs and chicks blends much better than on grass. They even nest between the rows of polythene that cover newly sown maize. These arable fields also seem richer in invertebrates, especially if manured prior to cultivation. The main hazard is the cultivation process, but many farmers are very aware and work round the nests, although they quickly re-lay if nests are lost.

<b>Redshank</b>	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Total farm surveys</b>	6	17	18	19	18	20	23	26
<b>No of Farms present</b>	2	4	3	5	7	4	4	8
<b>Total pairs</b>	2	4	3	4	10	6	5	9

This species has not declined in the areas where it is present, which are quite few. They do not necessarily use the survey area every year but breed on adjacent fields. This makes it difficult to assess how well they are doing. This apparent site fidelity seems to be reflected in their reluctance to colonise new sites that to our eyes look suitable. It is possible that breeding success is only sufficient to maintain the current population and for them to move to new sites we need to manage the existing areas to such a standard that they produce more chicks. One important factor might be the quality and abundance of invertebrates. Also probably predator management (I have a theory that providing a habitat mix that includes small mammal habitat would attract predators to the mammals in preference to wader chicks).

## Breeding Waders in Cumbria

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<b>Curlew</b>	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Total farm surveys</b>	6	17	18	19	18	20	23	26
<b>No of Farms present</b>	3	9	7	9	7	9	11	13
<b>Total pairs</b>	5	16	15	18	13	18	20	18

Curlews show a worrying decline, although this only seems to be reflected in the 2010 surveys. They are site faithful and show great reluctance to move. From personal experience I know Curlews will return to the same nest site year on year. They show a preference for hay meadows for the nest site but then move their chicks, sometimes quite long distances, to feeding areas. The males display over a large area, which on small survey sites makes it difficult to pin point the breeding site, although surveyors do include adjacent fields in their surveys. I like to think that the scheme is helping Curlews but management of larger areas and fine-tuning to suit their nest site and feeding preferences should be considered.

<b>Snipe</b>	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Total farm surveys</b>	6	17	18	19	18	20	23	26
<b>No of Farms present</b>	3	3	4	5	3	3	5	3
<b>Total pairs</b>	3	3	6	9	4	5	8	11

Snipes are perhaps the most site specific of our breeding waders and they are relatively easy to pinpoint to a location. The surveys suggest that on sites where they are present they are actually increasing. The double cold winter of 2010 did have an impact on them though and it will be interesting to see if the 2011 surveys show this.

<b>Oystercatcher</b>	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Total farm surveys</b>	6	17	18	19	18	20	23	26
<b>No of Farms present</b>	2	6	5	7	4	5	9	10
<b>Total pairs</b>	4	14	8	9	5	6	13	15

Oystercatchers were doing quite well in the 1990's but seem to have gone into a steep decline over the last 10 years. However, on our survey areas they seem to be holding their own. They show a strong preference for shingle or bare ground nest sites and few of our survey sites have these conditions,

management being aimed at wet grassland waders. The incubation period only takes about a third of their breeding period and once hatched the adults often move the chicks long distances to good feeding areas and this can include wet grassland. Oystercatchers require more attention to its habitat management needs. Predation is possibly a significant factor to success or failure at both egg and chick stages. The recent run of dry weather in April and May also seems to have had an impact. The ground dries up and prevents the female regaining body weight to lay a replacement clutch after losing the first nest.

### **Other Species**

We have found that several of our sites are particularly good for other species such as Skylarks and Reed Buntings and I include below the tables for both. I suspect that the 2010 winters did neither of these species any favours and I know Skylarks numbers were down on my survey sites this year, Reed Buntings seemed okay and they do very well on the dense rush sites with grazing cattle on the site or nearby.

<b>Reed Bunting</b>	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Total farm surveys</b>	6	17	18	19	18	20	23	26
<b>No of Farms present</b>	4	12	12	9	9	13	16	19
<b>Total pairs</b>	13	32	31	30	29	35	38	49

<b>Skylarks</b>	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Total farm surveys</b>	6	17	18	19	18	20	23	26
<b>No of Farms present</b>	1	6	7	9	5	6	7	9
<b>Total pairs</b>	8	40	50	45	36	41	48	58

On the face of it Skylarks are maintaining a stable population on sites where they are present, four of the sites have more than 10 pairs most years.

