



BIRD NEWS
Vol. 23 No. 1 Spring 2012

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New South Wales, Australia

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

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please contact the Secretary who holds some.



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Club news and announcements

Help needed

We desperately need members who are prepared to help with administration, organisation, events etc . No knowledge of birds required! A lack of volunteers is definitely holding the club back. Please contact the secretary if you are prepared to lend a hand in any way.

Bird records for the Bird Report and Archive

It is still not too late to submit your records for 2010 either electronically or hand written on record cards. All your records are valuable so please take the time to submit them to your local recorder (details on inside cover).

Outings

Hawfinches atSizergh

Saturday 31st March

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

Contact: Clive Hartley tel.

015395 36824

clive.hartley304@btinternet.com



Hawfinch, Sizergh, Ivan Ellison

Minibus trip to the new Lancashire Wildfowl Trust reserve at Brockholes

Saturday 12th May

***Please book by 31st March** as Frank needs to book the minibus

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

Cost £10 for the minibus, payment in advance to Frank please. No other entry fee. Meet in Carlisle at 0800 at Rosehill where there is a free car park. Would also aim to pick up at Penrith probably the Auction Mart. Other pick ups between Wigton and Carlisle can be arranged and suitable pick up points in South Cumbria by arrangement. People can take a picnic lunch or they can use the very nice cafe at the 'floating' centre.

Bookings: Frank Mawby FrankMawby@aol.com tel: 016973 51301

Proposed bird surveys in Cumbria 2012/13

As fieldwork for the Cumbria Tetrad Atlas Survey draws to a close, the Club's Council have been giving some thought to what surveys might be undertaken by members in the latter half of 2012 and the first half of 2013. With work on the new avifauna beginning to gather pace, there is a particular need to be able to make up-to-date statements about the status of certain key species. With this in mind Council is proposing that the Club carries out the following surveys.

Wintering Cormorant Survey 2012/13

The numbers of Cormorants in Britain (and indeed throughout Europe) have been increasing for the past several decades, but there is some evidence that numbers are beginning to level out in some areas. Good information is available on breeding numbers, and in Cumbria all of the county's colonies are monitored annually. Much less is known about winter numbers. WeBS counts provide information on population trends but being based on daytime counts do not enable total numbers to be determined – this is much better done by counting at night-time roosts. The aims of this survey are, therefore, (i) to identify all night time roosts in Cumbria, and (ii) make a number of coordinated counts at these roosts. Full details of the survey are still being worked up but expressions of interest in helping with the survey should be made to Dave Shackleton d.shackleton@btinternet.com; tel: 01931 713693.

Rookery Survey 2013

Such evidence as there is suggests that Britain's Rooks have not been doing so well in the past decade or so. The position in Cumbria is somewhat contradictory. In the north of the county there is some evidence of recent declines (and numbers are certainly declining just over the border in Dumfries-shire) whereas a project in West Cumbria suggests that numbers over the past seven years have been stable, though had probably decreased in the decade before this. The last survey of the county's Rooks was carried out in 1996, so it is time for this to be updated. The intention is to carry out a survey of all the county's rookeries in April 2013. Locating rookeries and counting nests is fairly straightforward and we hope that anyone who has never been involved in survey work will give it a go (but 'old hands' are also very welcome!). A set of survey instructions is currently in preparation, and although the survey is a fair way off we welcome early expression of interest – particularly for anyone who would like to do their local patch. There are a lot of rookeries in Cumbria, and the success of this project is very dependent on getting sufficient people out in the field. Please do not be backward in coming forward! If you would like to participate in this survey please contact one of the survey organisers:

Mike Carrier: m.carrier131@btinternet.com; tel: 01697 472218

Robin Sellers: sellers@craghouse7.freemove.co.uk; tel: 01946 725453

Stephen Westerberg: Stephen.Westerberg@rsbp.org.uk; tel: 016977 42652

Robin Sellers

Raptor persecution and vicarious liability

The title may sound rather technical, but the concept is very simple. Vicarious liability is a legal concept where by if an offence is committed it is not the person doing so who is prosecuted but the person directing them.

So in the case of raptor persecution by a gamekeeper on 'sporting' estates, it becomes the owner, not the gamekeeper who is prosecuted. Hopefully this will stop owners from turning a blind eye, and reduce persecution. After all, if the gamekeeper goes down, the owner just hires another, and lets him carry on just as the last one did.



Buzzard, Walby Flash, Roger Ridley

So why is this important now? The concept of vicarious liability has been enshrined in wildlife protection law in Scotland for a while now, and moves are afoot to introduce it England too. But without getting too political, it isn't top of the government's agenda; to be charitable they have a lot of stuff on their plate. But there is a way of pushing it forward – by signing the e-petition at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/23089>

If 100,000 people sign up, then it may be debated in the House of Commons, but whatever, it sends a strong signal to the government. Not many petitions make it to the 100,000 mark – if it gets there it indicates serious public concern.

The statistics of raptor persecution get more depressing by the day, and it looks as if the Hen Harrier could be on its way out in England. We all know about the situation in Cumbria. Signing takes a 1 minute, and it might just make a difference. So please get on line and sign now, and tell all your friends and relatives about it too.

Jake Manson

Kittiwake productivity at St. Bees Head



There is widespread concern over declining Kittiwake populations and concurrent poor productivity in the UK. Numbers increased by around 24% between the late 1960s and the mid 1980s but there are probably now around 40% fewer than in the late 1960s. It is likely, given repeated recent years of low productivity and survival that declines will continue (JNCC 2011).

Productivity in the UK has declined since the instigation of the National Seabird Monitoring Programme in 1986. This is thought to be related to declines in the abundance of sandeels –

St Bees Head Seabird monitoring plot 1B 2011

the Kittiwakes main food and in certain regions is negatively correlated with sea surface temperatures, which have risen due to climate change.

Species such as Kittiwakes are particularly vulnerable to food shortages as they can take prey only when it occurs at or near the surface of the sea, unlike diving species such as auks, which have access to a greater variety of prey in the water column. This has exacerbated the effects of low prey abundance. By 2008 on average only one chick was fledged from every four nests, compared with close to one per nest between 1986-1995. This low productivity has probably contributed to the declines in abundance and would indicate that further declines in abundance are likely in the coming years, as fewer chicks become recruited to the breeding population.

When Kittiwakes first bred at St. Bees is not known, though it was not recorded as a breeding species by Macpherson at the time of his avifauna in 1892. By 1932 20 pairs were present (Bleazard 1943) and by 1956 this had increased to 1651 pairs (Stokoe 1962). In 1975 1200 pairs were recorded but In contrast to subsequent national trends of the period, the species appears to have been in decline to a low of 733 pairs in 1983. There was then a period of recovery to a peak of 1630 apparently occupied nests (AON) in 1994. Since

Kittiwake productivity at St. Bees Head

then numbers have fluctuated but generally have been in decline though as recently as 2006 1300 AONs were counted. However the 865 AON in 2011 is the smallest population since regular monitoring began in the mid 1980s. With its history of between year population fluctuations, the extent of the St. Bees colony decline is unclear. Elsewhere in the eastern Irish Sea counts from 2008 onwards have been very low at the Mull of Galloway and at the Calf of Man (JNCC 2011).

