

BIRD NEWS
Vol. 29 No. 3 Autumn 2018

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Club news and announcements



*The oldest known Whinchat,
RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

AGM

The AGM will be held at Penrith United Reformed Church on Friday 5th October 2018 at 7.30pm. The business of the AGM is intended to be as brief as possible and will be followed by the talk below by Stephen Westerberg.

Vacancies on Council: Secretary, Treasurer, and two ordinary members.

According to the terms of the constitution the above posts will become vacant at the AGM though there is a proviso that the current incumbents may remain another year if there are no other suitable candidates. This note is to seek nominations from members to fill these posts. According to the terms of the constitution, nominations should be submitted to the secretary not later than seven days before the AGM (i.e. by 28th September).

Subscriptions

The Cumbria Bird Club 2018/2019 subscription becomes due on 1st October. You will receive a subscription form with this mailing unless you pay by banker's order. To prevent unnecessary costs, such as postage for reminder letters, please can you ensure that this is paid as soon as possible. Why not pay at the AGM.

New student member category

Council unanimously agreed to give free memberships to under 21s in full time education. This will hopefully help towards recruiting the members of the future.

BTO Tawny Owl surveys

CBC Council is keen to carry out surveys of the various owl species in Cumbria. Initially this will involve supporting the ongoing BTO surveys of Tawny Owls.

They are running two types of survey:

- a) A point survey visiting random tetrads. A map of tetrads available can be found online (see below)
- b) A calling survey. This is a 20 minute survey that can be carried out from the comfort of your own home or pretty much anywhere else you can visit multiple times.

For full details visit: www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/project-owl

CBC Long-eared Owl survey 2019

The Bird Club is organising a survey of Long-eared Owls, the first phase of which will take place between mid-January and the end of March 2019. This will simply involve listening/watching for calling/displaying birds after dusk (from a fixed vantage point). It will be 12 years since the previous dedicated county survey (which took place in 2007). We are therefore very keen to recruit as many participants as possible, so that we can produce as comprehensive a picture of the current status of this elusive and under-recorded species as we can.

If you would be interested in helping out with this survey, please could you e-mail me p.howard691@btinternet.com before the end of November so that I can let folk know their survey area in December. When you e-mail, please could you tell me where you're based plus your preferred 10km square for the survey (for popular locations allocation will have to be on a first come, first served basis). At the same time I will also send participants further detailed information and recording forms etc. Many thanks in advance for your interest.

Pete Howard

CBC Swift survey

The survey was taken up with enthusiasm by a good number of members as well as a surprising number of non-members. A wide selection of towns, villages and hamlets were covered. Most surveyors did discover some Swifts in their chosen area but some inevitably drew a blank. Many thanks to all who participated. We hope to have a preliminary report out in the next newsletter. It is not too late to send in your Swift survey forms. Please send in all your results. Zero returns are equally important if you did not register any birds.

Dave Piercy

Successful Hen Harriers in Cumbria

2018 saw a welcome but small increase in the fortunes of Hen Harriers in England with fourteen attempts of which nine nests were successful. This included thirteen chicks raised in the Forest of Bowland and four in the Peak District National Park.

Two of the nests occurred in Cumbria at two geographically separate locations. At one site news of a breeding pair was provided to Natural England by a gamekeeper and monitoring of the nest was carried out by National Nature Reserve volunteers and staff. This was a late breeding attempt but two chicks successfully fledged. Both chicks were still at the nest in late August.



Satellite tracking has already provided useful information. Although both chicks left the breeding site at different times they have been tracked to the same location which has not previously been recorded as a regular site for Hen Harriers.

At the second site diversionary feeding was employed by a gamekeeper, nesting was successful and satellite tags have also been attached to the chicks.

Colin Auld

CBC Meeting programme 2018/2019

Friday Oct 5th (AGM): Penrith United Reformed Church 7.30pm

'Eight years of colour-ringing Whinchats at RSPB Geltsdale' - *Stephen Westenberg*

Wednesday 9th January 2019: Tullie House 7.15pm Joint with Carlisle NHS

'Reintroductions for a Wilder Cumbria?' - *Kevin Scott Northern Reserves Manager CWT*

Monday 11th March 2019 Friends House, Stramongate, Kendal

The First Fred Gould Memorial Lecture joint with KNHS

'Fred Gould, wildlife photographer' - *Gary and Lindsey Gould*

Wildlife photos taken by Fred Gould during his lifetime.

Hodbarrow Terns

Hodbarrow has continued its recent success for terns in 2018. The current upturn in numbers and breeding pairs has been, in part, due to some much needed investment. This year we had a record breaking number of Sandwich and Common Terns breeding on site.