### **Habitat restoration and management issues.**

The surveys have shown that it is as difficult to re-create wet grasslands for breeding waders, as it is hay meadow. The problem is probably the same, the inherent fertility of the soil, especially nitrogen and phosphate.



*Holme Dub site in spring, Frank Mawby*

The invasion of soft rush, *Juncus effusus* has been a particularly difficult problem to deal with. Cutting just seems to make it grow with greater intensity. Weed wiping with Glyphosate seems successful but is difficult and expensive to apply. Interestingly on sites where rush has increased the population of Reed Buntings and Sedge Warblers has increased.

Where scrapes have been created the problem has been maintaining bare mud, because they dry out early and vegetate over during the summer. By definition they are temporary areas of water. Nevertheless they should be sited in locations where the water table is close to the surface and should at least retain some water well into June and where livestock can get to them to poach the ground and suppress vegetation when they do dry out.

Managing water levels has proved a challenge. The aim is to raise water tables to create some surface flooding between December to late May and drain down in June to allow grazing, hay and other management operations. This regime is based on detailed studies over a number of years in particular

by David Gowing and Prof Gordon Spoor of Silsoe College whose numerous papers and presentations can easily be found on the internet. Seasonal flooding has many impacts on previously improved and semi-improved fields on both the vegetation and the all-important invertebrate communities. The dry



*Holme Dub site in winter, Frank Mawby*

period with a lower water table is essential to allow invertebrates to recover from the flooding. It is possible that restoring an invertebrate community to these sites of species that are wader chick food is much more difficult than getting the water tables right.

The weather and climate warming may also be having an effect. Over the years we have been surveying the weather seems to have produced an unusual number of dry April and early May periods followed by a wet cool June. However, I would need to look back over a number of years to see if this is a recent phenomenon.

Predators seem to be having a significant impact on the survival of wader nests and chicks. Foxes, Badgers, Buzzards and Carrion Crows are cited as the main culprits followed by a myriad of other birds and animals that turn to wader nests and chicks if voles and mice are in short supply. Predators have always been around, however with much habitat now reduced to small, island

## *Breeding Waders in Cumbria*

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sites the impact of predation is more pronounced. In due course, when the food supply has gone, the predators too will decline. Perhaps the creation of some rough ground for voles and mice might ease the predation problem.

Habitat size, structure and diversity are what really matters and is something the new schemes will try to address. Regular maintenance and management of created features all contribute to the success or failure of schemes and needs to be addressed. Key issues such as how well and how quickly invertebrate prey species of waders and wader chicks recover when wetlands are restored remains largely unknown and needs research. The impact of predators needs further research but is in my opinion a significant factor limiting breeding success. The provision of habitat for alternative prey especially mice and voles should be experimented with.

The most recent government review Biodiversity 2020 calls for a landscape approach to wildlife conservation, which broadly means larger well connected habitats to get away from the small island sites surrounded by barren (in wildlife terms) agricultural land. We have been trying to conserve our wildlife as long as I can remember yet the declines continue despite all the previous efforts. I do wonder just how much will change with this latest and very laudable attempt to bring about the changes necessary to halt the declines.

I think we are making a difference. It is through the efforts of people like Tim Youngs and Bob Timmins who have been key facilitators of the survey scheme and the volunteers who have put in endless hours of work to help make the scheme work, build relationships with farmers and give them the encouragement to stick with it. Whilst not every area of land has proved suitable I think I can find some wildlife that has benefitted on every site and whilst not all are suited to the breeding wader's scheme everyone has made a small contribution to biodiversity and landscape scale conservation.

*Frank Mawby*

## Champagne Moments

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A Great White Egret and the Diver at Bassenthwaite in the same week. I guess a good moment was on Striding Edge recently looking at some renovation work in strong wind and wet thick mist when a snow bunting appeared in front of me and dived off into the Red Tarn basin, my first of this winter, it looked happier than I was!