The degree of philopatry (the return rate of birds to breed at their natal colony) is low in Kittiwakes (Coulson & Coulson 2008). Hence productivity at St. Bees does not necessarily effect it's subsequent population size. However monitoring data of both population and productivity contributes to the national Seabird Monitoring Programme. Outputs from this programme inform decision making on conservation measures for the UK's internationally important seabird populations.

At St. Bees, plots monitored between 1985 and 1992 have been re-monitored since 2009 by RSPB staff with additional new plots established to assess productivity.

The table below shows the results of productivity monitoring.

Year	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	2009	2010	2011
No. of incubated nests	20	67	68	58	41	44	118	112	68	52	49	114
Total young fledged	12	9	70	17	13	9	131	75	19	25	11	122
Av. young fledged per incubated nest	0.6	0.13	1.03	0.29	0.32	0.2	1.11	0.67	0.28	0.48	0.22	1.07

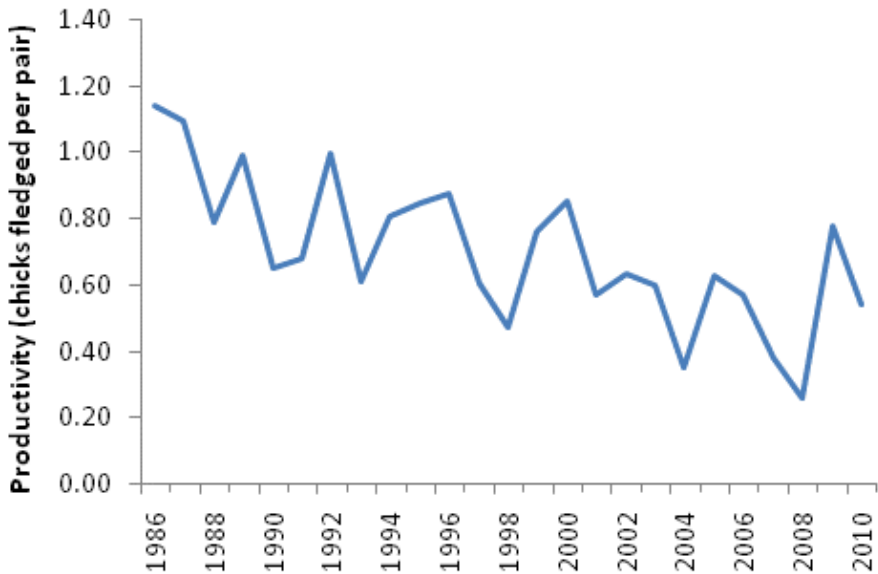
Note the number of nests incubated is not an indicator of population size, merely of the number of plots used.

The three years of most recent monitoring give annual productivities per incubated nest within the ranges of those found between 1985 and 1993 and like the previous era of monitoring are characterised by high annual variability.

There is also high annual variability in productivity between geographical regions. Productivity at St. Bees was lower than the UK average in both 2009 and 2010 but did show a similar decline between years (see graph). UK figures are not yet available for 2011 when productivity at St. Bees was much improved.

Kittiwake productivity at St. Bees Head

Trend in UK productivity of Kittiwakes (no. of chicks fledged per AON)



For methods and explanation of how these data were collected and analysed see <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3201>

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RSPB Cumbria Coastal Reserves

The Owls of Derwent Forest



Short-eared Owl, Craig Shaw

This winter has seen what may be the largest influx of Short-eared owls ever recorded in Cumbria. One notable area has to be the redundant Nato armaments depot at Great Broughton, now rebranded as 'Derwent Forest'. This site has recorded good breeding numbers of Barn Owl in the past with also breeding recorded of Long-eared and Little Owl.

It appears that, apart from odd accounts reported from the nearby Soddy Gap (mainly by Craig Shaw), there have not been any records previously of Short-eared Owls directly from the Derwent Forest site itself. We all know that, (humans included) all living species need the correct habitat in which to live. Up until three or four years ago pretty much all of the grassland on this site of 1050 acres was grazed by sheep. When the owners of the site were looking to sell it on, the grass letting agreements were not continued and the whole site has been left to nature since then.

A few years on and the overgrown dead grass from the previous years has been perfect for the voles, mice etc to thrive. It was just a matter of time until the predatory species took advantage of this with a reasonable resident population of Barn, Tawny and even Little Owl.

We know from a very reliable source that there are at least 20 Short-eared owls on the site with up to eight viewable from one vantage point on a regular basis.

Over the last month a good number of enthusiastic onlookers have enjoyed the spectacle of these birds hunting in their natural environment.

Whereas we believe that most of these birds will be winter migrants that mainly come across from Scandinavia, we hope that some will stay over to enjoy the West Cumbrian summer. But of course their future is in the hands of the developers of this amazing site.



Short-eared Owl, Keith Hamilton

Keith Hamilton



Hawfinch, Sizergh, Ivan Ellison

Sizergh car park offers one of the best opportunities to see ground feeding Hawfinches in northern Britain. These birds are easily over-looked even within the lightest of foliage but the larger trees around the car park offer an unobstructed view through to the tops of the trees where they like to spend their time before they venture to the ground.

In Spring (mid February to mid May) when leaves are absent they can be observed with ease displaying and pair bonding in the tree tops. The concentration of Hornbeams and Beech trees are the reason why they visit the area year on year. They are attracted to the seed and seed growth. In March a flock of up to 20 can be seen actively feeding under the trees in the corner of the car park (children's play area) opposite the café.

I have kept an eye on the 'disturbance' issues related to the Hawfinch, of which I receive numerous 'complaints'. What I have learnt over the last five years of observations is that these birds can easily be put off from visiting the ground if people are standing too close. What I usually do is park up near the entrance to the car park and walk down the wall side towards the café. The trees behind the café are usually where the birds arrive first. Once at the café I set my scope up either on the road or by the picnic benches on the central grass section. Usually birds fly from the larger trees into the smaller trees and then onto the ground near the play area. The best time is from first light to about 11am when

the morning sunlight hits the branches of the smaller trees and then the ground. Their characteristic 'tic' calls can be picked out which are usually muffled out by other songsters within a woodland setting. Singing, yes singing! Birds can be seen from March onwards.