One of the main changes to the reserve is fencing around the main tern island. Starting with a prototype floating fence in 2013 we moved onto a fixed in water fence. Many of you will have seen the fence in situ and probably wondered why it looks so industrial. The slag proved difficult to penetrate to get electric fencing into and previous attempts have seen batteries



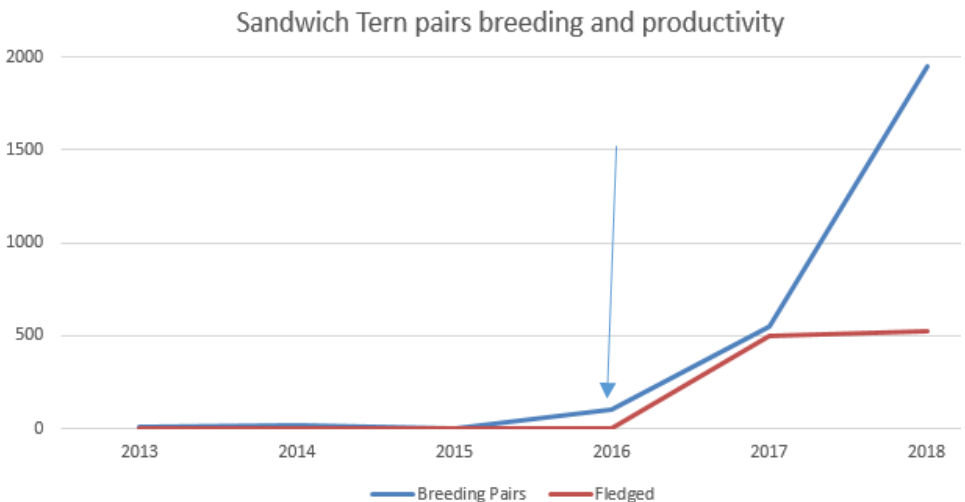
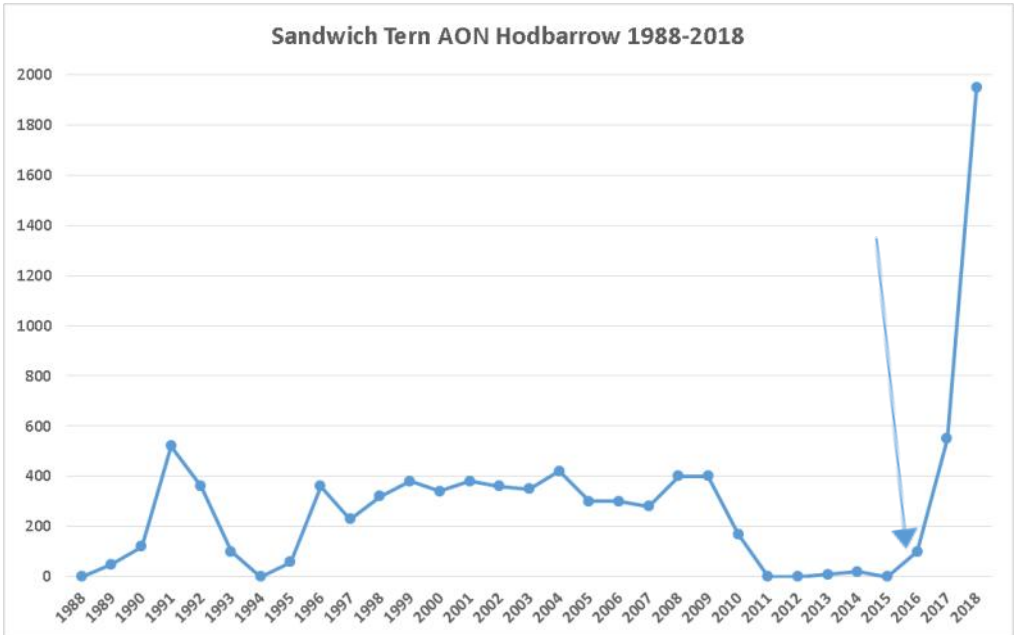
Hodbarrow fence on its way up, Dave Blackledge

and energiser going missing from the island. The fence you see today has large plates on the bottom designed to sit in the water. The main predator we want to discourage is the fox which has decimated colonies before in just one night and was undoubtedly a reason for some of the failures of previous years. The fence provides a mid-water barrier whereby the fox can't get enough purchase to jump clean over. It seems to be working and we have seen foxes swim close to the fence and move away again.

We have also had the resources in the last two years to employ contract staff and you may have spent a bit of time chatting to them in the hide. They spent many hours watching and recording from our hide at Hodbarrow and they have been able to keep the island disturbance free and collect some valuable data on the tern colony. Their main job though is to prevent gull settlement using a laser as a deterrent. The laser shone near to the large gulls causes them to fly off and when done early in the season prevents them from establishing and nest building.

This work for terns at Hodbarrow has led to some brilliant productivity and breeding records. The graph below shows that following the implementation of the in-water fence in 2016 and the employment of staff in 2017 numbers of apparently occupied nests (AON) have shot up for Sandwich Terns in particular. Now it would be a bit naive to say that this was only due to the work we've been doing at Hodbarrow when we are also aware of predation events at other sites which may have caused birds to move to Hodbarrow mid-season increasing nesting attempts. However, productivity gives us a good measure of how well our work is helping birds once they are nesting.

The in-water fence was in place for the 2016 season and is shown by an arrow on the graphs below. In the years following, fledged young numbers increased dramatically which is attributed to the lack of predation due to the fence and laser. Last year we found otter became a problem towards the end of the season and may have to look at ways of tackling this for next year.



Hodbarrow Terns

It is impossible to look at Hodbarrow in isolation of the other tern colonies in the south of the county and indeed the Irish Sea. Through more in-depth monitoring facilitated by staff on the ground and increased communication with other sites we've been able to identify patterns between sites such as Foulney, Walney and further afield around the Irish Sea for Little and more obviously Sandwich Terns. Last year we had an influx of 200+ Sandwich terns in June only a few days after a mass desertion of Cemlyn, North Wales, due to an otter predation event. Presumably it was early enough for birds to range further to find suitable breeding areas for a second attempt. The increase of nests and in particular the timings may not have been highlighted had there not been staff there to pick it up during monitoring.