*Pete Barron*

Excellent view of Jack Snipe - right in front of me - I flushed it from next to the track (quite close to the track from the hairpin below Hartside top) and got superb views as it dropped down about 6m away and then let me creep closer - this bird alone made all the slogging worthwhile!! I reckon I have walked 240++km in total and I feel I know that patch well now - but I don't need to go back for a bit!!

*John Peatfield*

NB: John has done ten tetrads on the Pennine ridge north of the Hartside/Alston road.

### Advertisement



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## Snow Buntings in Cumbria (and Aunt Jobisca's Theorem)

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Although there is a small breeding population in Scotland, the Snow Bunting is chiefly a winter visitor to Britain. Numbers vary, but in places such as the north of Scotland flocks of several hundred are commonplace whereas in Cumbria one is lucky to see a flock of even a tenth the size. Until about twenty years ago these wintering birds were thought to originate from Scandinavia and perhaps very occasionally from Greenland (birds from southern Greenland mainly winter in North America, but it is known that occasionally these birds head south-east rather than south-west probably in response to the wind direction at the time they migrate). Snow Buntings were known to be present in Iceland all year round but with no obvious reduction in numbers, so it was thought that they were non-migratory. This seemed to be supported by the few ringing recoveries that then existed, which showed only a connection between Britain and Sweden. Indeed so entrenched was the view that our birds came from Scandinavia that it showed all the hallmarks of being “a fact the whole world knows” (popularly known as Aunt Jobisca’s Theorem) and thus not really amenable to rational debate. It was, I need hardly add, rather wide of the mark.

That this view might not be correct can be traced back to the mid-1980s, when it was realised that Snow Buntings were fairly easy to catch in clap nets, and this inspired several groups of ringers to become interested in the species. Ageing and sexing the birds proved difficult, however, in particular because the criteria quoted in “Svensson”, the ringers’ bible on such matters, were difficult to reconcile with the appearance of the birds themselves. The problem was eventually resolved when an old publication by a famous Danish ornithologist, Finnur Salomonsen, sometimes referred to as the ‘Father of Arctic Ornithology’, came to light. This described the differences between Icelandic birds (subspecies *insulae*) and Scandinavian birds (subspecies *nivalis*), which turned out to be at the root of the difficulties (the Snow Bunting entry in the version of Svensson’s guide available at the time relied solely on Scandinavian birds). Armed with information about how to differentiate between the

## *Snow Buntings in Cumbria (and Aunt Jobisca's Theorem)*

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two subspecies it quickly became apparent that most but not quite all of those being caught in Britain were in fact Icelandic not Scandinavian. The much increased amount of ringing (as it happens not just in Britain, but also in the Netherlands and in Iceland itself), resulted in the generation of quite a lot of ringing recoveries which confirmed that Icelandic birds were a major component of the British and Dutch wintering populations. Strangely there has been no parallel increase in what we know about the Scandinavian connection and precisely where *nivalis* birds come from remains something of a puzzle – is it just Scandinavia or northern Russia as well? So far as I am aware no-one knows.

So, given that the Snow Buntings wintering in Britain may be either *insulae* or *nivalis*, the question is which of these two subspecies do our Cumbrian birds belong to? My money is on both occurring, but I can find no definitive answer to this question. In *The Birds of Lakeland* (1943), which quotes the trinomial names for all the birds of Cumbria (as was the fashion at the time), the Snow Bunting is listed as *Plectrophenax nivalis nivalis*, i.e. of the Scandinavian race. Frustratingly no hint is given as to the basis of this assignment and one can't help feeling that it is simply another manifestation of Aunt Jobisca's Theorem. The criteria for separating the two races are reasonably straightforward when one has the bird in the hand but slightly more tricky in the field. In males, *nivalis* birds have a white rump (sometimes overlain with gingery brown feathers) and *insulae* a black rump (overlain with dark brown feathers), and I would invite anyone who is fortunate enough to see some Snow Buntings in the county to scrutinise them carefully to see if they can determine which subspecies they are. Better still, if anyone has any photographs of Snow Buntings taken in Cumbria I would be delighted to see them. Ideally they need to be taken from behind (males) or in flight (either sex). The differentiation for females concerns the amount of black on primaries 9 and 10 - definitely not something that is easy to see in the field, but just about possible in a photograph of a bird in flight. For anyone who is particularly keen, I have a guide to ageing, sexing and racing Snow Buntings in the hand which is available on request. Good hunting!

