



BIRD NEWS
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Club news and announcements

CBC AGM 2021

Friday October 1st (AGM): Penrith United Reformed Church 7.30pm

Robert Pocklington - Sizergh wetland and Hawfinch

Mike Carrier - Memories

Adam Moan - Walking with a camera, RSPB Geltsdale

Subscriptions

You will receive a subscription form or a reminder with this mailing if your membership is due for renewal on October 1st and you pay annually by cash, cheque or bank transfer.

To pay by bank transfer:

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To prevent unnecessary costs, such as postage for reminder letters, please can you ensure that this is paid as soon as possible.

CBC winter wetland survey

A full account of this survey is being prepared for publication.

CBC Swift survey 2021

Please send your completed forms/spreadsheets to Dave Piercy.

CBC Meeting programme 2021/2022

(subject to changes - check the website)

Wednesday 12th January 2022: Tullie House 7:15pm. Joint with CNHS.

Tony Marsh - 'My local patch: A miscellany of wildlife'

Tuesday 22 February 2022 : Friends House, Stramongate, Kendal 7.30pm

The third Fred Gould Memorial Lecture joint with KNHS

Gary Gould - 'Nature through the lens'. A selection of slides by Fred Gould, showing a variety of flora and fauna.

Hawfinches at Haweswater



Here's a happy coincidence. On 10th June I read an article in the latest edition of *Scottish Birds* about the first breeding record of Hawfinches on the slopes of Loch Lomond, and on 11th June I looked into the garden of my home near Haweswater and saw a pair of Hawfinches on the lawn, the first I'd seen during my 36 years of living here. The date would seem odd for them to be migrants, but the location is also a little odd for breeding birds, I also saw no courtship feeding or anything to suggest they were foraging to feed young.

The birds were first noticed at 08:50 and stayed for ten minutes feeding on mixed seeds before being disturbed into the bushes by a red squirrel. I thought that was the end of it, but they briefly returned at 10:00, at 10:55 (for ten minutes), and paid another brief visit at 11:24. After the last of these the birds flew into a nearby plum tree, where they nibbled on buds for a couple of minutes before hopping out of sight and not being seen again.

It's difficult to know why the Hawfinches were here, how they found the food (it was in an anti-Woodpigeon cage feeder in the shadow of a tree), or why they should make several visits in one morning and then not return. It may or may not have been coincidental that two or three Greenfinches were present at the same time. This species isn't a regular in my garden at any time of year, appearing as if randomly, so perhaps their presence was the result of some type of midsummer finch movement. The only other Hawfinch record I can find for Haweswater is one from 25th October 2005.

Dave Walker

Marine litter – discarded fishing gear

Many of us have found a dead seabird on the shore, tangled in discarded fishing line. The autopsy on a young Orca in Sheltand recently concluded that it had drowned as a result of entanglement, highlighting the problem of discarded fishing gear.

Retiring after 20 years as RSPB Warden at Haweswater, Dave Shackleton moved to Ravenglass. During just three months of lockdown this year Dave along with a few neighbours used their daily exercise quota to clear most of the discarded fishing gear which has washed up on the Ravenglass Estuary during recent years – this was no mean feat, it involved over 60 fish boxes full of fishing gear alone, plus many bags of other human sourced waste.

To highlight the issue Dave's collection was displayed as art, a turtle and a jellyfish on the green at Ravenglass in August before it was sent to landfill.



Mike Mills

The 300 (part 2)

Continued from Summer 2021 newsletter:

1991 – 243 species: the “300” challenge had been set and the mission began, however after the overindulgence of sightings in the previous two years, the going proved slow with only four new additions during the course of the year. An **Avocet** was at the mouth of the River Bela on the Kent Estuary on 23rd February before autumn at Walney BO added **Melodious Warbler** on 25th August and a juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** on 6th September, as more time began to be spent birding on the island. However, the only other addition involved a journey north to see a **Shorelark** on a cold, crisp, frosty morning at Grune Point on 14th December.

1992 – 256 species: progress was back on track with 13 species added during a year which began when a **Bean Goose** of the tundra race was found amongst Pink-footed Geese at Askam-in-Furness on 16th February and a first -winter **Red-breasted Goose** seen on Rockcliffe Marsh on 19th April – the



Mandarin Ducks, Derwent Water, Tony Marsh

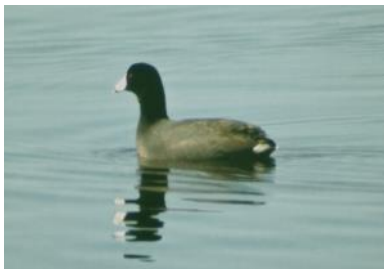
second county record. A female **Mandarin** was found nesting in the Rusland Valley on 13th May prior to a trip to Carr Beds, Rockcliffe for two stunning adult **White-winged Black Terns** on 19th May and a **Honey Buzzard** that overflowed Walney BO on 28th May. Another local bird involved a **Roseate Tern** roosting at the outfalls at Newbiggin on 5th June before a Walney BO hat-trick involved Cumbria's and the North West of England's first **Booted Warbler** on 17th June – to bring up the 250, a stunning adult **Roller** on 27th June and the county's second **Greenish Warbler** on 30th June. A first-summer **Ring-billed Gull** was at Ormsgill Reservoir on 12th July and an adult **Yellow-legged Gull** at Arnside on 30th July was the second “armchair tick” when it was only given full species status by the British Ornithologists Union in 2007. Seawatching activities produced two **Balearic Shearwaters** off Hilpsford Point, Walney Island on 1st August, although a **Yellow-browed Warbler** was at Askam-in-Furness on 5th October the autumn thereafter, in comparison to spring, proved disappointing.

1993 – 258 species: another quiet year with just two additions, Walney BO which was rapidly becoming my local patch produced an adult **Long-tailed Skua** offshore on 31st May and a juvenile **Temminck's Stint** on the newly created scrape on 13th September.

1994 – 265 species: a further seven top quality species were forthcoming during the year, beginning with a **Kentish Plover** at Earnse Bay, Walney Island on 7th March – only the third county record, which was quickly followed by an early **Sooty Shearwater** at Walney BO on 13th March to bring up 260. The next addition was a splendid **Bridled Tern** which took up temporary residence amongst the tern colony on Foulney Island on 3rd June and remarkably this was followed by a first-summer **Ross's Gull** at Workington Harbour on 26th June, a male **Dartford Warbler** on Walney Island on 11th July and a first-winter **Greater Yellowlegs** at Carr Beds, Rockcliffe on 16th October – an exceptional period producing four new Cumbrian species in a row. A **Pallas's Warbler** appeared at Walney BO on 31st October to become just the second Cumbrian record, however, the year ended with a Steppe Grey Shrike at the same location on 4th November. Accepted by BBRC and for a long time considered a separate species, the current taxonomic view is that it is unfortunately just a race of Great Grey Shrike.

1995 – 265 species: a blank year, with no additions, with 35 species still to go and obvious potential targets running out perhaps the goal for 300 species within the county boundary really was an impossible dream.

1996 – 273 species: belief was restored when another good year saw eight new additions which began with a trip to see a **Coues's Arctic Redpoll** on 2nd March, a visit which eventually produced another "armchair tick" when **Common Redpoll** was given full species status in 2000. The next trip was to Hodbarrow on 21st April for a drake **Green-winged Teal** before a first-summer **White Stork** which roosted overnight at Threlkeld was seen at dawn the next day and Cumbria's first **Red-rumped Swallow** was closer to home at Ormsgill Reservoir on 24th April – an excellent spring hat-trick. News of a singing male **Common Rosefinch** saw me heading north to Waterside on 19th June before, remarkably, on 14th July another visit was required to the same location for a male **Spanish Sparrow** that was to take up an extended residence – a Cumbrian first and part of an exceptional double for this small Cumbrian village. The final new bird of the year was a **Black-winged Pratincole** at Foulshaw on 25th August – another county first and only the second for the northwest of England.



American Coot, Walney

1997 – 274 species: only one species added, a juvenile **Woodchat Shrike** on Foulney Island on 17th August was one of a small influx into Cumbria during the autumn.

1998 – 278 species: spring passage produced a male **Serin** at Walney BO on 17th May – the first Cumbrian record and a singing **Corncrake** at Eskmeals at 29th June. Autumn provided another double with a **Red-necked Phalarope** on the gate pool at Walney BO on 1st October and two **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** at Rockcliffe Marsh next day.

1999 – 280 species: the year provided a trans-Atlantic double with a first-summer **American Coot** on the gate pool at Walney BO on 17th April – a first for Cumbria and only the second recorded in Britain and an adult **American Golden Plover** moulting out of summer plumage on the Solway at Anthorn on 7th October - the second for Cumbria.



Squacco Heron, Walney

2000 – 282 species: another double began with the fourth Nearctic addition in a row when a drake **Blue-winged Teal** in partial breeding plumage was found at Biggar Bank, Walney Island on 1st July, this preceded an adult **Pacific Golden Plover** in the north of the county at Grune Point on 6th August. Again, both were just the second to be seen in Cumbria.

2001 – 283 species: the only “tickable” new addition involved a **Cory’s Shearwater** which flew past Biggar Bank on 13th July, although arguably the “bird of the year” was a Fea’s Petrel which flew past the same location on 22nd July. However, although accepted by BBRC at the time, the record is currently “untickable” and likely to remain that way with its taxonomic status in a state of flux.

2002 – 285 species: late summer provided two quality additions beginning with a first-summer **Squacco Heron** found at Walney BO on 6th June, again only the second for the county and this followed by a group of four **Bee-eaters** in the Rusland Valley on 22nd June.

2003 – 289 species: another Nearctic addition in the form of Cumbria’s first **Lesser Scaup** – a drake on the River Eden at Armathwaite on 12th January was followed by a less auspicious **Egyptian Goose** at Whinfell Tarn on 10th

April. A **Stone Curlew** was then viewed distantly through the heat haze on the Irt Estuary at Ravenglass on 26th July – it later transpired that this bird had been colour-ringed as a chick in Norfolk earlier in the year. The final addition of the year involved an adult **Great White Egret** at Bassenthwaite on 1st August – another species, which, while rare at the time, was to become a regular feature in Cumbria's avifauna.

2004 – 290 species: new birds were becoming increasingly difficult and the only addition was Cumbria's first **Dusky Warbler** at Westfield Point, Rampside on 29th October.

2005 – 294 species: the year began with a **Chough** unexpectedly putting in an appearance at Biggar Bank, Walney on 22nd January before absconding north to eventually take up residence at St Bees Head. Walney BO then brought some much needed momentum to the total when autumn passage produced an **Oortolan Bunting** on 4th September, **Little Bunting** on 31st October and the county's first **Cetti's Warbler** on 17th November.

2006 – 295 species: a visit to Denton Fell on 22nd January was to provide the only addition of the year, when after a long wait a **Rough-legged Buzzard** finally performed admirably as it hunted over the fellsides in front of its assembled audience.

2007 – 298 species: a flurry of summer activity began with a **Hudsonian Whimbrel** at Wylock Marsh, Walney Island on 14th June which was to remain throughout the summer. This was followed by a **Whiskered Tern** at Siddick Ponds on 20th June and an adult **White-rumped Sandpiper** at Anthorn on 29th July. The "impossible" was finally within touching distance. The Hudsonian Whimbrel, Cumbria's first, became an "armchair" tick for the second time when it was finally and hopefully incontrovertibly split from Whimbrel in 2020.

2008 – 301 species: a trip to Grinsdale in the north of the county on 17th February produced Cumbria's third **Cattle Egret** which moved the total on to 299 - this was just the first of an unprecedented influx of this species into the county during the year. Nevertheless, the year was not done with two further county firsts appearing in the autumn. Another journey north on 23rd September provided a juvenile **Stilt Sandpiper** on the roadside scrape at Campfield Marsh to bring up the 300 before a **Rustic Bunting** was found at Walney BO on 27th September.

2009 – 301 species: after the hat-trick of 2008, birding brought me back to earth with a bump when no new species were recorded throughout the year.

2010 – 302 species: finally, after almost two years, the county continued to provide and the total began to roll again when a visit to Port Carlisle on 1st August produced an adult **Semi-palmated Sandpiper**.

2011 – 303 species: another singleton was added during the course of the year when a **Spotted Crake** skulked in the Central Marsh at South Walney on 1st August.

2012 – 305 species: a spring double was provided by a first-winter **Laughing Gull** at Standing Tarn on 17th March and a **Glossy Ibis** at Arnside on 25th April.

2013 – 307 species: another double began with a male **Western Subalpine Warbler** at Rampside on 18th May and a first-year **Red-breasted Flycatcher** at Walney BO on 20th September.

2014 – 308 species: the year was drawing to an uneventful close when a visit to Walney BO on 14th November conspired to produce a **Red-eyed Vireo** in the observatory garden – the first for Cumbria and the north-west of England and finally fulfilling a long-term personal goal to find an American passerine on the island.

2015 – 309 species: again, it was Walney BO that produced the surprise of the year when a juvenile/first-winter **Citrine Wagtail** appeared on the Gate Pool at South Walney on 11th August.



Red-eyed Vireo, Walney, Lou Cross

2016 – 310 species: yet again it was Walney BO in the autumn that provided the addition when Cumbria's first **Isabelline Shrike** dropped into the observatory garden on 28th October.

2017 – 312 species: the news of a singing **Blyth's Reed Warbler** – another Cumbria first, on 15th June saw an after work visit to Siddick Pond. However, the bird had stopped singing and a long wait ensued before the bird finally showed. Regular seawatching activities at Biggar Bank, Walney Island then struck gold when a **Wilson's Petrel** drifted past on 10th September.

2018 - 313 species: two female **Ring-necked Parakeets** took up residence in the observatory garden at South Walney from 25th March. Though perhaps one of the more contentious species on the list, the species has now been recorded in the Barrow-in-Furness area for around ten years and is now seemingly established in small numbers.



*Isabelline Shrike, Walney,
Alan Mackay*

2019 - 313 species: this proved to be only the third blank year since 1980 with potential additions becoming hard to predict and find!

2020 - 314 species: “lockdown” curtailed the spring before Walney BO again came to the fore and produced the goods in the autumn, the form of Cumbria’s first **Pied-billed Grebe**, an adult still showing a hint of summer plumage, found on the gravel pools at South Walney on 6th November where it remained until 8th November.

2021 – 314 species: there have been no additions to date though with “staycation” the mantra the autumn will be spent birding on Walney Island so anything is possible!

While an unforeseen total, beyond expectations, it does admirably demonstrate the stimulating diversity of Cumbria’s avifauna. Even though I missed many of the exciting rarities found at Walney BO in the 1980s, fortunately most have since reappeared. Nonetheless Black Stork, Nightingale, Western Bonelli’s Warbler and Hume’s Warbler are still amongst the omissions. More recently trips for Terek Sandpiper and Broad-billed Sandpiper on the Solway are frustratingly memorable, however, a Baird’s Sandpiper present on the gate pool at South Walney for two days is perhaps the most galling.

This total could not have been achieved without the help and hard work of other Cumbrian birders in getting out into the field and finding the birds, of the 314 species seen, only 271 species have been self-found, either initially or at a later date. The next target is to see 300 species on Walney Island, now that really is an impossible dream, however, an excellent start to 2021 has already produced both Stone Curlew and Glossy Ibis and of the island total, which currently stands at 301 species, I have so far managed to see 270!



Colin Raven

*Stone Curlew, Walney,
Rob Pocklington*

Ambleside Swifts “Annual Report” 2021



Swift, River Derwent, Tony Marsh

Another year, another summer of trying to find out more about the Swifts in the Ambleside area, contributing data to both the “Swifts in the Community” project and Cumbria Bird Club’s fourth year of Swift surveying. But once again, things didn’t go as planned: Covid restrictions were still in place early in the season; there was the post-restriction surge in visitor numbers; a variety of medical reasons prevented me from getting out anything like as much as I wanted. I didn’t organise a single Swift walk all summer. And as for the weather: May was cold and wet, June and July were pretty warm and then August was grey and cool. Overall, the visiting Swifts had it drier and warmer than average after a cold wet start.

The first Swifts of 2021 were reported from the head of the lake on 26th April. Birds were seen there regularly over the next few days, but none were reported from the village until the 7th of May, when the first birds were also seen in Grasmere. The next day, I was rung to say that Swifts had been seen entering a nest on Stonecroft: they weren’t messing about! But it wasn’t until a week later that I saw birds going in and out of the nest in the house next door to me. By then I had also witnessed (for the first time) Swifts mating in mid-air over the village. But overall, numbers seemed to build very slowly. The first double-figure sighting of birds over the village came on May 21st, after which there seemed to be more activity at and around nests. As the weather improved at the bank holiday weekend, there were frequent counts of 25 or more birds.

The good weather of June saw numbers build still further, presumably as non-breeding birds came back to join in the fun. There were frequent counts of 30 birds at a time, and several of over 40, most of these from Fisherbeck Park. Numbers seemed to be easily on a par with previous years, even though May had been poor. The highest count of all was 60-70 birds over the village on the evening of 20th July. Whilst probably too early for recently-fledged birds to be involved, this is one of the highest counts over the three years we have been seriously watching the village’s Swifts. Conversations with other south Lakeland Swift observers confirmed the feeling that this had

been a very good year for numbers, though of course we don't know whether these are local breeders. One theory is that poorer weather further south sent non-breeders in our direction. If so, "thank you" weather gods! The continued good numbers can be contrasted with what feels like annual declines in the breeding House Martin population around the village.

The highest numbers are always seen at the end of July and this year was no exception with 30-40 birds being seen every time I looked out on an evening. Early August brought wetter, windier and cloudier weather, but it seemed as though the Swifts stayed: maybe the poor May weather had delayed breeding. 30-40 were seen over the village on 5th August; I had 13 screaming over Millans Park on the 7th and 18 wheeling over Millans Park on the evening of the 16th just minutes after 22 were reported over Todd Crag. The same birds? We'll never know. I saw my last Swift of the year on 18th, but the last sighting in the area I'm aware of was on the 25th.

Comparing these dates and numbers to previous years it would appear birds arrived at about the same as last year, or maybe a day or two earlier, but numbers were slow to get going. June and July saw good numbers of birds, and the departure was later, possibly much later, than in previous years.

A major focus has been trying to identify nest sites. Birds were seen entering or leaving 21 buildings within the village, in a total of 35 places (slightly down on last year). The vast majority of these are probably nest sites though it is hard to know how many of these were successful. As last year, the two major colonies within the village accounted for most of these nests: Millans Park saw 12 "confirmed" nests this year, and Fisherbeck/Blue Hill nine. Both numbers were slightly down on last year, the latter almost certainly because of less time being spent watching the colony, though there was building work at one end of a heavily-nested-in terrace. A number of "new" buildings were found, and some previously used nest sites were unconfirmed in spite of considerable observer time being spent by them. But absence of evidence of use is not evidence of them not being used!

A couple of sites where nesting had been suspected before were finally confirmed this year. In several instances, birds were found to be nesting in the same buildings as last year, but in slightly different places. Are these different nests or additional ones? Or just faulty record keeping? We also found a number of new places where birds were "banging": approaching likely nest holes and slapping the walls with their wings, sometimes repeatedly. This is presumed to be an activity undertaken by non-breeding birds, looking to see if a likely site is occupied: think of it as an avian game of "knock and run". Whilst this mostly happens around occupied nests, in some cases we know nothing about birds having been seen at these sites before.

In Millans Park, the birds mainly nest in the walls and under the eaves of late Victorian terraces, though several pairs also use a more modern construction. Similarly, in the Blue Hill colony, the birds are mainly in a Victorian stone terrace, though also use more modern council-constructed houses (and holes within these made by a house owner). In both areas, the birds will race over the rooftops and along the "cuttings" between the houses. Outside of these two areas, Swifts appear to be using older, often larger, buildings with holes in the stone walls. Local stone construction seems particularly good at providing nest sites. Often, but not exclusively so, these are buildings whose walls give high views and take off points over the village.

It is often said that modern building techniques and improvements are denying Swifts nest sites. From my observations I don't think there is a shortage of nest sites within the village, but building works certainly move birds on/deny them access to traditional sites: scaffolding on one building denied birds access and caused them distress this year. However, at one site where last year scaffolding prevented nesting, birds returned this year. During the winter I responded to a planning application requesting that the National Park planners require work to be undertaken outside the nesting season: in the end the application was refused. I will continue to monitor planning applications and will do this again if necessary. Please feel free to tell me about planning applications you know of. On a cheerier note, one householder told me that they had put off having work done until the autumn as they enjoyed having Swifts coming into their nests so much as they put the children to bed!

This year, I once again managed some investigations outside the village. Wray Castle was visited on three occasions. It's a perfect playground for Swifts, who swoop from the walls, circle the towers and then head off to the lake for a bit of feeding. My maximum count there was 38 birds and I managed to find 12 nest sites, six of which were different from last year.

In Grasmere, the first birds were seen on the 7th of May. Two more nests were found in the "Wordsworth Trust" complex, bringing the total known there to four. Nest sites in the village centre remain undetected, though suspected. A couple of mornings at Skelwith Bridge gave a maximum count of 21 birds. More interestingly, nine nests were found in cottages and derelict buildings. Seven of these were new this year, including one only 8-10 feet above ground. An hour or so in Little Langdale confirmed two nests: one at a spot used last year, the other in a building where use was suspected but not confirmed in 2020.

Swifts give great pleasure to people: I've had lovely emails reporting them screaming amongst the tall buildings in the village centre, and feeding just above swimmers at Waterhead. I sometimes feel, though, that the more information I gather the less I understand what's going on and the more complicated and beyond my ken the Swift's world is. There are always more ques-

tions: do the local colonies interact? Are some sites doing better than others? Do nests get used every year (it appears that sometimes nests are returned to after "years off": they've certainly returned to next door after a gap of several years). It is, of course, unlikely that we have found all the nests within the village: the colonies may have more nests to be found and there may be other groups of nests as yet undiscovered (by us). Surely there are birds nesting up on the Ellers! All information is gratefully received.

I've read a couple of books this year that have helped me understand Swifts a little more, as well as helping me come to terms with how magical their world appears: Charles Foster's "The Screaming Sky" and Sarah Foster's "Swifts and Us". We are lucky to live in a quite marvellous place, and each year the Swifts come and add to that marvel. The more I learn about them and think about them the more marvellous it all becomes: long may it continue!

My thanks to those who have contributed counts, information and anecdotes: Helen Baker; Rebecca Costello; Jennifer Moffett; Sally Capewell; Ashley Cooper for his frequent counts from Fisherbeck and Waterhead; Jane Cooper for news from Grasmere; Allan Nicholson; Paul Martin; Mike Green; Seb Butlin; Janet Moss for keeping her eyes open and encouraging my counting; and Mike Withers. And thank you to everyone else who has expressed interest in what we are doing.

Here's to finding out more about these fascinating birds next year! Let us know if you'd like to be involved: thorncottage@hotmail.com

Pete Martin



Swift, Adam Moan

The inland occurrence of Common Scoters in Cumbria



Common Scoter, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

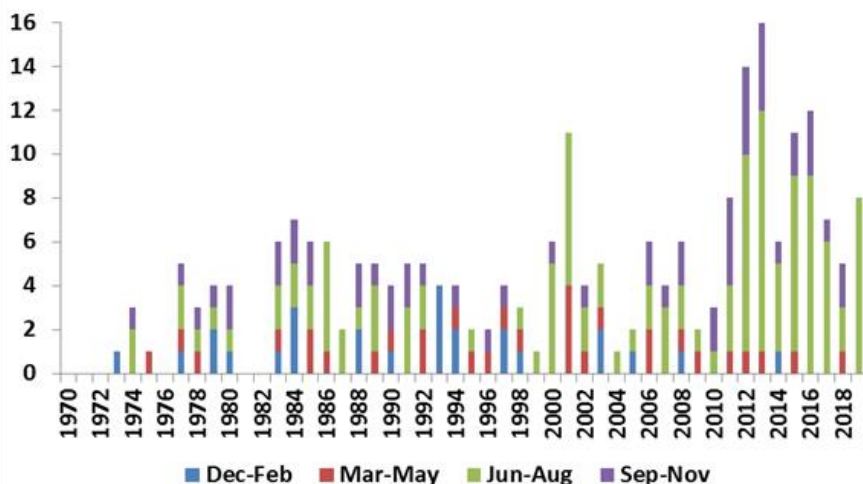
Common Scoters breed across Scandinavia and northern parts of western and central Russia, with smaller populations in Iceland, Greenland, Ireland and Scotland. They winter in shallow coastal waters of the western North Atlantic from Norway and the Baltic Sea to North Africa. They undergo a moult migration primarily, but not exclusively, to the eastern part of the North Sea and in the Kattegat where huge flocks can occur in July and August involving males and immatures, with females later. The very large Baltic wintering population may have declined and it may be that some birds have relocated to the North Sea and around the British coast. Non-breeding first year males may curtail spring migration north and return as early as mid-May to moulting sites. Adult males vacate their breeding grounds soon after mating and return south early to moult sites, perhaps from June onwards, with females and juveniles from September and into October. Overland passage in the Baltic region is regular during both spring and autumn migration.

There are about 14 sites around the UK coast which hold significant flocks in the non-breeding season. Six of these are in the Celtic and Irish Seas: off the North Solway Coast and Wigtown Bay, Dundrum Bay in Northern Ireland, off the Lancashire and North Wales coasts, in Carmarthen Bay and in Cardigan Bay. Numbers at these sites appear to vary and it is only recently that their size, footprint and importance has been revealed with the advent of aerial and boat based surveys related to offshore wind energy development. However less is known about seasonal usage of these sites for staging during migration, moulting and wintering and nothing is known about interchange of birds between these areas. The extent of overland passage in the UK is also unknown, largely because it takes place at night. Inland occurrence on still waters of birds presumably forced down in poor weather is uncommon but regular, particularly in spring and late summer. Recent nocturnal migration monitoring in 2020 by microphone partly supports extensive overland movements, revealing west to east passage in spring, although it remains to be seen if this is annual and extensive. However it is reasonable to assume that birds wintering off our west coasts access their breeding grounds over the UK and via the North Sea.

This summary updates a paper in *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria* 2004 and analyses Cumbria data up to and including 2019 with some additional supporting information from nocturnal migration recording in 2020.

Inland occurrence in Cumbria is recorded as far back as early as 1848, however there had only been 25 specifically dated or located records prior to 1973. Since 1973 there has been at least one inland record in all years except 1976, 1981 and 1982 with a maximum of 16 in 2013. In all there are about 255 documented occurrences (records, not number of birds) on still waters and rivers, both inland and close to the sea to the end of 2019, with some at different sites on the same date.

Figure 1: Inland occurrence by season 1970 – 2019



Perhaps surprisingly only a small spring occurrence rate is noticeable in the inland records with the most prolific period between 21st to 26th April involving only ten records and 16 birds. There is one more record in late April and 13 in May. This lack of records at a time when more would be expected if overland migration to breeding sites was taking place is intriguing. It could be because birds heading east from their western wintering area would only be a short way into their journey over Cumbria and so less likely to be forced down by a change to bad weather, assuming they had chosen to start their journey in favourable conditions. There is an increase in occurrence in June to peak in both July and August. Thereafter there is a sharp fall in September before levelling out in October, all before and including 26th October. 14 of the 19 November records fall between 11th and 20th. Hence there is a very light period at the end of October and beginning of November.

The inland occurrence of Common Scoters in Cumbria

The lowest period of occurrence is between 21st November and 20th April. Though occurrence by month shows an obvious peak in July and August, presumably involving returning birds from their breeding grounds, there are in truth no substantial gaps in days with records between late April and late October making accurate demarcation between spring and moult/autumn migration impossible.

Figure 2: Month of first occurrence at different inland sites

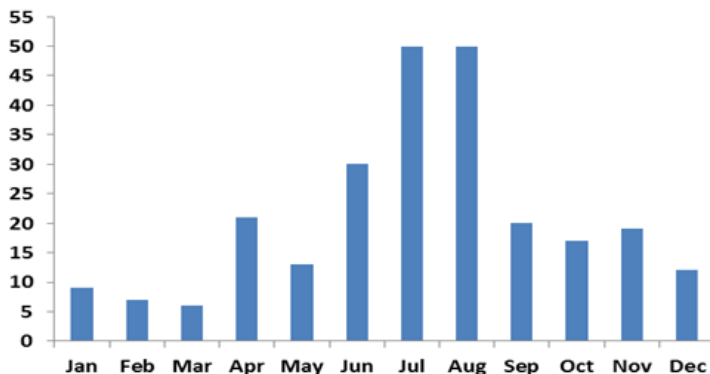


Table 1: Nocturnal migration monitoring by microphone at Ulverston 2020

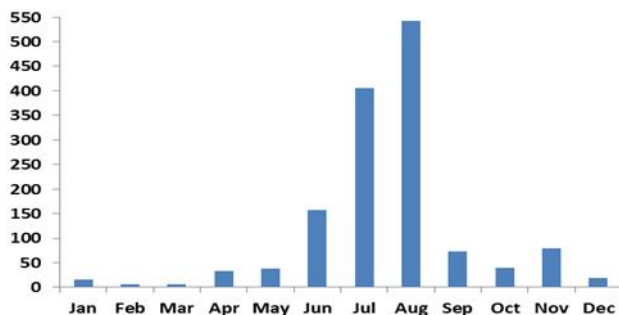
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Nights monitored	5	17	11	0	4	13	6	5
Nights with registrations	1	2	0		0	0	2	0
No. of registrations	1	5	0		0	0	2	0

In addition a device was deployed at Kershope for two hours at dusk in 2020, for four nights in April with no registrations and 20 nights in May, when there was a single pass on one recording on 3rd May.

(Data for Ulverston and Kershope supplied by Mike Douglas)

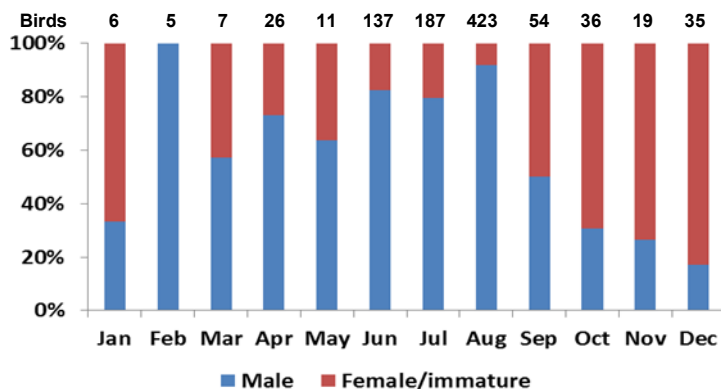
Analysis of birds involved rather than occurrences confirms a low level of spring passage and a rise from June onwards peaking in August. This is influenced by a huge count of 235 on Haweswater on 2nd August 2014. Indeed three of the four highest dated counts have come in the period 29th July to 2nd August and all were at Haweswater. The others involved 50 flying east over the reservoir on 29th July 2002 and 62 on 1st August 2015. The remaining highest counts are of 52 also at Haweswater on 13th November 1988 and 50 on Ullswater in July in an unknown year prior to 1943.

Figure 3: Monthly totals at inland sites



The proportion of adult males to females/immatures/juveniles (lumped for analysis) involved in occurrences where sex or age was recorded, shows a distinct pattern of male dominance from February into August. A switch in favour of females or immatures is evident by October. Where flock size involved more than three birds, the latest record in the year to show male dominance is on 22nd August (2019) and the first to show female/immature dominance is on 10th September (1985) which was exclusively female/immature. This suggests that though there is overall parity in September, a switch to female/immature dominance may happen in this month. The higher proportion of presumably returning males in the summer records in inland Cumbria strongly suggests this drives occurrence levels at this time, with females and juveniles returning later and accounting for a small November spike. However it is not known if birds in these movements have moulted further east and are returning to wintering areas, or are heading to moult in western UK coastal waters, before presumably remaining to winter.

Figure 4: % of males and female/immatures by month



The inland occurrence of Common Scoters in Cumbria

Inland flock size is dominated by single bird occurrence at 57%, followed by two birds at 9% and 90% of all records fall within the range of 1 to 10 birds. Flocks of 11 to 30 account for about another 8% and flocks larger than 30 under 3%.

Though most records have been of one day duration, birds have regularly lingered in to the following day or two and this is probably under-recorded in many records. All longer staying records have involved just single birds, prominent amongst these being a male on Cavendish Dock from 21st October to 21st December 1978 and possibly the same bird again here from 25th March to 14th April 1979.

Likewise a female on Grasmere from 28th November to 12th December 1983 and possibly the same bird from 17th to 24th January 1984, and a female on Bassenthwaite from 16th November to 31st December 2002.

The ranking of favoured inland sites is heavily influenced by observer effort and it is probably no coincidence that Haweswater Reservoir is a nature reserve with constant wardening presence and has the most occurrences with 50. Close behind on 47, Killington Reservoir has also been a well watched site.

Dave Shackleton



Common Scoter, Backbarrow, Rob Pocklington

The inland occurrence of Common Scoters in Cumbria

Table 2: Summary of occurrences by site

Longtown Ponds	2	Haweswater Reservoir	50
R. Irthing: Newby	1	Wet Sleddale Reservoir	19
Geltsdale flyover	1	R. Eden: Watersmeet (Edenhall)	1
Tindale Tarn	4	R. Eden: Warcop	1
Talkin Tarn	11	Floddors Pond, Warcop	1
Hayton flyover	1	Whins Pond. Penrith	2
Castle Carrock Reservoir	2	Wastwater	2
R. Esk: Rockcliffe	1	Hodbarrow Lagoon	2
R. Eden: Cargo to Rockcliffe	7	Ormsgill Reservoir	1
R. Eden: Rickerby	1	Barrow Docks	9
Glasson Moss	1	Dalton-in-Furness Pond	1
Campfield Marsh, Bowness	1	Urswick Tarn	1
Monkhill Loch	1	R. Duddon: Ulpha (dead)	1
Thurstonfield Lough	1	Coniston Water	3
Cardew Mires	1	Esthwaite Water	1
Silloth Docks	2	Elterwater	1
Derwent Water	10	Rydal Water	1
Bassenthwaite Lake	7	Grasmere	3
Overwater	1	Lake Windermere	23
Tarns Dub	1	Kentmere Reservoir	1
Mockerkin Tarn	1	Lakeland Tarn (un-named)	1
Siddick Pond	4	Kendal flyover	1
Brotherswater	1	R. Kent: Sandy Bottoms, Kendal	1
Grisdale Tarn	1	Sunbiggin Tarn	5
Red Tarn	1	Tarn House Tarn	2
Ullswater	6	Sedbergh on road (died)	1
Blea Water (Mardale)	1	Killington Reservoir	47
Small Water (Mardale)	1	Whinell Tarn	1

Recent reports

The period covered is from June to August 2021 inclusive. Some records are unauthenticated and may require review. There seemed to be fewer records in the public domain for the period but it has to be said that it becomes harder seeking out reports on the increasing number of sites available.

Wildfowl



Eiders, Hodbarrow, Tony Marsh

Not unexpectedly there were few reports of geese but 60 **Brent Geese** reported moving south past Silecroft on 22nd August were of note as were eight **Canada Geese** which came in off the sea at Lowca from the Kirkcudbright direction before going inland. The **Garganey** at Longtown and the **Long-tailed Duck** at Walney were both still present up to mid June. A single **Garganey** was at Ulpha Meadows in the second half of August. Unexpected at Walney were five **Gadwall** on the sea on 16th June.

Probably the most significant wildfowl movement was the overland passage of **Common Scoter** at the end of June, part of a much larger movement in Northern England; birds were reported from high ground at Killington (ten), Wet Sleddale (six) and Hardendale – seven on 25th June (increasing to 14 on 5th July) and then ten on Ullswater also on 28th. Further inland reports were four at Bassenthwaite on 6th June, three at Killington on 20th July, and 62 at Wet Sleddale on 6th August. Coastally 540 were off Walney on 24th June, presumably part of the wider movement and then there were 106 past Silecroft on 14th August and 1000 south past Workington on 30th. At Walney numbers reached 1015 on 14th July and still 915 in first week of August and 400 at the end of the month.

A flotilla of 38 **Goosander** were on Bassenthwaite on 12th August. The Duddon Estuary had 91 **Red-breasted Mergansers** drifting in with the tide on 26th July.



Fulmars, St Bees Head, James Hewitson

Partridge to Cormorant

In the Penrith area **Quail** were heard on 12th June and on 14th July (three present) with one at Thornhill Meadows on 6th August. The Parton **Fulmars** successfully bred with at least one young. **Manx Shearwaters** were reported from the west coast with c1100 past Silecroft on 4th July and around 1000 feeding and roosting in flat calm off Eskmeals on 22nd being of note. At Walney 1630 passed in mid June with lesser numbers until the third week of July. A **Storm Petrel** passed Silecroft on 10th July.

Of note were five **Little Egrets** at Longtown on 18th July as was a single bird which frequented the River Eden in the Warwick Bridge/Wetheral area for some weeks. The largest counts were in August with at least 20 at Foulshaw on 2nd, 29 at RSPB Hodbarrow on 22nd. There were 27 on Irt/Esk/Mite complex a week later and 56 seen leaving the roost here on 16th August. Three **Great White Egrets** were at Arnside on 12th June and in July single birds were at Ravenglass, Coniston and Foulshaw and in August, four at Ulpha Meadows reducing to one by the end of the month. Two were at Sandside on 17th to 24th August. Apart from three reported flying west over Carlisle on 6th June and a single bird on Rockcliffe Marsh on 27th all **Spoonbill** records came from RSPB Hodbarrow or nearby from 20th June to end of August. Walney's first **Glossy Ibis** appeared on 1st June.

Raptors to Waders



Snipe with young, Howard Pond, Barry Robson

Osprey were reported over Kirkstone and at Ravenglass in June. Also at Eskmeals in July. In August one moving west at Geltsdale on 10th with a bird at Anthorn on the same day. One was heading for Crummock on 15th, over Wrynose on 16th and then at Calder Bridge on 22nd and Silecroft on 28th. Birds started using the regular site on the estuary at Campfield with two there on 24th plus others at Port Carlisle and Burgh Marsh; four birds were together at Campfield in the first few days of September. At Walney birds passed through on 17th July and 25th August.

A **Honey Buzzard** was reported in North Pennines in mid June. Away from the regular sites in the south of the county records of **Marsh Harrier** were of a bird in the North Lakes on 29th July, one moving west over Gilsland on 4th August, past RSPB Geltsdale on 19th and on the Solway on 26th. Just two birds went through Walney in July and August. The only reports of **Hen Harrier** were of a ring-tail at Anthorn on 10th August and another at Walney on 26th, with a **Merlin** there the next day. **Red Kite** were reported from the south east of the county, the North Pennines and from Bowness on Solway (21st July). Reports of **Hobby** came from High Harrington in June, Lazonby in July and Kendal and Milnethorpe in August. Ones and twos were reported from southern mosses throughout the period.

Whimbrel were at Hodbarrow, Port Carlisle, the Irt/Mite/Esk and Flimby in July with two at Foulshaw, a single at Port Carlisle and another single past Silecroft in August. At Walney there were 16 on 26th July and 32 four weeks later.

A post breeding flock of **Lapwing** at Lazonby numbered 1000 birds. One hundred and twenty two **Grey Plover** were at Walney on 24th August. The last week of July saw **Curlew** flock numbers building up with 2400 at Walney (1620 in late August) and 155 at Grune Point and 134 at Workington/Flimby. Thirty five **Black-tailed Godwits** passed Silecroft on 4th July with 11 at Port Carlisle three days later, increasing there to 25 on 28th August and 155 on 30th. Anthorn held 35 and Old Sandsfield 27 on 24th August. The largest count however was at Arnside on 21st July with 250 present. Twenty four **Sanderling** were at Workington on 28th July. Unexpected was a **Little Stint** at the inland/high level lake at Hardendale Quarry, Shap.



Lapwing, River Esk, Roger Ridley



Snipe, Castle Carrock, Adam Moan

The largest number of **Common Sandpiper** were eight at Port Carlisle on 7th July, nine on the Esk Estuary on 13th, three at Workington/Flimby on 28th and then singles at Siddick on 14th August, Bassenthwaite on 17th and the last at Port Carlisle on 18th.

A **Green Sandpiper** reported was at Linstock on 10th July, another was at Foulshaw on 1st August, a single at Torver on 8th August, two at Walney on 15th August and three near Cliburn. Two **Wood Sandpipers** were at Siddick Ponds on 9th August and singles at Hodbarrow and Walney at the end of the month.

Nineteen **Greenshank** were at the regular site on the Irt/Mite/Esk complex on 19th August whilst Walney had had 39 a day earlier. A single **Spotted Redshank** was at Port Carlisle among the **Common Redshank** flock numbering several thousand - 2100 were at Walney on 24th August. An adult **Avocet** with two juveniles was at Port Carlisle on 28th July whilst there had been up to 14 on the north shore of the Solway at Redkirk point earlier in the month.



*Greenshank, Geltsdale,
Adam Moan*

Skuas to Auks

Two **Arctic Skuas** were off Eskmeals on 21st July. Four **Pomarine Skuas** went high inland on 6th June at Walney. Returning **Mediterranean Gulls** were first reported at Port Carlisle (one on 7th July), two at Maryport on 20th and a count of 44 between Workington and Flimby also on 20th. A count of the Workington area produced 74 birds on 23rd August. There were still ten present in Workington Harbour itself on 30th. In the south of the county four were at both Rampside and Roosebeck early in August and three were seen passing Silecroft on 14th. Walney had ones and twos throughout the period but also a maximum of five on 23rd and 27th July. Reports of **Yellow-legged Gull** came from Greenodd in late July and Irt Estuary in mid August.

Away from Hodbarrow of note were 15 **Little Tern** off Walney and a single off Silecroft on 14th August. Large numbers of **Sandwich Terns** seemed to move around the North Irish sea in late August with large numbers at Hodbarrow including on 27th an **Elegant Tern** that had, assuming only a single bird involved, spent time in the colony at Cemlyn, Anglesey and moved to other sites in Lancashire since. 537 Sandwich terns were at Flimby on 30th August by which time the Elegant had been reported back in Lancashire. Two **Roseate Terns** were in the tern colony at Hodbarrow in late June/early July.



Sandwich Tern, Flimby, Tony Marsh

Recent reports

As is the norm six **Black Guillemots** were regular off St Bees Head throughout. Walney had 209 **Puffin** reported since April with the highest count during the period being 25 on 5th June. Three were heading south over Selker on 21st June.

Pigeons to Buntings



*Black Redstart, Geltsdale,
Adam Moan*

A **Short-eared Owl** at RSPB Geltsdale was “the first for some time”. Two **Cuckoo** arrived at Walney on 23rd July and were present till 1st August. On 15th June a **Nightjar** was churring shortly before dawn in clearfell, “west Cumbria”.

The latest of **Common Swift** were some near Aspatria and Egremont on 22nd August. A group of 30 were moving south at RSPB Campfield on 21st August. Feeding numbers of note were 50 on 13th June at both Wetheral and Newlands Beck; on 17th July up to 200 were feeding over several fields of oilseed rape at Aglionby and on 13th August 90 were at Ormsgill Reservoir.

A female **Black Redstart** frequented the old spelter quarry at Tindale from 10th August through till at least 19th. On 8th July two **Hooded Crows** were with two Carrion Crow hybrids on the Irt estuary. One was at Eskmeals on 13th July. Twelve **Ravens** were in Mell Fell woods. **Rose-coloured Starling** were at Baycliffe on 10th June, Whitehaven on 19th and Haverigg on 13th July. On 20th June two **Ring Ouzels** were on Red Screes and a male was on Kirkstone on 1st July.

August saw a female **Yellow Wagtail** with “Pieds” at Silecroft on 14th and two were at Hodbarrow two weeks later. Eight **Tree Pipits** passed over Ambleside, calling on 24th August. The first post breeding flock's of **Long-tailed Tits** included eight at Wetheral on 4th June and ten at Waterside a week later.



Juvenile Redstart, Waitby, Tony Marsh

A flock of well over 200 **Goldfinches** were at Millom. A flock of 40 **Greenfinch** were at Lazonby on 1st August. The flock of **Linnets** at Walney had reached 485 by 26th August. The only reports of **Hawfinch** were two by Haweswater on 11th June and from Brigsteer on 18th June.

Tree Sparrows at Walney started to increase in numbers with 23 on 26th August and 64 a day later.



Tree Sparrows, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

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



*Yellow Wagtail, River Esk, Roger Ridley
Pied Wagtail, Maryport & Grey Wagtail, Plumbland Mill, Tommy Holden*

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Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is December 1st 2021

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

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