Finally, as many of you may know Bart Donato, Natural England, has been running a Little and Sandwich colour ringing scheme at Hodbarrow and Foulney for the past two years which is throwing up some really interesting information with regards to wintering grounds but also movements during and directly after the breeding season. Any ring re-sightings would be very helpful so please let us know if you note any when out and about next year. With just shy of 100 birds colour ringed from Hodbarrow alone we are hoping for a few re-sightings. So far Sandwich Terns ringed this year have been seen in Wales at Gronant Dunes, Flintshire, Rhos Point, Kinmel Bay, Llanfairfechan Beach, as well as Formby Beach, Merseyside. Birds ringed last year were re-sighted as far away as Namibia!

Mhairi MacLauchlan



Little Tern chick, Hodbarrow, Dave Blackledge

Kestrel with Snipe prey

On the afternoon of 21st August driving down the track from RSPB Geltsdale I saw a young male Kestrel sitting and eating a large item of prey at the side of the track in front of me. I stopped to watch, but with a bit of a struggle, the bird took off and flew further down the track, carrying the prey and landed on top of an open gate. After a minute, it dropped down onto the track alongside the gate and began to pull the prey apart. The Kestrel began to eat the head and it became apparent from the bill that the prey was a Snipe.



Once the skull had been consumed the Kestrel manoeuvred the bill and began to swallow it, as can be seen in this sequence of photographs. This process took about a minute, but did not look very easy for the bird and it spent a short time after just sitting. The bird was then disturbed by someone walking down the track and it flew off to the west, leaving the prey behind. Later, I was told by a colleague that a Kestrel flew off with a large prey item from that exact spot a few hours later, so this bird may have returned to finish off its' meal. It would seem odd for a Kestrel to consume such a difficult food item and apparently without any nutritional value.



Later, once the bird had flown off I examined the corpse of the Snipe, which appeared to be very fresh. Presumably the Kestrel had caught the Snipe rather than finding it as carrion. Although this would seem to be a large prey item for a Kestrel, several similar sized waders are listed as prey for Kestrels in *Birds of the Western Palearctic*.

Stephen Westerberg

Cumbria's Willow Tits – a quick update



Four Willow Tits were ringed at two locations on the Solway Plain in winter 2017/18 (see CBC newsletter Spring 2018). Of these, one was an adult and three were juveniles. All four were monitored and not surprisingly remained faithful to the ringing sites. They took full advantage of feeding stations which thankfully helped them survive the Beast from the East. Despite our efforts, no further Willow Tits were noted or encountered in further mist-net sessions.

As spring progressed a group of three were found nearby at the first site which included an unringed bird. One colour-ringed bird set up territory and the second bird was also frequently noted.

At the second site two of our birds remained and were heard singing. It was therefore a real surprise to find both of them on the 16th April singing strongly at the **first** site – a movement of 3kms! One quickly paired up with an unringed bird. Its travelling companion failed to attract a mate and surprised us further by returning to its original location on 4th May, where it was singing again. This is at odds with the site faithful, sedentary, nature of this species. However, it suggests that at low populations Willow Tits will move quite widely in search of a mate. It's also possible that there is a more regular movement between the two sites and differing breeding and wintering locations. Without colour ringing we wouldn't have known and hopefully further sightings will help us build up a more complete picture.

We were delighted to find two nests but quickly deflated when both were predated by Great Spotted Woodpeckers. One nest had been pulled out and found on the ground. At the second location Great Spotted Woodpecker damage was evident on the nest stump. The nestlings must have been very close to fledging so it's possible that some escaped. What's clear is that we've lost much of the dense secondary woodland which Willow Tits favour.

As we were told on a fact-finding trip to Wigan Flashes, if there are Woodpeckers close to Willow Tits then the habitat has gone far beyond optimum condition. This makes a lot of sense but presents us with a management challenge. Creating more Willow Tit friendly habitat is clearly a priority and the woodlands of the South Solway Mosses are key to their survival. The population remains extremely low, numbering a mere handful of individuals and hence extinction in Cumbria seems a real possibility.

In 2018 we've implemented habitat management via a Higher Level Scheme, with thinning of woodland, nest-box provision and planting of key shrub species to aid connectivity of habitat. Our MSc student has also been mapping the quality of potential habitat on the Solway, which will assist further targeting of key areas for habitat restoration and re-creation.

Our endemic race of Willow Tit is the second-fastest declining species in the UK, after Turtle Dove, and is red-listed. RSPB and others have conducted research into causes of decline, and are trialling woodland management solutions. However, due to the declining numbers, monitoring the species is becoming increasingly difficult. Whilst the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey is still able to produce an annual trend, the sample had fallen to just 46 squares by 2017. Although collation of records by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) is useful for the design of future surveys, it is currently insufficient to enable robust population estimates, measures of change or maps of current distribution to be produced. RSPB and RBBP are therefore currently working to deliver a national Willow Tit survey in 2019 and 2020.