*Postscript:* Just in case you were wondering Aunt Jobisca's Theorem comes originally from Edward Lear's poem *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, the final two lines of which are:- And she said: "It's a fact the whole world knows,/That Pobbles are happier without their toes." It was adopted by J.B.S.Haldane, the famous evolutionary biologist, as one of his 'theorems' mocking bad science (for what it's worth I have preferred to use Haldane's spelling of 'Jobisca' rather than Lear's, who spelled it 'Jobiska'; however, if you are minded to find out more, try googling with the 'k' spelling - that with the 'c' is not quite a googlewhack, but close).

Robin Sellers [sellers@craghouse7.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:sellers@craghouse7.freereserve.co.uk)

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## The Trouble with Tetrading

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*Roy Atkins Tetrading*

This is a work of fiction... honest!! But can you say with hand on heart you have never done any of these things? Read on...

Great Spotted Woodpecker!! I haven't got my stuff out of the car yet as the bird vanishes over the trees. Quickly I put on my boots, grab my map, notebook and pencil and set off noting which tetrad and the time - exactly nine o'clock (well it is actually a minute to nine - but near enough). I can't help feeling a tiny tinge of guilt as I write Great Spotted Woodpecker which is now three minutes ago, but I might not hear another one!

For the next fifteen minutes all goes swimmingly, birds are flying over, flying out of bushes, feeding in fields and a Buzzard circles overhead drifting off to the north. A flock of Wood Pigeons clatters out of the tree tops and heads out over the fields and I diligently write them all down. I hear a Song Thrush singing away to my left and there are Willow Warblers, Chaffinches, Robins, a Pheasant bursts from cover and a Blackbird sings nearby.

A car stops beside me, "Hi Roy" comes a voice, it's Pete, a good mate of mine and we catch up on news. Waving goodbye I think, "Now then where was I?" A Blackbird sings from the far side of the field... have I got that one? Then a chaffinch. Oh dear, wasn't I about to write that one down when he stopped? Oh heck I'll put them down anyway and that Willow Warbler and Robin just in case I didn't get them either. Hmmm, I now realise I forgot to look at my watch when we stopped - how long were we talking for?! Ten minutes, or was it only five - surely not fifteen! I check my watch and am a little shocked how much of the first hour has already gone - ok definitely not fifteen then, I'll go for middle and call it ten.

I quicken the pace a bit and write frantically as I walk, another Blackbird, a Yellowhammer- that is nice, a - hmmm - what was that? Looked a bit like a Dunnock the way it shot in there - I haven't had a Dunnock yet - there must be Dunnocks in this habitat - it would be ridiculous not to have Dunnock on the list - ok Dunnock it is then. Almost as soon as it is written down a Wren appears in the bush. I pause for a moment then write down Wren (I can't believe that there aren't both in this hedge anyway!)

Is that the same Blackbird singing that I could hear a minute ago? Would I still be able to hear that one from here? And there's another one! Oh heck, I'll put them both down just in case. I walk on as fast as I can before I start worrying too much, its only Blackbirds after all.

Approaching some scrubby woodland little birds flick across a gap. I pick out Long-tailed Tits, a Great Tit, a Blue Tit, another Long-tailed , another Great, the Blue Tit flies back, or is it a different one, a Great Tit flies back, then one flies the other way was that a Robin? I can hear a Coal Tit, or is it a Gold-crest? I'll put both. A Great Tit is calling - is it one of the ones I have seen or another? Another Blue Tit appears. Is that two Coal Tits calling now? Is that the same Blue Tit again or another, arrrrhhhh!!! This is hopeless! OK - six Blue Tits, four Great Tits, three Coal Tits, ten Long-tailed Tits, no that sounds like too round a number, eight Long-tailed Tits, there's another Blue Tit, or is it one I have already counted, I'll add another one.