By late spring birds disperse into the local woodland to breed and it almost becomes impossible to see them within the canopy of leaves, unless they are seen in flight between trees or in woodland rides. I regularly see pairs when out on the estate but yet to find any specific nesting areas. Young birds can be seen later on visiting the car park with their parents showing them how to feed and passing food to them.

robert.pocklington@nationaltrust.org.uk Rob Pocklington, Ranger

Birds, Worms & Binoculars at Sizergh - May 5th 11am-5pm

Cumbria Bird Club hope to have a stall at this inaugural 'Bird Fair'. If you would be prepared to help represent the club please let the secretary know.

A day at Sizergh Castle celebrating all British birds. Discover how many wonderful & unique birds there are in our area and the rest of the UK. Visit the hide to watch many of these birds feeding, learn how to make bird boxes, try out the binoculars & scopes demonstrated by Lamberts of Lancaster. Take a ranger led bird walk through the Sizergh estate. Activities for children include building their very own nest, completing their own bird spotter's quiz and learning how to feed the birds in your garden from 'Watchers'. Normal entry admissions apply. For more details please visit our website www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sizerghcastle 015395 60951

Watchtree Nature Reserve - Bioblitz

Midnight to Midnight Sunday 17th June

The two aims are to record as many species of as many taxa as possible during a 24 hour period and to involve people by inviting them to join the many specialists to see how recording and identification is done and where to go for help with identification. There will be displays, demonstrations and a live link to the Data Centre. Specialists are still required for all taxa and should contact Frank Mawby on 016973 51301 FrankMawby@aol.com.

The first night session for moths will commence at 9.30 pm on Saturday 16th, please book for this event. On Sunday we shall have early morning and evening sessions for birds and mammals, times and sessions to be announced. The site will be open for all other events from 7.00 am until 10 pm. For full details please contact Tim Lawrence on 01228 712539. wnr@watchtree.co.uk or visit our website: www.watchtree.co.uk

Cumbria Bird Club Winter Bird Race 2012

Nine teams took part in yet another enjoyable and successful CBC Winter Bird Race on Sunday 8th January this year. Thankfully, the severe winter weather of the last two years (the 2010 event had to be cancelled) did not materialise this time and relatively mild conditions prevailed. Some good birds were again recorded including Tundra Bean Goose, European White-fronted Goose, Bewick's Swan, Long-tailed Duck, Smew, Bittern and Short-eared Owl. As ever, one of the undoubted highlights came when the teams converged at the finishing venue – this year it was the Hawkshead Brewery in Staveley - for pie and chips and a few pints whilst the results were revealed and the day's events discussed. To no-one's surprise, the Walney Wanderers yet again took first place and were the only team to record over 100 species.

Deaf, Dumb and Blind Squad (83 species).

Only the same as last year's score in better weather. Must get better organised - but not helped by being unaware that the level crossing by Brampton Golf Course was closed. Bad misses included Song Thrush, Skylark, Pintail, R.B. Merganser, Coot, Peregrine and none of the rare geese which have been sighted daily. Highlights were the Cross-bills and Black Grouse seen at Geltsdale when we should have left. We went into the reserve at Bowness with a hopeful target of three and came out with five - LT



Woodcock, Inner Solway, Darren Robson

Tit, Treecreeper, Willow Tit, Woodcock and Goldcrest. The final goodies were two Bitterns at Siddick - Maynall found one and could not understand why I was not looking at his bird. It transpired that I had found another very close by.

Richard Wimpress

Gouldfinches (97 species). Total of 97 was a bit poor; need to be getting back to the days of 100+, at least we might be in the ball park to at least challenge the Wanderers!!!! Our highlights were firstly our first Bird race Barn Owl, which ironically involved 2 separate birds, also Short-eared Owl at Kents Bank, Green Sandpiper at Brogden, first picked up as it flew over the car. Also at Brogden Whoopers and a 1st winter Kit, which appeared a rather sickly bird. Smew at Whinfell Tarn was nice and proved to be one of the last birds seen along with Mandarin duck. The lowlights - where do I start: not

picking up Knot or Goldie up on Walney, missing Treecreeper, only one of us (me!) picking up a fly-by Merlin and Dunnock being the 92nd species!

Jonathan Lishman

Kendal FBs (73 species). Having four members this year we hoped for an improvement on last year. Whilst collecting our last member we had our first bird – a Robin singing. We headed in the general direction of Hodbarrow from Kendal. We stopped at four different places on the way in the hope of hearing owls – we heard Tawny Owl at three of these four stops and this was the last of any owls during the day. Our highlight was probably the female Scaup and a Redpoll, but we missed out on Song Thrush. We all enjoyed the day and loved the pie and chips at the finish. Out total was 73 species which was two up on 2011.

Ian Tallon

Kendal Mafia (85 species). Our lowest ever total by some distance. Some very disappointing reces in the previous week persuaded us to change routes to the unrehearsed north of the county late in proceedings. It seemed like a good idea at the time! Dipping on Black Grouse, then finding that rowers had flushed all the *aythya*s from Talkin Tarn made for an inauspicious start, alleviated only slightly by picking up Dipper due to an unexpected road diversion. This set the tone for the day, the occasional good bird among a collection of missed common ones. The former included Bewick's Swan, Merlin, Shag, Med Gull, Crossbill and Bittern (generously pointed out by the Deaf Dumb and Blind Squad who proved to be none of those things!) while the latter included Little Grebe, RB Merg, Golden Plover (who'd have thought it possible to tour the Solway without seeing a single Goldie!), Skylark, Meadow Pipit, LT Tit, Jay etc etc. Further disappointment was the total lack of geese at Abbeytown where we'd hoped for Snow Goose and White-fronts though a distant blue Snow Goose look-alike on Rockcliffe caused a flurry of excitement and some debate, with the eventual conclusion that it was a hybrid of some sort. Perhaps the most grievous miss of the day however was the lack of bacon sarnies, usually a highlight of our northern route on bird race day.

Ian Kinley

The Tower Hill Mob (75 species). It was a struggle all day in the wet weather. We posted our lowest score ever and missed out on some very common birds, like Yellowhammer, Peregrine and Stonechat. Our highlight was probably finding Rock Pipit, not only at Workington, but a pair on Parton beach. Also we missed Iceland Gull that was reported on Parton beach later on Sunday.

Brian Ward

Walney Wanderers (108 species).

The team assembled at a local woodland to broken skies and light winds and soon a Tawny Owl called at 06.30hrs to set the total running. Heading back on to more familiar territory, steady progress was made with local specialities such as Brent Goose, Long-tailed Duck, Merlin, Purple Sandpiper, Greenshank and Twite all added and the total had increased to an impressive 70 species by the



Kingfisher,

time the team left Walney Island at 10.20hrs. A tour of the Furness Peninsula in increasingly wet and murky conditions, due to the onset of persistent drizzle, added a further 15 species, although Gadwall, Peregrine, Green Sandpiper and Mediterranean Gull were all missed, before a Kingfisher was added en route to the woodland stage. Woodland species were steadily accumulated and a Lakeland stream provided Grey Wagtail and Dipper before a Treecreeper brought up the century at 14.30hrs – remarkably the same species that had brought up the 100 in 2011. Several Goldcrests, a flock of six Hawfinches and a Sparrowhawk were further additions as the weather relented before roadside stubble fields near Flookburgh provided the long-staying flock of Eurasian White-fronted Geese. Raven and Goosander were then added before the same stubble fields yielded a flock of Linnets. A final dash to Whinfell Tarn on the outskirts of Kendal produced redhead Smew in fading light before a leisurely drive to the 17.00hrs finish failed to add to the total.