A couple of other reported sightings around the County have been followed up in 2018 but remain nothing more than anecdotal and tantalising. Any records of Willow Tits are of interest to us – colour ringed or not! Please send to:- Colin.auld@naturalengland.org.uk

Colin Auld

The breeding season in the Watchtree area

From our ringing it seems to have been a year of mixed fortunes. I am getting the impression that Chiffchaff have had a poor year, they arrived in good numbers from mid-March onwards but then all seemed rather quiet and I wonder if they were hit by a shortage of food or the cold weather or both. Ringing catches seem lower than usual. However, Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Whitethroat all seem to have done well, although I am not sure about Garden Warbler.



*Sedge Warbler, Oughterside,
Tommy Holden*



*Grasshopper Warbler,
RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

Good numbers of Sedge Warblers seem to have done well from ringing returns and it is nice to see a good year after a few not so good. We had up to three singing male Reed Warblers but it was only in our last two mid-August sessions that we have ringed four juveniles. An early arrival Grasshopper Warbler seemed to move on.

We had three displaying Curlews on and around the site and at least one pair raised at least one chick, but not sure if it got off the ground. Sadly, one flew into one of the wind turbines, although I will say that we get very few hits.

The Great and Blue Tits held off laying and were at least a week later than average for recent years and one of my last broods of Blue Tits were ringed on 11th June. Overall these two species of Tit had a very good fledging success here and at Finglandrigg Wood. I think Long-tailed Tits may have felt the effect of the cold and being early breeders I think losses have been quite high after fledging. We have not had the usual flocks on ringing sessions. Lesser Redpoll, Linnet, Bullfinch and Goldfinch seem to have done okay.

It will be interesting to see what others think but I have a feeling that Wrens and Robins were hard hit by the cold spells and some of the juvenile Wrens we are ringing now do not seem to have started their post juvenile moult.

Our Mute Swan only laid three eggs and all failed. The male is rather aggressive, I say this because, after seeing at least three Coot nests disappear I am wondering if he was the cause, they gave up and left the site. He also drove off the other pair of Swans that were attempting to nest. Our Little Grebes have also had a poor season and as I write two are incubating at least third attempts, although one pair have raised one chick.

The Skylarks seem to have done quite well but never easy to tell how successful they have been. We had two pair of Tawny Owls raising three and two respectively, although one chick we think was taken by a Buzzard. However, my boxes at Finglandrigg Wood only had one pair and they failed (Grey Squirrel predation?)



*Linnet, Maryport,
Tommy Holden*

Barn Owls have had a very poor year. I have only ringed five pullus in two boxes, (compared to a record 36 in 2017), two pair failed at egg or chick stage and of the rest I had three pairs not breeding and four boxes with single birds present. They were also very late breeding and really showed the impact of the cold weather and lack of voles and mice. Interestingly from my Natural History Society records there were quite a few sightings after the cold spells in March but perhaps that was a sign that all was not well?

As many people noticed the Swallows and House Martins came at the usual time but numbers were low and late arrivals were still coming well into May. The farm near Bowness on Solway, where I have been nest recording and ringing for 13 years, had one of the lowest nest totals with only 12 nests compared to a record 20 last year. As I write most have produced two broods and I have the usual two third broods. The House Martins on our house are a little down on last year but I think we have had at least 12 pair and at least five are on second broods.

The House Sparrows never stop breeding and we have at least 120 feeding on our lawn every day now, perhaps I feed them too well! Tree Sparrows, again not a bad year but late starters and a big stagger on nests in boxes, the late broods only fledged last week. We have a Greenfinch or two coming in to the feeders but they did not bring any juveniles in till August.

Frank Mawby

Lowgill and Sedbergh Swifts - breeding report 2018

We have had an excellent year for Swifts in 2018. In Sedbergh the earliest arrivals we have ever recorded were on 28th and 29th April this year, in the Settlebeck School webcam boxes, although the partners did not return until May 19th. Our colony at Lowgill has increased by a further three pairs, now numbering 18 in our house and 23 pairs in total in the terrace as a whole. One of these new pairs had roosted last year - finding a new nest site, but not being ready to breed until this year. In the seven Lowgill nest sites that are on camera, on average 2.3 chicks per pair were produced.

It was the best year we can remember for seeing large numbers of Swifts – sometimes over 40+ seen in one view – with an increase in both the numbers and frequency of screaming parties. The ‘bangers’ too have been exceptionally active, practising their technique of approaching buildings while prospecting for future nest sites. One explanation put forward for seeing such frequent activity is that in good weather the adult breeding Swifts do not need to forage far afield for insects, so that near breeding colonies we will then observe greater numbers of Swifts.



Two adult Swifts on a nest concave, in the eaves at Lowgill



Nuthatch narrowed this Schwegler nest brick entrance hole

Sparrows often take over Swift boxes, but this year we had a first when one of our internal Schwegler nest bricks was taken over by a Nuthatch! None of our colleagues in either the national or international Swift networks have ever heard of this happening. The Nuthatch characteristically narrowed the oblong Swift entrance hole with mud, and successfully reared one brood.

All four of the Sedbergh People's Hall nest bricks had breeding pairs this year. Last year we had two breeding pairs, with roosting pairs in the other two bricks. Installing

these bricks has been a great success, with Swifts having been attracted in the first year.

Watching our Lowgill nest sites that are on camera, it was clear from the Swifts' behaviour that in some cases a new mate had been attracted, to replace one that had failed to return. Over the years, eventually one of a pair fails to survive the hazards of migration, or simply dies of old age. In that case, the first bird back waits as a singleton for its partner to also return, but in the end goes out and tries to draw in a new mate – either another Swift similarly bereaved or a juvenile that is just old enough (3-4 years) to breed. The newly formed pair then breeds and remains faithful to that nest site, and so the cycle continues.

This year we have observed some unusually late breeding. In general Swifts lay eggs by mid to late May, hatching 20 days later and fledging after another 40 days at the end of July. Two of our newly-formed pairs of Swifts laid eggs extremely late, around 20th June, the date by which chicks would normally have hatched. We believe that this may have occurred because the feeding conditions were very good this year, and they went on to breed a year earlier than would otherwise have been the case - albeit so late. Their chicks didn't then fledge until 20th August, well after the time that most other Swifts have departed.

Swifts normally have only one brood. This year we had the unusual situation of two pairs of Swifts laying a second clutch of eggs, after the original eggs had been knocked out of the nest. One pair in a Settlebeck school box laid three eggs but after all were knocked out they laid another two eggs, as late as 29th June. It is a considerable toll on a female to produce five eggs. Unfortunately these last two were also knocked out – are these exceptionally clumsy Swifts we wonder?

In a box at Lowgill, a pair of Swifts knocked both their eggs out of the nest, within only a few days of laying. Then they too, a fortnight later in mid-June, laid two more eggs which fortunately successfully hatched.

Like the other late breeders, these chicks didn't fledge until late August, and we have to wonder what their fate will be, when there are far less or no Swifts flying around to join. We wonder how many make it to Africa.



New entrance holes in our gable wall – and two Schwegler bricks at bottom right

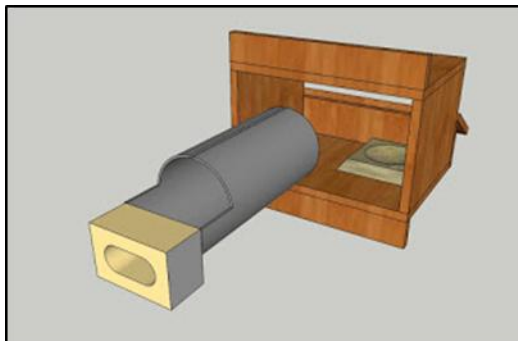


Diagram of our new nest site system

Of our 23 pairs at Lowgill, 15 breed in open eaves, five in internal Schwegler nest bricks, one in an external Stimpson box, and two pairs in a newly installed internal system. This latter has an external entrance hole visible in the wall, linked to a nest box inside the house by a 4" diameter drain pipe. The pipe is 12" long because of the thickness of the walls, with mortar on the bottom to help the Swifts crawl along. It is similar to the successful system developed at the famous Fulbourn colony in Cambridgeshire.

Tanya and Edmund Hoare

Hirundine passage through Allonby on 27th May

Don't worry if your Swallows or House Martins haven't turned up yet; there's still time!

Another amazing diurnal passage of hirundines north through Allonby this morning. In about an hour and a half I estimated 500 with House Martins about 70%.

The Swallows were moving through continuously in dribs and drabs, whereas the House Martins were in pulses, almost flocks with one of about 50, and some more than ten. All of the birds were very low, not much above vegetation level into the continuing brisk NE wind.

A wonderful spectacle on my doorstep, however the dozens of dogwalkers remained oblivious to one of nature's wonders!!

John Callion on BirdingCumbria

A week's holiday in Grisedale

My wife and I generally like to choose self-catering cottages a bit off the beaten track and this was certainly no exception. I do most of my birding down south in Sussex, so it was exceptional to wake up to the sounds of Curlew, Lapwing and Oystercatcher. There was so much going on with broods of youngsters, some birds still displaying, and during the week I managed to see or hear 40 species from the cottage.



The beck which ran through the valley attracted Sand Martins and Common Sandpipers, and the meadows at the sides held breeding birds and a source of food. Mistle Thrushes, for instance were constant visitors seeking food for their young in the conifers nearby. Pheasants, Mallard and Pied Wagtail all seemed to be around constantly, while brief fly-overs included Red-

poll, Siskin and a distant Buzzard. Swallows were nesting in out-buildings, and nearby I heard Redstart singing as well as Reed Bunting, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. Red Grouse were heard regularly but some distance from the cottage.

The highlights were a number of views of Short-eared Owl, surely nesting on nearby moorland; and roding Woodcock which flew around from their conifer woodland base. Up to four were seen on one evening.

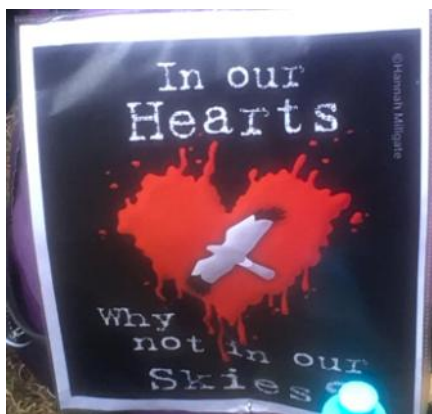
Perhaps the most significant sighting was a rather amazing roost of Jackdaw every evening. Birds arrived from all directions, mostly from the south and pre-roost gathered in ash trees which hadn't yet gained their leaves. The norm was around 100+ in one tree and from the first evening on it became clear there were large numbers involved. It took around half an hour for the gatherings, some distance apart, to join up and fly in to roost in the conifer woodland. The noise was deafening as they flew overhead not only their calls but the sound of their wings. The numbers ranged from 400 to around 600. No other corvids were involved in the roost, even though there were Crows and Rooks seen nearby.



Peter Whitcomb 12-19 May 2018

Hen Harrier Day 2018

On 12th August “The Inglorious Twelfth” I was at Parkgate in Cheshire for one of the half-dozen Hen Harrier Day events around the country. This was the sixth such event that I had been to over the past five years and I was happy to be joined this year by Pete Howard, Geltsdale RSPB’s former Hen Harrier warden. There were some very inventive placards around.



The array of speakers was inspiring with Mark Avery, Alan Davies, Iolo Williams, Findlay Wilde and James Bray all giving their own angle on the precarious fortunes of Hen Harriers in Britain and the wider issue of raptor persecution. This persecution is the main reason why Hen Harrier numbers in England are pitifully low and why these birds are on the brink of extinction here.

Each of the speakers has his own role in working to improve the lot of Hen Harriers – some promoting petitions, some active on social media, and some out there in the field protecting Hen Harriers on their breeding grounds. But the message that they all gave out was a consistent one – Hen Harrier has been a legally protected bird for over half a century and yet it is systematically illegally killed to enhance the interests of the Grouse shooting industry.

Driven Grouse shooting is big business in today’s world and many involved do everything possible to increase the numbers of Grouse on their estates. They often achieve numbers of Grouse that are 100 times that of the natural population level. It is now widely acknowledged that gamekeepers on driven grouse moors are shooting Hen Harriers – we heard this on the BBC Look North report on 7th August. This is all so that people will pay large sums of money to shoot as many Red Grouse as they can – just for fun !



So why is it not possible to put a stop to this illegal killing of Hen Harriers and other raptors ? The RSPB Investigations Unit works to get evidence of illegal killing of raptors which largely takes place in remote areas where there are likely to be few witnesses to these crimes. The only available evidence for such crimes has often been video footage. Such video evidence has on several occasions been presented to courts of law and has been declared by the court to be inadmissible evidence. It beggars belief that in today's world of speed cameras, dash and body cameras, of security cameras and of video footage of events taken by bystanders on their mobile phones that video evidence of acts of illegal raptor persecution should uniquely be regarded as inadmissible. It would seem that the judicial process is somehow weighted against successful prosecutions of these crimes.

When Mark Avery's petition to ban driven grouse shooting triggered a parliamentary debate this was chaired by a blatantly biased MP who should have impartially conducted the proceedings. It resulted in a whole array of grouse shooting and grouse moor owning MPs spouting nonsense about the benefits of grouse shooting and a secretary of state who summed up the risible proceedings after spending most of the debate rummaging through her handbag. The person representing the Moorland Association famously spoke of seeing plenty of raptors from her kitchen window; her other famous remark was " If we let the Hen Harrier in, soon we will have nothing else " – a clear admission of ongoing persecution of Hen Harriers. This was a clear demonstration of those with power and influence looking after their own interests.



Back at the Hen Harrier Day, a series of cartoons was shown that illustrated how the YFTB (you forgot the birds) campaign headed up by Ian Botham sought to discredit the RSPB. And how grouse moor owning newspaper editors used their influence to sway their readers in favour of the supposed benefits of grouse shooting.

One of the positive aspects of the Hen Harrier Day event was the number of people there who had not been to one of these events before – it is always a concern that these events are about preaching to the converted. So new faces are extremely welcome. It was also very good to catch up with some of the regular protagonists – Mark Avery and James Bray and also some of the people who are less in the limelight but are resolutely working away – Ruth Tingay of Raptor Persecution UK being the person I have in mind.

One of the aims of the day was to celebrate the Hen Harrier and this year the nine successful nests in England represented an improvement in breeding success. But it is rather ironic to be celebrating nine nests, when England should support around three hundred nests, were it not for the constant drain on the population that results from persecution. I think the most telling comment I have heard in recent days was “Every five year old will tell you that killing things for fun is wrong”.

Chris Hind

Recent reports

The period covered is June 2018 to August 2018. Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review by the Club Records Panel or British Birds Rarities Committee.

Swans to ducks

Wildfowl reports were few during the period. 38 **Mute Swans** were at Siddick Pond on 2nd July. Feral **Barnacle Geese** were reported from Ullswater, Brothers Water, Derwent Water and Bassenthwaite. 176 **Canada Geese** were at Hodbarrow RSPB on 21st July with a female **Scaup** on the same day. Single female **Pintail** were at Foulshaw on various dates and two **Gadwall** were there on 4th June. Five hundred **Common Scoter** were off Walney on 16th July with varying numbers thereafter. Post breeding numbers of **Goosander** on the lower Eden included 42 between Burgh by Sands and RSPB Campfield and 53 between Grinsdale and Old Sandsfield. A female **Mandarin Duck** was on Mockerkin Tarn in August.



Female Scaup, Hodbarrow, Doug Radford

Partridges to herons

A **Black Grouse** was at Spadeadam on 15th August. **Water Rail** were at both CWT Foulshaw Moss and Siddick Ponds. Singing **Quail** were at Walney on 2nd June, Skiddaw Forest on 24th and Finglandrigg NNR on 20th August. An immature **Shag** was off Selker on 12th June.

A **Great White Egret** was at Foulshaw on 28th June. **Little Egret** numbers continue to increase year on year on the Solway - with several high counts of the high tide roost being made during August of which the highest was 38 counted from the air on 15th. Other high counts which will have presumably included birds using the high tide roost were 25 at Port Carlisle on 14th August, 49 between Burgh by Sands and RSPB Campfield on 12th August and 37 from Glasson Point to Port Carlisle on 22nd. Away from the Port Carlisle area two were on Grune point on



Grey Partridge, Allonby, Tommy Holden

2nd August and two more were at Rockliffe on 4th. In the west five were on the River Irt on 21st June – a family party? - rising to 11 on 19th July and in the south 22 were at Hodbarrow RSPB on 30th July and seven at Upper Leven on 14th. Foulshaw held up to four throughout the period. Thirty were on Walney by 11th August. A **Bittern** was at Siddick Pond on 19th August.

Raptors to waders

Ospreys as well as being reported from regular breeding areas, were in the Penrith area in June, and in August, the North Pennines, lower Eden and one was fishing off Scargavel point, Campfield, a regular site at this time. One passed through Walney on 30th August. Fifteen reports of **Red Kite** were received with six in the northern third of the county, five from the mid-third and four from the south. **Marsh Harriers** were reported from Langdale and Northern Lakes in early August as well as a juvenile on the Solway at the end of the month. Single birds were on Foulshaw on various dates. A juvenile was on Walney on 5th.



*Buzzard, Cleator Moor garden,
Alan Frost*

Up to two **Hobby** were reported from a southern moss on various dates. In June a single was reported on two dates in north Cumbria and in July from Walney and in August from the North Pennines, mid Eden Valley and the north-west of the county. Two **Merlin** were at Walney on 13th August and a female was at Anthorn on the next day.



Hobby, Guy Broome

A single **Avocet** was at Port Carlisle on 23rd July and another was at Halforth also in July. By the end of August **Oystercatchers** had built to 6000 on Walney. **Little Ringed Plovers** were reported from the Lakes on various dates and in August from Siddick Pond and Shap. A female with three fledged young was reported from the south of the county.

Lapwing flocks started to build at the end of July with 135 at RSPB Campfield on 30th, in August 100 were at Castle Carrock on 12th and there were 637 between Grinsdale and Old Sandsfield on 18th. An **American Golden Plover** was briefly at Sandside on 3rd August. **Knot** were present on Walney throughout, with 600 in mid-June, 680 by 25th, 800 by mid-July and 600 on 17th August. Four hundred **Sanderling** were on Walney by 11th August and the 50 on Drigg beach that day were the first of Autumn. Two hundred **Dunlin** were on the River Eden east of Rockliffe village on 2nd August and 2000 were noted between Burgh by Sands and RSPB Campfield on 12th with this number increasing during the month. Away from the coast a single was at Sunbiggin also on 12th.



Dunlin, Bowness Railings, Tony Marsh

Single **Curlew Sandpipers** were at Haverigg on 23rd July and Bowness on Solway on 12th and 30th August. The only **Little Stint** was at Port Carlisle on 22nd August. The only report of **Wood Sandpiper** were two at Ulpha Meadows on 5th July and a single for two days after that. Up to three **Green Sandpipers** were present at Foulshaw on many dates from 28th June to 20th August and one was on the River Leven on 14th July. On the lower Eden at Rockliffe three were present on 2nd August, four on 5th, two on 18th and a single on 31st. Further west one was on the River Waver at Brownrigg on 10th and two were at RSPB Campfield on 16th.

In late July **Redshank** numbers had built up to 350 at Hodbarrow and 400 at Walney and in August at least 800 were at Port Carlisle on 12th and 1300 at Walney. Inland they were at Helton on 16th.



Knot, Bowness Railings, Tony Marsh

A **Spotted Redshank** was at Hodbarrow on 25th July. Away from Walney reports of **Green-shank** came from Foulshaw with up to four on 20th, 22nd and 25th August. The north of the county, from Grune to Grinsdale held up to three on the River Eden near Rockliffe on 18th and four at An-thorn on 29th. At Walney there were 25 on 23rd July and still 12 on 11th August.

Inland **Black-tailed Godwits**

included three at Sunbiggin on 21st July and 29 at Bassenthwaite on the same date. Three summer plumage birds were at Anthorn on 1st July and 20 were at Siddick on 4th July. In August numbers increased with a maximum of 63 at RSPB Campfield on 16th, seven juveniles at Foulshaw on 20th and 20 birds at Crosscanonby on 25th.



Black-tailed Godwit, Siddick Ponds, Tommy Holden



Snipe, Siddick Ponds, Tommy Holden

Small numbers of **Whimbrel** were present on the Solway and the west coast from the end of July to end of August with a maximum of eight. Passage birds included 16 moving south at Drigg on 5th. 53 **Curlew** were at Grinsdale on 18th August.

Five **Common Snipe** were at Siddick on 2nd July and eight early migrants were seen flying south over the Irt estuary on 3rd August.

Single **Ruff** were on the River Eden at Rockliffe and RSPB Campfield on several dates in August. Seven **Common Sandpipers** were on the Upper Leven on 14th July and one at Foulshaw on 24th but thereafter most records came from north of the county (apart from five on Ravensglass Esk on 12th August) the highest number being five at Rockliffe and seven westwards from Burgh by Sands to RSPB Campfield on 12th.



Woodcock, River Ellen, Tommy Holden

Skuas to auks



Sandwich Terns, Flimby, Tony Marsh

Few Skuas were reported but included an **Arctic** flying west at Glasson on 22nd August and an **Arctic** and two **Great Skuas** off Walney on 27th. Single **Mediterranean Gulls** were at Hodbarrow on 12th and 26th June then once again built up in significant numbers in the north-west – with an adult on the Irt estuary on 19th July then 12 at Workington on 22nd July, two adults at Bowness on Solway on 27th and a day later a total of 34 from Siddick Shore/Siddick Pond to Workington Harbour. A single flew south-west over Waverton on 27th. The bulk of birds were on the shore at Siddick/Flimby with smaller numbers at Siddick Pond and Workington Harbour with overall peaks of 82 on 14th and 94 on 15th, 21 on 19th and 31 on 27th August. It was good to see the injured Stumpy had returned for her 10th winter. Single birds were at Walney on 16th July and 13th August.

On 23rd June the **Black-headed Gull** colony on Wastwater held 25 or so nests and 21 fledged young. Fifty-three **Common Gulls** were back at RSPB Hodbarrow on 21st July. A **Yellow-legged Gull** was again reported from Whitehaven on several dates and another at Sandside on 19th July and 3rd August. The Walney gull colony deserted by 23rd July after a total failure.

Sandwich Terns at RSPB Hodbarrow did well with a peak count of 3100 and around 1800 nests – approximately 15% of the UK population. **Little Terns** there didn't do as well this year. **Common Terns** had 56 scrapes but no **Arctic Terns** bred this year. **Little Terns** bred successfully at South Walney but of 43 nests on Foulney only eight survived storm Hector. Eleven birds were off Walney on 23rd July. Single **Arctic Terns** were off Selker on 12th July and Bowness on 14th August.

Lone **Black Guillemots** were off Selker on 12th June and 12th July. There was an exceptional run of records from Walney of **Puffins** in June over eleven dates with a total of 44 birds being noted.

Pigeons to buntings

In June **Cuckoo** were reported in the North Lakes, on the Solway Plain on several occasions and three were in Dentdale on 2nd. Those in July were an adult at Sunbiggin on 22nd and a juvenile at old Hutton a week later. Both **Long-eared** (on 8th July) and **Short-eared** (on 28th July) **Owls** were on Walney. A Short-eared was on the Duddon estuary from 7th to 11th August. The only **Nightjar** record came from a southern moss on 11th June.

Swift were reported widely but the following feeding flocks were of note - where crop was specified they related to oil seed rape – 70 near Aglionby for the third day on 30th June and a similar number on 14th July as well as 100 about 2km away a little later in the morning so this could include some duplication. On 4th July 200 were noted by more than one observer near the A66 at Centre Parcs, Penrith with 100 not far away at Winderwath on 1st August. A pair at Rockliffe left on 5th August some days after other birds as it had been late starting as the nest site was still occupied by a pair of Starlings when it first arrived. On the same day birds were passing Drigg at a rate of 60 per hour over a two hour period in the afternoon. Birds were still passing Walney in small numbers at the end of August including 18 moving ahead of rain on 28th.



Swift, Farlam, Adam Moan

One thousand **Swallows** passed through Walney in a four hour period on the morning of 31st August part of a movement including 1250 **Meadow Pipits** and 100 **Pied Wagtails**. **Kingfishers** were on the River Petteril at end of July and on the River Eden at Grinsdale in mid-August. A **Hoopoe** spent some days at Hesket Newmarket from 18th June. Away from Walney the first migrating flock of **Meadow Pipits** on the west coast was at Allonby on 29th August. Forty **Pied Wagtails** were on Leven salt marshes on 12th August. A **Yellow Wagtail** was at Boustead Hill on 19th August and a few birds passed through Walney.



*Spotted Flycatcher, RSPB
Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

Ten **Robin** were associating with a large “tit flock” at Finglandrigg NNR on 1st August; this flock consisted of approximately 100 birds with addition of four **Spotted Flycatchers** also present.

Three **Wheatear** were at RSPB Campfield on 8th August and two at Parton on 20th. Thirteen birds were on Walney on 26th. Two **Whinchat** were on Gowk Bank on 15th August with birds present at RSPB Geltsdale throughout the period. Two **Stonechat** were at Parton on 20th August and 11 at Allonby on 29th and 12 at Walney a day later. A **Ring Ouzel** was in Riggindale on 23rd June.

Two **Hooded Crows** were reported several times at Whitehaven and another at Drigg on 15th August. As part of a wider influx into the UK **Rose-coloured Starlings** were seen at Tebay on 1st June and an injured bird was at Walton on 12th.

A **Tree Sparrow** at Walney was unexpected on 30th June but 100 at the end of August were part of more normal pattern. Ten **Crossbills** were at Foulshaw with at least one male and two juveniles on 6th June then two at Witherslack on 25th June with July reports from Finglandrigg NNR and Stanwix, Carlisle but the largest number being 15 “mostly juveniles” were on Penrith Beacon on 8th.



*Tree Sparrows, Hallbankgate,
Adam Moan*

As ever, we are indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list. 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 December 1st 2018

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Cumbria Bird Club Website

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

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