I walk on fast before anything else appears and realise that there are Chaffinches calling. How long have they been calling for?? Have I missed any?! Sounds like at least a couple; I'll put down three to be on the safe side. And is that the same Blackbird! Well, I counted the possible extra one last time so I'll not count it this time to even it up.

'Tsii' - I know that call. Or do I? Is it a Spotted Flycatcher?! It stops. Now what do I do. I mentally play it back and I am not sure. I decide to leave it. Crossing a small stream I'm scribbling frantically again as birds call then at the top of the hill I check my watch - oh b\*gger!! I am ten minutes into the next hour!! Was the stream in this hour or the first hour? Well it would be good to have some nice things in this hour, I'll call it this hour. Maybe my chat with Pete was only five minutes anyway so then it would definitely be in this hour.

From the top of the hill I scan the fields. A couple of Pheasants, a flock of Wood Pigeons, another Blackbird, some Common Gulls and what are they - yes!!! Grey Partridge!! I haven't seen one of them round here for ages, brilliant! As I walk on I check my map and realise with horror that I'm quite close to the edge of the square, were the Grey Partridges and Pheasants in the square or not?! I try to imagine the view and compare it mentally with the map but I don't want to lose my partridges so I decide to cross out the Pheasants and keep the partridges, after all there are plenty of Pheasants and no doubt the partridges feed in the closer fields sometimes.

Heading back towards the car the little 'tsii' call keeps playing in my head and sounds more and more like Spotted Flycatcher the more it goes on. The habitat was right -I write down Spotted Flycatcher. A Swift flies over really high. Are you supposed to count them if they are just flying over, I can't re-

## *The Trouble with Tetrading*

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member! Surely it would be crazy not to wouldn't it? I mean what else is a Swift going to do? I write it down. A Lesser Black-backed Gull flies over - oh hell, is it the same with these? Am I supposed to judge if it is suitable habitat or if it is 'using the square' or something? I can't remember so I leave it off - I'll check later perhaps. I spot a circling buzzard up ahead. Great! I put it down with confidence thinking, 'So why is that any different?' I write down the gull, then watching the buzzard I can't help wondering - is it the same one that I saw earlier? It would be very unlikely surely that this is the same bird, it is several fields away from where I saw it first time. A Pheasant calls in the distance, I put it down. Actually, that was pretty distant and I am quite close to the edge of the square now? I hesitate - well I didn't count the ones when I saw the partridges, so I'll count this one. And are those the same wood-pigeons flying back to the trees?!!

A Linnet appears on top of the hedge! Brilliant another nice find. Then a small flock of Tree Sparrows and a Yellowhammer and was that a Reed Bunting? Looked a bit like one, I'll have it and are those Carrion Crows flying away. That is crazy! I haven't seen a Carrion Crow since the start of the walk!! I think back, surely that was a Carrion Crow earlier at the back of the field when I was counting the Pheasants. Well it will look stupid not to have Carrion Crow on the list; I'll put two down for the first hour and a couple for this hour plus these two that makes four. That sounds better.

My brain tunes into the sound of Chaffinches and Blackbirds again and I suddenly realise that they had become background noise and I had stopped noticing them! I'll just add another Chaffinch or two or maybe three, and a couple of Blackbirds and that sounds like some Jackdaws - I can only see a couple but the rest must be hidden in the trees - I'll call it ten. Oh, a flock of starlings, perhaps fifty or so! I make a quick estimate before they vanish over the trees, yes about fifty, plus three from earlier, that makes 53.

I check my watch, just one minute left. I listen hard and write down anything I hear up ahead between me and the car. A minute later I take the pencil from behind my ear, tuck it in my notebook and look at my list, not a bad morning at all, a few nice finds and lots of birds counted more or less accurately. Is that a Treecreeper calling? Damn it is! I haven't had a Treecreeper. It is only a minute after stopping time - and I could have been chatting to Pete for six minutes - in fact it is more likely to be somewhere between five and ten minutes rather than exactly one or the other, let's say it was six minutes then. I write down Treecreeper. Then two minutes later a Great Spotted Woodpecker flies right over my head!!!! No, I can't do it!! I shove my notebook firmly in my pocket and run for the car!!

*Roy Atkins*

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## Recent reports

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The period covered is September to November. Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review by the Club Records Panel or British Birds Rareties Committee.