Colin Raven

The other competing teams were the Duddon Dippers, Keswick Cuckoos and Phil's Flyers. Once again, thanks are due to Colin Gay for organising the day's event, which continues to be popular and well-supported though more teams are always welcome. Have a go next year, it really is good fun, however seriously, or otherwise, you take it!

Ian Kinley

Did you know?

The Stephen Island Wren, a flightless endemic from a small island in the straits between the North and South Islands of New Zealand, was driven to extinction by one individual animal – the lighthouse keeper's cat.

DYK

Lowther Castle and Garden possible bird survey site

Lowther Castle and Garden Trust have been fortunate to secure major funding to allow significant restoration work to take place at Lowther Castle and in the garden there. Everything about the place is vast. Commercial ecological work has been limited to surveys for bats and newts and other protected species as usually occurs with developments.

The 'garden' covers over 120 acres with a variety of habitats from new lawns to mature broadleaved woodland and a large pond. Major felling of conifer plantations has taken place to restore some of the original vistas and allow visiting public to see the remains of the various formal gardens as well as provide an area for a new orchard. Now the really big jobs have been completed, apart from the pond restoration which will take place this year, and members of the public are visiting the site, the Project Manager is keen to get more information about the birdlife on the site than our casual records have been providing over the last few months.

There is a heronry in the grounds which has never been monitored for the heronries census, perhaps because the Lowther Castle estate has been strictly private until last year. The birds have just started returning. This could be included in the BTO Heronries Census and landowner permission for this would readily be given.

The whole site could be used as a survey site by someone in the long term and I think it would be an interesting area to cover. There are raven and peregrines around the area. There would also be the opportunity to suggest enhancements for birds and other wildlife. It may be possible to fund a nest box scheme in the gardens.

If anyone would be interested in this opportunity please contact me on 015395 68304 or tony@marshallecology.co.uk or Andrew Mercer, Commercial Director for the project by email andrew@lowthercastle.org. For more information about the project and restoration work please see their website www.lowthercastle.org. It is anticipated that anyone undertaking regular bird surveys will be given access to the grounds even when they are closed to the public.

Tony Marshall

Did you know?

Male Robins have slightly more red on their breasts than females, and adults slightly more red than first-years.

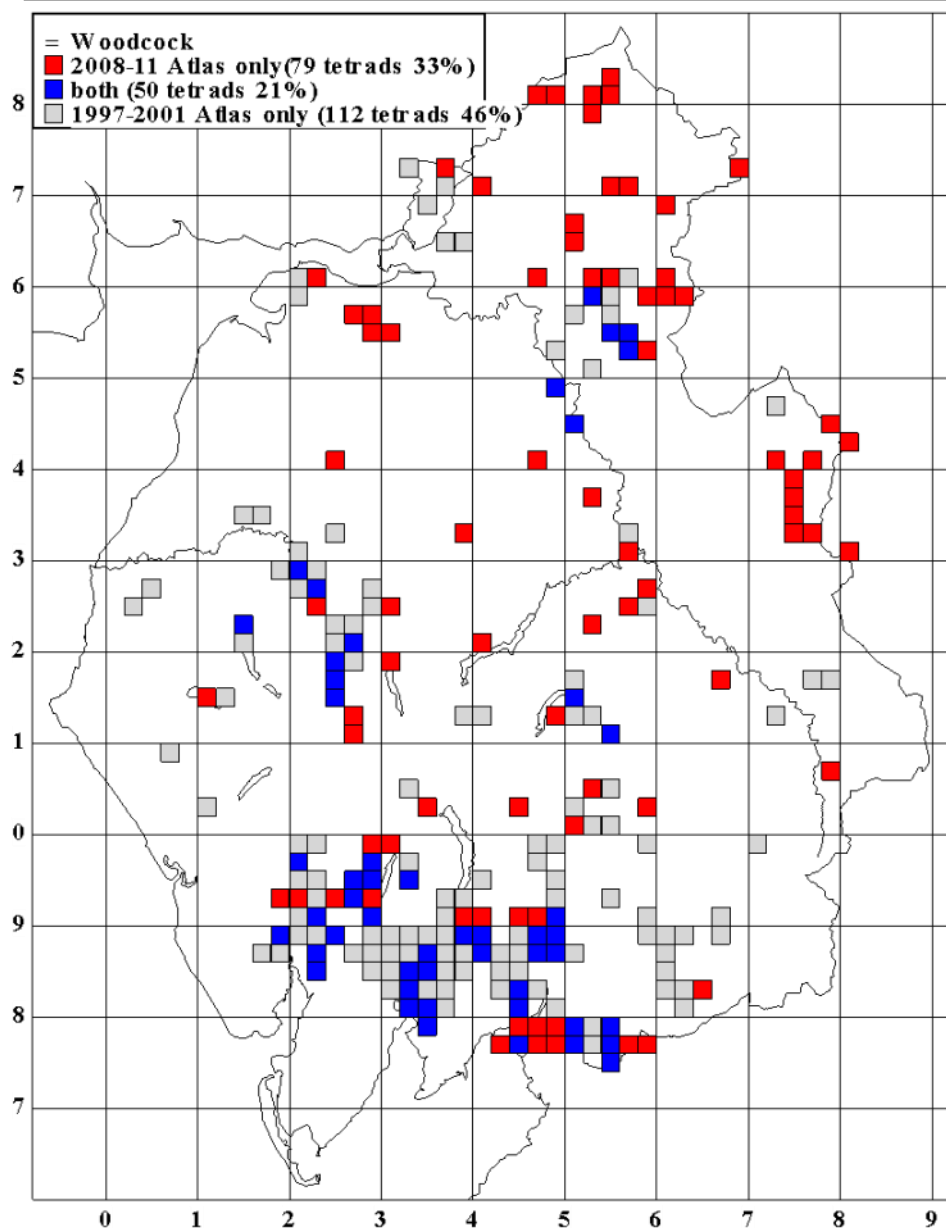
DYK

Atlas - breeding season timed tetrad visit vacancies

NY43F	Greystoke (west)	first visit only
NY43G	Johnby	
NY43K	Greystoke (east)	second visit only
NY43L	Little and Great Blencow	
NY44N	south of Wreay	
NY44T	Barrack Fell	
NY44U	s of Cotehill	
NY45Z	Hayton Castle	
NY46P	River Lyne NW of Kirklington	second visit only
NY46R	East of Smithfield	second visit only
NY46W	Kyleskye Hill	
NY52A	Helton	
NY52B	Askham	
NY52I	Clifton	
NY52N	Clifton Dykes	
NY53E	Lazonby Fell	
NY53H	south of Wan Fell	second visit only
NY53I	Wan Fell	
NY55E	north of Hayton	
NY55Q	Cumrew Fell	second visit only
NY57F	e of Stapleton	second visit only
NY57J	e of Bailly Mill	second visit only
NY57L	sw of Bewcastle	second visit only
NY57T	N.of Bewcastle	second visit only
NY62V	Appleby	
NY62W	Brampton (Appleby)	
NY62X	Dufton	
NY63Q	Grumply Hill	
NY63R	Kirkland Fell	
NY64A	Unthank north of Gamblesby	
NY64D	Scarrowmanwick Fell	
NY64E	Cumrew Fell	
NY67G	Spadeadam	first visit only
NY67H	Spadeadam	second visit only
NY74T	High Raise, Nent Hall	first visit only

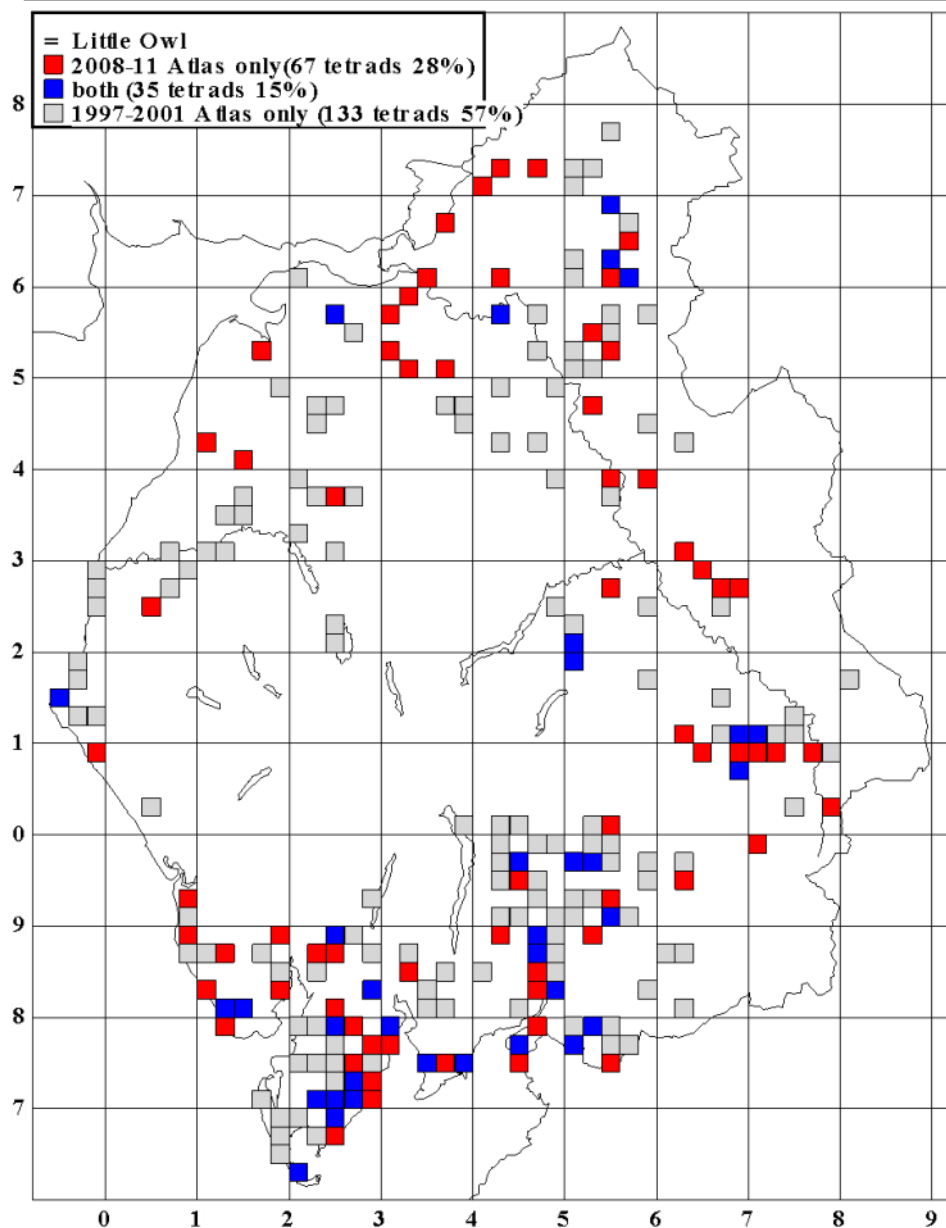
Please help to complete the Atlas work by taking on any of these tetrads for the breeding visits this year. Contact Steve Westerberg
Stephen.Westerberg@rspb.org.uk; tel: 016977 42652

Atlas Supplement - provisional breeding maps



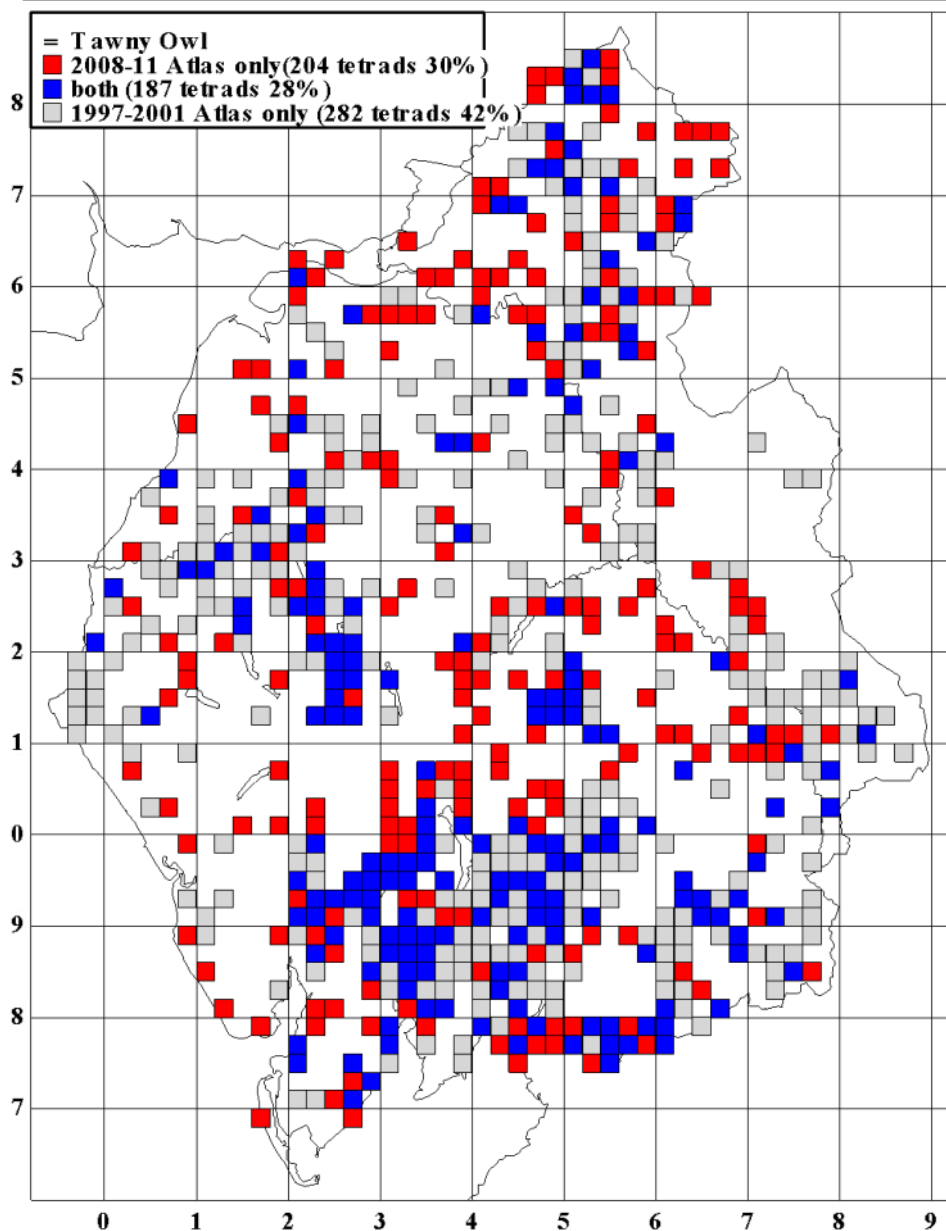
Please note that these maps are very provisional and only contains data as input at BTO to September 2011. Dawn & dusk visits needed to find more.

Atlas Supplement - provisional breeding maps



Another species that appears to have disappeared from a number of tetrads.
Please make sure you forward any sightings.

Atlas Supplement - provisional breeding maps



It is obviously well worth having a few after dark visits to likely habitats for all owls, woodcock etc. Please help to fill in the blanks.

The Workington Mediterranean Gull : Ageing sequence

The regular Mediterranean Gull at Workington has provided an interesting opportunity to observe the succession of plumages through from first-summer to its present near-adult state.

I found this bird on 30th July 2009, it lingered around the harbour car park and allowed for photographs both in flight and perched. It was a distinctive individual in having a damaged left leg which was not functional and resulted in the foot projecting visibly from the plumage of the belly both in flight and when perched. The left leg carried a metal ring.

The plumage state at that time was first-summer moulting into second-winter.



First-summer moulting into second-winter, Workington, Chris Hind

The first-summer features visible were:

- Head showing considerable dark mottling but falling short of a full hood
- Outer tail feathers with dark sub-terminal band
- Dark secondary band
- Outer four primaries dark

The second-winter features becoming visible were:

- White central tail feathers
- White inner primaries
- White tertials

The Workington Mediterranean Gull : Ageing sequence

When I photographed the bird next on 23rd September 2009 it was well into second-winter plumage. The outer primaries, P8, P9 and P10 were not fully grown. This gave the bird a rather truncated look when perched and a blunt-winged appearance in flight.



Second-winter 23rd September 2009 , Workington, Chris Hind



Second-winter 22nd December 2009

By 22nd December the primaries were all fully grown. The distribution of black on the four outer primaries is typical of a bird of this age. This wing pattern is retained through the third summer until the fourth winter.



Second-winter 7th January 2010



Second-summer 7th July 2010

The Workington Mediterranean Gull : Ageing sequence

In its third winter it showed black outer webs to the three outer primaries, P8, P9 and P10. Most Mediterranean Gulls are in full adult plumage by this age and would show a thin black line on the outer web of P10 only. There is a 50% incidence of black on the three outer primaries in females and a 25% incidence of this in males. (Olsen 2004)



Third-winter 12th December 2010



Fourth-winter 18th December 2011

By the fourth winter a Mediterranean Gull would certainly be expected to be in full adult plumage. The Workington gull, however, shows a small dark mark on the outer web of each P9 in addition to the normal dark line on P10.



The ringing details of this bird were eventually forthcoming after 18 months of frustratingly fruitless emails ! It was ringed on 27th May 2008 as a nestling (sex unknown) at Kieldrecht, Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

Chris Hind

Champagne Moments

Sitting in car watching Peregrine flying along about 500 m away – it rose a little and went into shallow curving stoop, veering all the time toward me till I was “looking down the barrel” as it were and it passed about 20 ft from the bonnet of the car, 3 feet off the ground and away – not to put up prey as I expected but a grey male Hen Harrier- after a brief skirmish they both disappeared – it couldn’t get any better I thought till a few minutes later the Harrier re-appeared and hunted up towards me passing just as close as the Peregrine had done - did I have a camera of any sort with me – of course I didn’t.

Bob Jones

Taking daily walk around village, stopped on bridge over Haweswater Beck to look for dippers regularly seen there, but absent this morning, and heard cry of kingfisher and not 1 but 2 flashed by within 5 metres and landed on a tree root 50 metres away and sat there sunning themselves, the blues iridescent. I had not seen a kingfisher on this stretch or River Lowther since the summer of 2010. Magic.

David Cooke

Northern England Raptor Forum



Annual Review 2010

- Forum Activities
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- A review of the RSPB Bird Crime report
- Monitoring Raptor Demography
- Predatory Bird Monitoring scheme
- A tale of two Ospreys; the migration of two Cumbrian chicks
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Canada Geese Cull on Windermere

Editors Note: As with all articles there is the rider that "Opinions expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of Cumbria Bird Club, its Editor, nor any of its Officers." I thought I'd better point this out as some members may well disagree vehemently with the viewpoint expressed below! I would welcome any responses for the next newsletter.

As part of an ongoing survey of the wildfowl on Windermere I have carried out counts of the lake's Canada Geese population every month, apart from four, in the last four years. The counts are taken from various vantage points around the shores of Windermere (including all known goose feeding locations) and take about six hours to complete. They have resulted in an average monthly count of 383 Canada Geese, with numbers remaining fairly stable at between 390 and 460 in every month apart from June and early July, when the number of Windermere residents are boosted by migratory birds from outside the Windermere catchment which use the lake as a safe haven during their annual moult in conjunction with similar numbers of naturalised Greylag Geese, many of which come from North Yorkshire. This migratory movement of Canada Geese contributed to annual peak counts of 525 on 9th July 2008, 967 on 22nd June 2009 and 878 on 25th June 2010. Counts in 2011 were carried out on 9th June (480) and 22nd July (661) and probably peaked at a higher number during the intervening six weeks.

Mr Tatlock, LDNP warden, is quoted in the *Westmorland Gazette* as saying that my figures are based purely on land-based observations, whereas those of the LDNP authority are carried out from a boat "giving us a more complete survey and picture of overall numbers". As far as I am aware the LDNP wardens have made very few dedicated counts of the Canada Goose population over the last few years. However, in 2008, when we both counted independently using our respective methods, the boat-based counts produced figures of 576, 254, 152 and 414 in January, March, May and October respectively, whereas comparable figures from my land-based counts were 493, 328, 156 and 379. Given that the Canada Geese are land-based feeders, sometimes at sites that are better counted by a telescope from a stable platform on land rather than from the water, Mr Tatlock's claim does not ring true!

What the above figures clearly show is that, if there is a Canada Goose "problem" on Windermere and I would strongly dispute this, it will not be solved by culling the one hundred or so pairs which nest on Windermere each year (LDNP figures). In fact, as I warned in a presentation to Mr Tatlock's Goose Management Committee over a year ago, a cull of the resident breeders could exacerbate things, as it will free up nest sites for younger (possibly more fertile) geese that currently form part of a pool of some 200 to 300 non-breeders that are waiting in the wings for just such an

opportunity. In fact, if the entire population of resident geese within the Windermere catchment were to be destroyed (the Committee's ultimate goal of 600 Canada Geese!) this would not stop visitations by migratory geese which may, themselves, decide to stay on and fill any vacuum created by the cull.

Mr Tatlock is quoted as saying that they have tried all other methods of control, such as fencing and egg oiling, but that this has only made a small difference. I am not sure how long the LDNP wardens have been involved in egg oiling activity, all I do know is that the productivity of the breeding geese on Windermere has been exceptionally low for the past few years, which must be put down to the success of such operations! My counts of young Canada Geese fledged on Windermere comprise 38 juveniles on 20th June 2008, 11 juveniles on 22nd June 2009, 20 juveniles on 30 June 2010 and 39 goslings on 10th June 2011, which is not a great deal from a breeding population of some 100 pairs.

I am aware that the National Trust fenced off a field at Wray Castle specifically aimed at preventing flightless geese from accessing rough pasture and that this was so successful that their tenant farmer was able to exclusively graze sheep there during June and July 2011. However, the problem with this is that the Canada Geese either find alternative sites or starve to death, so these measures are not without their associated problems.

I firmly believe that the LDNP authority and its associates are over-stating the case for a cull. Up to 450 Canada Geese feeding on grass alongside England's largest natural lake for 10 months of the year is the equivalent of a flock of 100 sheep. Culling them will have no discernible impact on water quality within the lake, compared to run-off of nutrients from agricultural land and from sewage treatment plants. As long as grass is available to them, the Canada Geese on Windermere do not resort to feeding on reed shoots. The problem of the disappearing reed beds on Windermere has been with us since the 1920's and is far more likely to be linked to changes in lake-level regimes, erosion caused by the wake from the ferries and nutrient enrichment as a result of the run-off from agricultural land etc.

I am afraid that the oversimplification of the problem by officials of the Lake District Planning Authority and other organisations without giving proper consideration to the life cycle of their target species or the intricacies of its breeding biology, along with their keenness to push ahead with a cull before giving non-lethal methods of control adequate time to work, sends out the totally wrong message.

Clive Hartley

Recent reports

The period covered is December 2011 to February 2012. Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review by the Club Records Panel or British Birds Rarities Committee. Species order and nomenclature follow that used in *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria*.

Wildfowl

As many as 11 **Bewick's Swans** frequented the Newton Arlosh/Wedholme area in December while up to seven were seen around Abbeytown in January and a single lingered at Longtown through January and February. A remarkable 624 **Whooper Swans** were also present on the Inner Solway, roosting on Wedholme Flow and flying out to feed in the surrounding fields. **Whooper Swan** numbers elsewhere included up to 75 at Longtown, 70 at Hodbarrow, 56 at Kirkby Thore and 53 near Allonby.



*European White-fronted Goose, Soddy Gap,
Craig Shaw*

Tundra Bean Geese continued to be seen in December and January with up to 29 in the Cargo/Calvo/Blackdyke area, two near Flookburgh, two at Linstock and singles near Longtown and Aglionby. Numbers declined in February with just four on Newton Marsh and two at both Longtown and Flookburgh. **Pink-footed Geese** increased on the Inner Solway in February with up to 10,000 in the area. **European White-fronted Geese** remained in exceptional numbers throughout the period with peak counts of 280 on the Inner Solway, 205 near Longtown, 110 near Flookburgh, 93 near Little Salkeld,



Red Breasted Goose, Cardurnock, Darren Robson

45 in the Walby/Park Broom/ Aglionby area, 15 at Walney, 13 at Soddy Gap, eight by the Kent Estuary, four at Kirkby Thore, two at Waberthwaite and a single near Allonby. Less numerous were **Greenland White-fronts** which consisted of maxima of 22 on the Inner Solway, 11 near Allonby and ones and twos at several other sites, usually among



Snow Goose, Abbeytown, Craig Shaw

European birds. The returning **Ross's Goose** was seen occasionally anywhere between Rockcliffe Marsh and Grune Point throughout the period. A first-winter **Red-breasted Goose**, the fourth county record, was a surprise find among the Barnacle Geese at Drumburgh then Cardurnock on 22nd January while a blue morph **Lesser Snow Goose** accompanied **Pink-footed Geese** at Abbeytown from 3rd to 6th January, with presumably the same bird then seen on Newton Marsh on 19th February. **Barnacle Geese** included 12000 on Burgh Marsh while away from the Solway up to 40 lingered near Flookburgh and 35 appeared at Walney in February. The **Brent Goose** flock at Walney steadily increased to further record levels peaking at 165 pale-bellied birds by the end of December while 58 dark-bellied birds were recorded at nearby Rampside. Elsewhere, single dark-bellied birds were near Easton and on Skinburness Marsh in February.

The female **Mandarin** remained in residence at Whinfell Tarn to 28th January, A drake **Green-winged Teal** lingered at Hodbarrow all December and January, briefly joined by a second bird on 3rd December, the first multiple sighting in the county while others appeared at Campfield Marsh on 4th January and Siddick Pond on 14th January.

Scaup included four at Bassenthwaite, two at Hodbarrow

and singles at Walney, Soddy Gap and Siddick Pond. Long-staying **Long-tailed Ducks** continued to linger at Soddy Gap, Longtown and Walney throughout while a short-stayer visited Hodbarrow on 2nd January. Walney recorded the period's only **Velvet Scoter**, a single on 4th and 11th December. The long-staying redhead **Smew** remained at Whinfell Tarn to at least 22nd January then relocating to Killington on 29th January while a new redhead appeared briefly on Talkin Tarn on 31st December. What may have been the same pair of **Smew** moved between Longtown Ponds, Talkin Tarn



Smew, Talkin Tarn, Chris Hind

and Tindale Tarn in February while a redhead was seen on Bassenthwaite Lake on 15th February. Other wildfowl counts in the period included 3000 **Teal** at Campfield Marsh, an amazing 426 **Goosander** at Soddy Gap and 150 **Common Scoters** off Silecoft.

Divers to herons



Great White Egret, Campfield, Darren Robson

Red-throated Diver totals at coastal locations included 21 at Walney in December followed by 24 at Walney and 18 at Workington in February. November's **Black-throated Diver** remained on Bassenthwaite Lake to 4th December and singles appeared off Workington and Sellafield in February.

Great Northern Divers were limited to singles at Workington on 15th December and Walney on 8th February. A **Slavonian Grebe** was off Foulney Island in January and two drifted past Bowness-on-Solway on 12th February while two **Black-neckeds** at Walney on 14th January was followed by a single at Kents Bank on 22nd February. Westerly gales produced a **Leach's Petrel** at Bowness-on-Solway on 13th December. Late **Fulmars** and **Gannets** were also recorded at several coastal sites in December. **Shags** peaked at 10 at Walney in January and eight in February with two at Foulney Island and singles at Cavendish Dock, Whitehaven and Workington.

At least four **Bitterns** were to be found at Siddick Pond. **Little Egrets** consisted of 24 on Walney Island and eight on the Kent Estuary in December followed by 21 on Walney, 13 on the Kent Estuary, six at Hodbarrow, four in the Lyth Valley, three on the Inner Solway and a single on the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass in January and 14 on the Kent Estuary, 11 at Walney, three in the Lyth Valley, two at Rampside/Foulney and a single on the Inner Solway in February. The **Great White Egret** remained around Campfield Marsh though ranging more widely up to 24th December when it was joined by a second bird at Burgh Marsh before disappearing for a few weeks until returning to Campfield Marsh on 14th January where it lingered into March. Meanwhile the long-stayer was seen intermittently at Kents Bank up to 14th February. The Leighton Moss **Glossy Ibis** briefly crossed the border from Lancashire, being seen in flight near Arnside on 15th December then it or another was photographed in flight near Flookburgh on 3rd February.

Raptors to waders

Red Kites from the Grizedale release scheme were regularly reported, especially in the Holker/Flookburgh area. An unseasonable **Marsh Harrier** put in an occasional appearance around the Kent Estuary during December and January while, more expectedly, **Hen Harriers** were reported from a number of widespread locations across the county.

Single **Ruff** were near Flookburgh in December and near Crosby-on-Eden in January and February. Peak **Purple Sandpiper** counts at their favoured locations comprised 44 at Workington and 26 at Walney. **Black-tailed Godwit** numbers were unexceptional with no double figure counts in the period. Three **Spotted Redshanks** took up residence on the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass from 4th to 31st December; with two remaining into January and one in February when a single was also in the Campfield/Port Carlisle area.

Greenshank were, as usual, largely restricted to Walney where monthly maxima comprised eight in December, 12 in January and 11 in February. Elsewhere single wintering birds were noted at Cavendish Dock and the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass. Counts of **Common Snipe** included 162 at Soddy Gap while **Jack**

Snipe, traditionally under-recorded, comprised two at Soddy Gap, two at Kents Bank and singles at Walney and Rampside.

Green Sandpipers seemed less widespread than usual.

A storm-driven **Grey Phalarope** appeared at Walney on 4th December.



Purple Sandpiper, Workington, Tristan Reid

Skuas to auks

Westerly gales in December produced some late skuas with an **Arctic Skua** at Walney and single **Greats** on two days at Workington and one at Bowness-on-Solway. In January, another unseasonable **Great Skua** appeared off both Foulney Island and Walney on 14th. **Mediterranean Gulls** were relatively scarce with just two, including the regular adult, in the Workington area; two adults at Soddy Gap; two, an adult and a second-winter, in the Rampside area and an adult at Walney in December followed by four, an adult, two second-winters and a first-winter, in the Rampside area; two, an adult and a first-

winter, near Allonby and the usual adult at Workington in January and at least four, an adult, two second-winters and a first-winter, in the Rampside area; three, two adults (including the usual one-legged bird) and a first-winter, at Workington, single adults at Flimby and Walby floods near Crosby-on-Eden and a second-winter at Ravenstown in February. **Little Gulls** in December comprised two at Walney on two days and two singles at Bowness-on-Solway. An unseasonable juvenile **Sabine's Gull** passed Workington on 3rd December and an adult **Yellow-legged Gull** visited Workington on 18th December. An influx of white-winged gulls took centre stage in January with an adult and a juvenile **Iceland Gull** at Rampside, at least three **Iceland Gulls**, two juveniles and an adult, between Whitehaven and Maryport and juvenile **Glaucous Gulls** at several sites in Furness including Walney, near Allonby

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and on the Inner Solway at New Sandsfield. The Par-ton **Iceland Gull** and the **Glaucous Gulls** at Allonby and New Sandsfield all lingered well into February. **Kittiwakes** included site maxima of 480 at Walney and 70 at Bowness-on-Solway in December, 120 over Rockcliffe Marsh in January and 60 at Bowness-



Glaucous Gull, Maryport, Keith Hamilton

on-Solway in February. A highly unseasonable **Sandwich Tern** was recorded at Workington on 27th December. The only **Little Auk** in the period was seen at Workington on 8th December.

Owls to buntings

Short-eared Owls became widespread and rather numerous including eight at Whinfell Forest near Great Broughton, six at Flookburgh, three on Burgh Marsh, three on Walney, two at Foulney Island and a single at Kents Bank. A **Water Pipit** was amongst up to 21 **Rock Pipits** at Rampside in January while high tides pushed 30 **Rock Pipits** and a single **Water Pipit** from the Walney saltmarshes on 23rd February. A **Black Redstart** visited Watchtree N.R. on a couple of occasions in December. **Hooded Crows** were limited to a single at Walney in January. **Brambling** were relatively scarce while **Twite** also seemed less numerous than usual, 140 at Walney being by far the largest flock reported. **Common Crossbills** included 27 at Whinfell Forest, eight in Wythop Woods and six in Grizedale Forest. **Hawfinches** included seven at Sizergh Castle and six at Hutton Roof, Allithwaite and the Rusland Valley. **Snow Buntings** comprised at least 12 on Helvellyn in January.

As ever, I'm indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list individually. Feel free to send records by e-mail to ian.kinley@btinternet.com

NB *It is important that observers also submit records to the appropriate Regional Recorder at the end of the year. Please see either the latest edition of *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria* or the Cumbria Bird Club website <http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk> for details of how to do so.*

Ian Kinley

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Information for contributors

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

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