Species order and nomenclature follow that used in *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria*.

### **Wildfowl**

Two **Bewick's Swans** were found at Kirkbride airfield on 30th November. The summering **Whooper Swan** was last seen on the Esk Estuary at Newbiggin Marsh on 30th September, the same date that six appeared at Whittigg, the first of the autumn arrivals. Thereaf-



*Tundra Bean Geese, Blackdyke, Tristan Reid*

ter, numbers steadily increased and counts included 305 at Kirkbride airfield, 289 near Silloth, 232 at Beaumont and 60 at North Plain. A total of 1785 **Pink-footed Geese** flew south at Walney during September from 15th onwards followed by another 1600 in October and 1111 in November. The nationwide influx of **Tundra Bean Geese** and **Eurasian White-fronted Geese** was reflected in exceptional totals of both species in the county in November. **Tundra Bean Geese** were mostly short-staying and consisted of four at Burneside near Kendal on 17th followed by an amazing flock of up to 76 near Silloth from 25th to 27th, six near Longcroft on 25th and six in the Lyth Valley on 28th. Meanwhile, **White-fronted Geese** were rather more widespread from 11th onwards with up to 25 near Silloth, a total of 18 through Walney, 17 flying east at Kirkandrews-on-Eden, 10 over Leasgill near Milnthorpe, six over Arnside Marsh, five near Crosby-on-Eden and one at Wet Sleddale: while not all were racially identified, the vast majority are likely to have been Eurasian. A westward movement of **Barnacle Geese** was noted from several sites in the northeast of the county on 7th and 8th October and 101 lingered at Tindale Tarn on 10th while overshooting birds accounted for 116 on the Leven Estuary and 28 on the Kent Estuary in October and 18 grounded at Walney in November. Up to 13 dark-bellied and 71 pale-bellied **Brent Geese** were logged at Walney in October and the flock steadily increased to record levels with 161 pale-bellied and 50 dark-bellied birds present by the end of November, some of which could also be found at nearby Rampside at times. A drake **Mandarin** appeared on Thacka Pond, Penrith on 23rd September, lingering into October while a female took up residence on Whinfell Tarn from 17th October onwards.

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## Recent reports

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In November, drake **Green-winged Teals** were found at Siddick Pond and Haverigg both on 20th, the latter still being present on 21st and both presumably returning birds. Two **Long-tailed Ducks** arrived at Walney on 12th October, one of which took up residence for the rest of the period, whilst November also brought singles to Soddy Gap from 23rd and Longtown Ponds from 30th. A drake **Velvet Scoter** appeared off Sellafield on 14th November. Maximum counts of **Common Scoters** at coastal sites included 150 off Silecroft and 120 off Walney while inland birds included four on both Tindale Tarn and Bassenthwaite in November. Redhead **Smew** were seen at Whinfell Tarn from 14th November onwards and rather more briefly at Bowness-on-Solway on 23rd. Other wildfowl counts in the period included 1633 **Pintail** on the Kent Estuary, 80 **Shoveler** at Campfield Marsh and 34 **Gadwall** at Longtown.



*Green-winged Teal, Siddick, Craig Shaw*



*Long-tailed Duck, Soddy Gap, Craig Shaw*

### **Divers to Herons**

**Red-throated Diver** totals at coastal locations included 14 at Workington in September; 10 at Workington in October and 14 at Walney and 60 in Allonby Bay in November. A **Black-throated Diver** appeared inland on Bassenthwaite Lake from 18th November onwards while single **Great Northern**s were recorded at Selker on 26th September and

Walney on 24th November. A very late **Manx Shearwater** was logged at Walney on 25th November. **Storm Petrel** sightings consisted of singles at Bowness-on-Solway and Walney in September whilst, despite the strength of the September gales, there was just a modest showing of **Leach's Petrels** that brought a total of 10 to Walney and singles to Workington on 12th and 14th and Bowness-on-Solway on 13th. Further gales in October brought singles to Walney and Workington on 9th and Walney again on 10th. Unusually, a **Gannet** was inland at Tindale Tarn on 13th September whilst ones and twos were seen at Walney, Silecroft, Workington and St Bees Head well into November. **Shag** sightings comprised four at Walney in September, three there in Octo-



Gannet, Bowness-on-Solway, Darren Robson

ber and seven in November plus singles at Workington in October and November,

**Little Egret** numbers increased with 23 on the Kent Estuary, 20 at Walney, three on the Inner Solway and a single at Haverigg in September, followed in October by 38 at Walney, 34 on the Kent Estuary and two on the Inner Solway. November totals comprised 37 at Walney, 26 on the Kent Estuary, 13 on Flookburgh Marsh, four at Cavendish Dock and one on the Inner Solway. The **Great White Egret** returned to Kents Bank in September for the third successive autumn and remained to at least 10th November while new birds appeared at Campfield Marsh from 1st November onwards and Bassenthwaite Lake from 16th to 25th November. At

least three **Bitterns** were observed at the traditionally favoured Siddick Pond during November.

### **Raptors to waders**

A wing-tagged **Red Kite** visited Grune Point on 21st October while one without wing tags was seen at Kelton Fell near Kirkland on 24th October and birds from the Grizedale release scheme were reported from various sites. Two **Marsh Harriers** hunted Campfield Marsh on 13th September, a juvenile was at Grune Point on 5th October and two birds were to be seen around the Kent Estuary during October, at least one of which lingered to 21st November. Meanwhile **Hen Harriers** settled into wintering haunts. At least two **Ospreys** lingered around the Kent Estuary early in September as did the radio-tagged bird in the Dalston area while others were seen at Walney, Tindale Tarn and Grune Point during the month. An immature **White-tailed Eagle**, presumably from a reintroduction scheme, visited the Tindale area on 13th October.



Great White Egret, Campfield, Roger Ridley

## Recent reports

**Curlew Sandpipers** included 11 at Port Carlisle and seven on the Kent Estuary while the best **Little Stint** counts were three at Sellafield, Port Carlisle and on the Kent Estuary. **Purple Sandpipers** at the favoured sites comprised an impressive 62 at Workington and 25 at Walney. Cumbria's share of the influx of Yank waders dumped on Britain's shores in the wake of Hurricane Katia was, surprisingly, limited to the Kent Estuary where a juvenile **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, the first in the county since 1998, frequented Arnside Marsh from 24th September to 1st October, to be joined by two juvenile **Pectoral Sandpipers** from 28th September to 2nd October with one remaining until 3rd. New arrivals in October came in the form of a brief **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Port Carlisle on 16th and another juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** that lingered in the Lyth Valley from 21st to 27th. The highest **Ruff** count was

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*Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Arnside, Craig Shaw*

19 at North Plain though one was still to be seen at Blackdyke near Silloth on 27th November. **Jack Snipe** included three at Soddy Gap (along with 97 **Common Snipe**), two at Fisher Tarn plus singles at Walney. **Woodcock** included one flushed from Lingmell on 15th November at an altitude of 750 metres above sea level. **Black-tailed Godwit** numbers were generally unspectacular but

included 16 at Campfield in September and 60 on the Kent Estuary in November. **Spotted Redshanks** consisted of three at Port Carlisle, two at Old Sandsfield, two in a flooded field near Crosby-on-Eden and a single at Hodbarrow. Walney, as usual, provided the highest **Greenshank** totals with 44 in September, 30 in October and 17 in November. Elsewhere, the only likely wintering birds were singles on the Mite Estuary and at Cavendish Dock and Anthorn in November. **Green Sandpiper** numbers seemed on the low side, four at Carr Beds being the maximum reported. A **Grey Phalarope** paused briefly at Workington on 15th September.

### **Skuas to Auks**

September gales produced a decent showing of skuas with a **Pomarine** and four **Arctics** at Workington; totals of 14 **Arctics** and 15 **Greats** at Walney, several **Arctics** and two **Greats** at Bowness-on-Solway and a **Great** off Nether-



*Ruff, Whitrigg, Darren Robson*

town. October then brought a **Pomarine** and an **Arctic** at Workington and three **Arctics** at Walney. Sightings continued into November with an **Arctic** off Workington on 22nd and single **Greats** off St Bees Head on 12th and Walney on 28th.



*Arctic Skua, Bowness-on-Solway, Darren Robson*

**Mediterranean Gull** sightings in September consisted of at least six, four adults and two first-winters, at Workington and two adults at Bowness-on-Solway followed in October by at least three, two adults and a first-winter, in the Workington/Siddick area; two, an adult and a first-winter, at Crosscanonby and an adult at Bowness

Railings. November produced relatively few records with just two, the regular adult and a first-winter, in the Workington area; two, an adult and a first-winter, at Rampside and an adult on the Esk Estuary at Newbiggin Marsh. **Kittiwake** numbers were largely unexceptional but included site maxima of 150 at Silecroft on 22nd October and 180 at Walney on 25th November. **Little Gulls** were limited to one that frequented a flooded field near Halforth for several days in September and single adults at Workington on 20th September and 9th October followed by five, four adults and a first-winter, off Workington on 22nd November. There was a good showing of **Sabine's Gulls** with no less than three at Walney during September (juveniles on 12th and 13th and an adult on 14th), a juvenile at Sellafield on 24th September, a juvenile at Workington on 7th October, a juvenile in Allonby Bay on 16th October and a juvenile reported at Campfield Marsh on 3rd November.

A late juvenile **Arctic Tern** appeared on the Kent Estuary on 17th October. A juvenile **Black Tern** was on the Kent Estuary at Sand-side on 6th September. **Razorbills** peaked at 245 off Walney on 25th November and single **Black Guillemots** were noted there on two dates in September and one in November.



*Sabine's Gull, Workington, Keith Hamilton*

## Owls to Buntings

**Short-eared Owl** sightings included three at Walney, two on Flookburgh Marsh and singles at Workington and in the Lyth Valley. A very late **Swift** at Walney on 10th November was followed by a late **Swallow** at Arnside on 28th November. A **Water Pipit** frequented the usual flooded fields and horse paddocks at Walney from 8th November onwards.

A **Black Redstart** on 27th was the pick of the passerines at Walney in October, a prelude to a mini-invasion in November that produced at least two typically elusive birds on the beach at Workington, at least two at Walney and one at Geltsdale. Late departing migrants included a **Whinchat** at Walney on 4th November while November **Wheatears** were seen at Cardunock on 10th, Croglin Fell on 12th and Walney on 13th. The



*Black Redstart, Workington, Craig Shaw*

only late **Ring Ouzel** consorted with winter thrushes at Fisher Tarn on 28th October. A very late **Whitethroat** was seen at St Bees Head on 1st November. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** was found at Rottinton near St Bees on 30th October, followed by one at South Walney on 4th November. **Chiffchaffs** were prominent at Walney throughout September with a daily turnover of birds (maximum 30 on 4th) while good numbers of **Blackcaps** were seen there in October (max. 14 on 25th). However **Goldcrest** and **Robin** numbers were below strength. A **Great Grey Shrike** was found at Tarn Hows on 16th November. October at Walney was highlighted by an exceptional finch passage with 980 **Greenfinches**, 770 **Chaffinches**, 140 **Tree Sparrows**, 62 **Siskins**, 50 **Lesser Redpolls** and 14 **Bramblings** recorded. **Twite** flocks were rather less widespread than usual, with peaks of 150 at Walney and 40 at Anthorn. **Common Crossbills** included 60 at Tarn Hows, 50 at Whinlatter, 24 at Setmurthy, 20 at Killington, 15 at Finglandrigg Wood, 15 at Cliburn Moss, 13 over Longtown and eight at Middlesceugh. Sizergh Castle hosted up to six **Hawfinches**. **Snow Buntings** consisted of six on Crag Fell near Keswick and singles at Grune Point, Maryport, Drigg Dunes, Wetherlam in the Coniston Fells and on Helvellyn.

*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](mailto: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.*

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## Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is March 1st 2012

**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](mailto:daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk)

**If you do not have a computer:** please send in as clear a format as possible to Dave Piercy,  
Derwentwater Youth Hostel, 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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## Cumbria Bird Club Website

[www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk](http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk)

Contributions for the website to: [daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk)