



BIRD NEWS
Vol. 25 No. 1 Spring 2014

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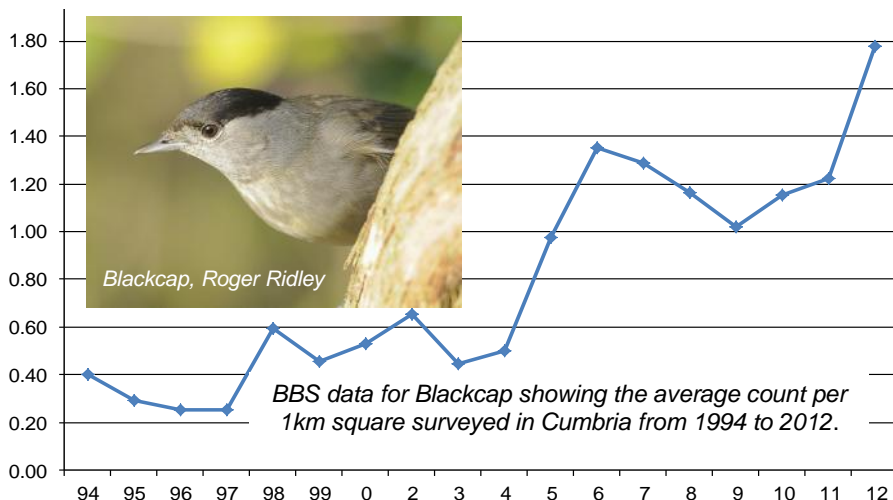
C.B.C. Bird News

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BBS, WBBS & WeBS Vacancies



The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), launched in 1994 is the main scheme for monitoring the population changes of the UK's common breeding birds by comparing these standardised counts between years. The survey is designed to be simple and enjoyable and involves counting birds along two predetermined 1km routes during the breeding season. The BTO have randomly selected 1km squares (the squares on an Ordnance Survey map) across the country and in Cumbria we have about 90.

The WBBS is a follow on from the Waterways Bird Survey started in 1974 and has a similar methodology to the BBS. The difference is the WBBS involves single route along a stream or river and the walk is between 500m and 5km long. There are about 20 WBBSs in Cumbria.

We are looking for volunteers to cover the following 1km squares or WBBSs. The grid references can be found on an Ordnance Survey Map, if you require any further information please contact your regional organiser.

South West Cumbria – contact Colin Gay
colinathodbarrow@btinternet.com Tel 01229 773820

BBS

SD1888	Thwaite Yeat, Duddon Bridge
SD2685	Great Burney
NY0128	Moor Close, Workington
NY2700	Swirl How

WBBS

SD2092	River Duddon, south of Ulpha
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BBS, WBBS & WeBS Vacancies

North East Cumbria – contact Stephen Westerberg,
swesterberg@btinternet.com Tel 07818806991

BBS

NY4835	West of Plumpton
NY4960	Ruleholme, Brampton
NY5076	Sleetbeck north of Roadhead
NY5087	Dykecrofts, Newcastleton, Scotland
NY5573	Lynes west of Bewcastle
NY5643	Whinfell north-east of Kirkoswald
NY5841	Parkhead east of Kirkoswald
NY5926	East of Whinfell
NY6527	Low Abbey south of Milburn
NY6726	Knock
NY7239	Pennine Way, Garrigill

WBBS

NY483828	Kershope Burn (on Scottish border)
NY515784	Black Lyne (near Bailey Mill, Bewcastle)
NY557668	King Water (near Walton, Brampton)
NY5634	Briggle Beck/River Eden (Langwathby)
NY8016	Swindale Beck (near Brough)
NY710200	Hilton Beck (near Appleby)
NY800124	River Belah (near Brough Sowerby)

The 'Northumberland' bit of Cumbria – contact Tom and Muriel
Cadwallender, email tomandmurielcadwallender@hotmail.com

BBS

NY6080	Slightly Crag, Bewcastle Fells
NY6081	Smuggy's Pike, Bewcastle Fells
NY6260	Tindale, east of Brampton

South East Cumbria – contact Clive Hartley
clive.hartley304@btinternet.com Tel 015395 36824

BBS

SD7090	Frostrow
NY3102	Little Langdale
NY3101	Tilberthwaite
NY5713	Hardendale
NY6617	Hoff
NY6711	Great Asby
NY6402	Langdale Fell
NY6510	Great Ashby Scar
NY6617	Hoff

NY6711	Great Ashby Scar
NY6717	Mount Pleasant
NY7807	Nateby
SD6696	Brant Fell

WBBS

NY5006 Crookdale Beck

North West Cumbria – contact Dave Piercy
daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk Tel 017687 77246

BBS

NY2832	Great Calva
NY2931	Great Calva
NY3215	Thirlmere South
NY3417	Near Longtown
NY3429	Souther Fell
NY3456	Little Orton

Stephen Westerberg

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) counters needed

WeBS counters needed to take over from Clive Hartley:

East and West Plain, Flookburgh Marsh: both sites should be counted together to minimise duplication, with the top of Humphrey Head and the flood defences between East and West Plain being the main vantage points. Telescope and ability to identify and count large numbers of waders essential.

Foulney Island/Furness Coast Road: both sites should be counted together to minimise duplication, with the Foulney count involving a visit over high tide and the Coast Road counted as soon as the tide has dropped sufficiently to allow egress from Foulney. Telescope essential.

Windermere: a comprehensive count of England's largest natural lake from numerous vantage points, taking about 6 hours to complete. Telescope essential.

For advice on covering these contact Clive Hartley
clive.hartley304@btinternet.com Tel 015395 36824

The Armathwaite Tree Sparrow project 2012/13



Tree Sparrow, Frank Mawby

Aimed at increasing the number of Tree Sparrows in the Armathwaite area, the scheme was started by the late Tony Kendall, and is now in its ninth season.

The early part of the 2012/13 winter was wet, but this was followed by a cold spring with frosts and bitter winds. This unseasonable weather continued throughout late March and well into April and had a noticeable bearing on the success of the first part of the breeding season. When the warmer weather finally arrived its influence was noticeable in terms of a far better second brood.

Winter Feeding

The feeding arrangements, in a small field compartment close to Aiketgate was almost identical to that of previous years. Millet and some wild bird seed was put on in suspended feeders from mid October. In 2013, in view of the adverse weather, feeding continued until the third week in April.

Coordinated counts in the area revealed a total of 90-100 Tree Sparrows feeding in January. This figure rose to 120-130 birds by the end of February. Other species at the feeding station included Brambling, Yellowhammer and up to 12 Stock Doves.

Breeding season

In 2013 there were 124 nest boxes aimed specifically at Tree Sparrows in the study area. During an all too brief spell in early March, paired birds were noted on territory and building began.

However the arrival of more cold winds in the remainder of March and into April curtailed activity for a while and this no doubt resulted in the lateness of the first brood and below average clutch size.

The second brood was much better and the average clutch size showed a big improvement. There were only four third broods in 2013.

Ringling

A total of 242 young Tree Sparrows were ringed during the season.



Tree Sparrow, Armathwaite, Mike Carrier

Discussion

- a) It was of interest that the average brood size of the second brood in 2013 was at 4.8, the highest since the scheme started. It was felt that this satisfactory situation compensated for the poor weather related effects of the first brood.
- b) It has become obvious during the course of the scheme that Tree Sparrows favour particular nest box sites. Single trees, noticeably Ash, along hedgerows are a prime site. It was interesting that in 2013, the birds only laid and had young in boxes used previously by the species.
- c) On at least three occasions during the season it was found that eggs of the second brood were being laid before the young of the first had departed. Whilst there was only a short overlap (1-2 days) it is not unknown in other species (Sand Martins) where this happens, for the first brood young to trample and damage the eggs of the second brood. Fortunately this did not happen.

The Armathwaite Tree Sparrow project 2012/13

Year	Brood	Average Brood Size	Boxes Available	Boxes Occupied	Percentage Occupied
2006	1st	4.0	75	40	53
	2nd	4.5			
	3rd	4.0			
2007	1st	4.5	86	46	53
	2nd	4.0			
	3rd	3.7			
2008	1st	4.2	104	60	57
	2nd	3.4			
	3rd	4.2			
2009	1st	3.9	105	63	60
	2nd	4.6			
	3rd	4.2			
2010	1st	3.7	130	81	60
	2nd	4.2			
	3rd	4.1			
2011	1st	4.5	134	99	74
	2nd	4.2			
	3rd	4.2			
2012	1st	3.2	128	48	37
	2nd	3.6			
	3rd	Nil			
2013	1st	3.7	124	99	79
	2nd	4.8			
	3rd	4.5			

The table above gives the average brood size, availability of boxes, occupancy of boxes and percentage occupied since 2006.



Tree Sparrow, Stanwix, Roger Ridley

- d) A worrying factor has seen a marked decline in the number of third broods from a high in 2011.
- e) There have been very few ringed Tree Sparrows recovered from outside the ringing area. When visiting the feeding station it is apparent that only a small proportion of the birds are ringed - less than 5%. In 2013 ten females were examined at the nest - none were ringed. From conversation with others in both Lincolnshire and in Co. Durham this is not an unusual situation by any means. So where do our ringed birds go and where do the unringed ones come from? Perhaps the overall population is greater than was thought!

In conclusion my thanks to all who have helped in this project and in particular to Cumbria Bird Club for a grant to offset the costs of providing food for the birds during the winter.

Mike Carrier

Bird ringing news (4)

For the past couple of years I have been trying to collect together as many ringing recoveries involving movements of birds ringed in Cumbria, or ringed outside Cumbria and recovered in Cumbria, as I can, and this has met with reasonable success. Most of the material obtained has been fairly straightforward, but every so often something unusual pops up.



I recently received details of a Mallard found dead on the strandline near Selker during a beached bird survey in March 1986. The bird had been ringed, but the identity of the ringer remains a mystery. The ring appears to be made of aluminium and is about the size of a BTO 'G' ring, the size recommended for use on Mallard. It bears a simple four digit number – 0729 – and no other marks (no return address, no indication who, where or when it was ringed). The ring looks professionally made in that the number looks to have been stamped by machine rather than by hand. Its surface had a dull patina but otherwise showed no obvious signs of corrosion apart from some very slight mottling of the surface; there was some slight superficial scratching but no other signs of wear. In short the ring had not been on the bird very long, perhaps no more than a few months and certainly not more than a year or two. It seems reasonable to deduce from the ring number that some 728 birds may have been previously been marked with similar rings, and that the intention had been to ring thousands – but one must be careful not to read too much into such details.

At the time it would have been illegal to ring wild Mallard with such a ring, and, whilst one can't absolutely exclude the possibility that it was done illegally, that seems unlikely. Much more likely is that this was a hand-reared bird marked as part of some private initiative. The absence of a return address suggests that the ringer(s) were not interested in the bird's movements, but rather anticipated catching it again themselves, as one might if one were shooting released birds and wanted to know what fraction of the shot birds were one's own hand-reared birds.

I have made extensive enquiries about this bird with all the obvious organisations (BTO, WWT, BASC etc) but to no avail. If anyone reading this can supply any of the missing bits of the jigsaw (who ringed the bird, where, when and why) I would be delighted to hear from them – and would be more than happy to report the details in a future column.

This is not the only strange recovery I have come across in Cumbria. I recently chanced upon a reference to a Raven seen with a ring round its neck at Calder Bridge. It might, of course, have been just a bit of rubbish, but the report is dated in the 1820's and I have a sneaking suspicion that it was a genuine ring (ringing round the neck was not unknown before the advent of modern, scientific ringing at the beginning of the last century, and, indeed, is still practised by some with birds such as geese). The trail has long since gone cold, of course, but it would be nice to know just why this bird was ringed. Attempts were made at the time to shoot it, but it was too wary.

I am still very much in the market for any recoveries – old or new, and no matter how strange they may seem – please don't assume that someone else has sent details in; they almost certainly haven't.

Robin Sellers sellers@craghouse7.freemove.co.uk



Black-headed Gull ringed at Ambleside seen at Keswick, Dave Piercy

Foulshaw Moss - restoring a raised bog



Air photo of the Ulpha wetland

Cumbria Wildlife Trust is coming to the end of 15 years of work restoring Foulshaw Moss, one of the largest remaining un-cut Lowland Raised Bogs in England. A Raised Bog is essentially a small hill in the landscape, made up of water and un-rotted plant remains (otherwise known as peat). Formed over thousands of years, they are dependent on high rainfall and a short growing season for their existence and support highly specialised plant and animal communities.

Once extensive in the Cumbrian landscape, occupying valley floors in all sorts of places, they have been massively reduced by peat cutting and drainage. Foulshaw is no exception, and the bog we see today is a fragment of what was once a much larger and more complex system of bogs and other wetlands that covered the floor of the valleys that extend from the head of Morecambe Bay and forced people to cross the sands of Morecambe Bay to get to and from south-west Cumbria. Foulshaw is unusual among English bogs in that it was used from the 1950's as a forestry plantation.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust was asked to take over the site from the Forestry Commission in 1996 as part of a previous round of forestry privatisation and the Trust bought the first part of the site in 1999 and has gradually built up the 350 Hectare nature reserve that exists today, heavily supported in terms of finance by the Heritage Lottery Fund for purchases and GrantScape and Natural England for site management.



Before work commenced

The Work

When the Trust acquired Foulshaw, no-one had ever removed conifers from a raised bog on a big scale. Up until then, tree removal from bogs had involved hand felling, skylines, helicopters and the like. We looked at these, found the costs to be astronomical and, since we didn't have any money, decided that the only method that was workable was to use a conventional forestry forwarder and harvester system.

Felling began in 2001 and we felled 180 hectares of conifers over 3 winters. In the meantime, the Trust's fundraisers had been busy and in 2006 we were awarded money by Grantscape to undertake a whole range of work including removing Rhododendron scrub and blocking drains so as to start the process of restoring water levels within the bog. Again, all this work was done using heavy machinery. This money also enabled the Trust to put in a raised viewing platform, as whilst bogs are fantastic, they aren't easy to walk across and it is difficult to see far across them. Removing the trees and blocking the drains across the centre of the bog raised the water table within the site and

we began to see the recovery of some of the key bog vegetation. Most notably Sphagnum mosses began to grow on the bog surface for the first time for decades.



At work on the forestry

At the same time, the Trust worked to clear conifers out of two areas of ancient woodland that had been acquired as part of the original Foulshaw purchase and was able to acquire 17 hectares of fields adjoining



Working on bunds

the bog and wet these up to form a new wetland that is currently a mosaic of open water, reedbed and wet grassland.

As bog restoration is a relatively new area of work, techniques are developing all the time. One of these involves the creation of “cell” bunds along the sloping edges of the bog and on areas of the bog that had been cut away for peat. Cell

bunding involves digging down through the dried and degraded surface peat and replacing it with wet high quality peat dug from “borrow pits” to form impervious bunds.

Cell bunding does two things, firstly it prevents water flowing off site through cracks in the peat and secondly, it raises the water levels in the areas of cut-over bog and reduces the gradient between the water in the bog itself and the cut-over areas. This however meant extra work as woodland that had been left around the edges of the bog on the areas that had once been cut for peat was now in the way and preventing the creation of the cell bunds, and so it too had to go.

This felling work began in 2011 and again was done using conventional forestry equipment. This removed the remaining 90 hectares of conifers. Then, from 2012 work began on cell bunding the edges of the bog. At times this involved up to 9 machines working in wet and difficult conditions to create the bunds.

What did we get?

Well, the main thing we have achieved is a really wet bog! The vegetation has begun to change, with a decline in the vigour of Purple Moor-grass and increases in the bog species like Sphagnum mosses, Cotton-grasses, White-beaked Sedge and Cranberry.

There is somewhere in the region of 90 hectares of shallow water wetlands, all of which are fairly fresh and raw at the moment, but which will develop over the next few years.

There are two areas of very different ancient oak woodland, one derived from abandoned coppice, the other from old wood-pasture with ancient trees.

What about the birds?

The main shift in the bird populations with the restoration of the bog has been from a community of woodland birds, with species such as Coal Tit and Chaffinch to one of wetlands and open space. Breeding passerines now include Reed Bunting, Stonechat, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Meadow Pipit, Tree Pipit and Cuckoo.

The wetlands created on the fields around the site are still relatively new, but already support flocks of Snipe, Teal and other wildfowl through the winter. Teal breed and Shoveler, Gadwall, Garganey and Wigeon have all summered without breeding being confirmed. Similarly, Water Rail are presumed to breed.



An after shot of bunds holding water

Foulshaw can be absolutely brilliant for raptors, with its combination of perches in dead trees and a large area of mixed habitats to hunt over. However, it can be very hit or miss. The commonest species are, as might be expected, Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Peregrine. However, a variety of other species can be present, with Marsh Harrier, Osprey and Hobby all around during the summer. The persecution of the English Hen Harrier population seems to have adversely affected the number of birds wintering on Foulshaw, with what was a small winter roost now reduced to just occasional birds. Other occasional winter visitors are Merlin and Short-eared Owl.

Apart from raptors, Foulshaw can be spectacular for Swifts and Hirundines. In spring or late summer, it is possible to look out across the moss and see thousands of birds feeding and then look up and realise that this density of birds goes up for thousands of feet into the sky.

Foulshaw Moss - restoring a raised bog

Foulshaw is a very popular wintering place for Snipe, with probably hundreds of birds scattered across the bog surface. Jack snipe and Woodcock are a lot less common, but there are normally a few of each through the winter, whilst Woodcock is another possible breeder.

Other wildlife

Foulshaw supports good populations of a variety of reptiles and amphibians, with huge populations of Common Frog, but also Adder, Common Lizard and Slow Worm.

The most obvious mammal is the Red Deer, with a fairly substantial population including some magnificent stags, but other mammals include Roe Deer, Red Fox, Otter, Red Squirrel and Hare.

The bog specialist invertebrate community is well represented, with species like Bog Bush-cricket, Large Heath Butterfly, Emperor Moth and Purple-bordered gold Moth.



Large Heath

One of the good things about having done the restoration is being able to see species like Common Lizard, Adder and Bog Bush-cricket spread out from the small areas they used to occupy to re-colonise areas of the former conifer plantation.

The White-faced Darter



White-faced Darter

At the same time as doing the bog restoration, the Trust has been running a project in conjunction with the British Dragonfly Society to re-introduce the White-faced Darter to Foulshaw.

The White-faced Darter is a small dragonfly that is very closely associated with bogs, breeding amongst Sphagnum moss floating in peaty pools.

White-faced Darter was historically recorded from Foulshaw, but had become extinct, probably as a result of drainage or afforestation. There are other populations in Cumbria, but most of these are too small to be viable and the one remaining larger population is on a site where its future cannot be assured.

The restoration itself is a relatively simple technique of moving *Sphagnum* containing eggs and larvae from one site to another, but there is a huge monitoring effort to ensure that this is not harmful to the donor population.

The White-faced Darter has a relatively early flight period (May and June) and the re-introduction coincided with a sequence of summers with really poor weather at this time of year and relatively few sightings of adult dragonflies. However, during 2013, there was good weather during the flight period and much larger numbers of adults were recorded. We also were able to record adults emerging from ponds separate from the ones the larvae had been put into, so in spite of the bad weather, the adults had been able to meet up and breed. This is excellent news and the presence of White-faced Darter is already attracting human visitors to the site, as this is one of the most accessible populations of this rare species in the whole country.

What next?

Over the winter there is work to be done creating further new wetland areas in some fields that the Trust owns on the east side of Foulshaw and around the neighbouring Meathop Moss, which will create further areas of pools, fen and reedbed vegetation.

We also have to put back in all the access and replace the interpretation that has had to be taken out as part of the process of bunding the area around the car park at Foulshaw, so that people can get to the viewing platform without needing a wet suit. There will also be a route all the way round the periphery of the site for the more intrepid.

What will we end up with?

Fundamentally what we want is to have is a large and very wet raised bog, dominated by *Sphagnum* mosses across the middle section and surrounded by a mix of reedbed and fen, open water and wet woodland.

Other sites that have undergone a similar restoration process, have shown rapid colonisation by wetland bird species. So, the Trust has done similar work at Drumburgh Moss on the Solway and this has rapidly developed a Black-headed Gull colony and probable breeding Snipe, Curlew, Lapwing and Redshank.

Foulshaw Moss - restoring a raised bog



Foulshaw Nov 2013 viewed from Whitbarrow

The truth is, we don't really know what we will end up with in terms of birds. Unlike the other sites where cell bunding has been used to create shallow-water wetlands and bird communities have developed rapidly, Foulshaw has been under a forestry plantation for 50 years and so the wetland plant and animal communities will have to assemble themselves more-or-less from scratch.

Perhaps the presence of the RSPB's Leighton Moss just over the border into Lancashire will help? Other wetland restoration projects in the offing may also be useful. Just up the valley from Foulshaw, the National Trust is just about to start a wetland creation project at Brigsteer, restoration of Rusland Moss is in the offing and Natural England have started work on the restoration of Roudsea Moss. Once these are all complete, there will have been a significant increase in the amount of wetland habitat around the headwaters of Morecambe Bay. Perhaps we might look forward to some new breeding species for the county?

Getting Involved

Restoring Foulshaw has involved a lot of money, a lot of time and a lot of heavy machinery. It hasn't necessarily been able to incorporate a lot of volunteering into that process. However, the "big machines" period is coming to an end and the Trust is keen to involve more volunteers in the site.

So if you want to make Foulshaw part of your local patch and send in casual records the Trust would be glad to receive them. If anyone would like to do something more formal and try to work out ways of properly monitoring bird populations on the site, the Trust would be extremely grateful. If anyone would like to run a bird feeding station at the car park, the Trust would pay for the feed.

It's a huge site, it can soak up a lot of volunteering !

David Harpley davidh@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk

News from the Records Panel

Tim Dean has retired from the Records Panel, having been a member since its formation in 1990 and serving as County Recorder from 1992 to 1999. Since moving to Orkney, Tim has provided the Panel with a valued, detached view but now feels too remote from the county's birding scene to make a valid contribution and thinks the panel would be better served by someone more local. The Panel would like to express its gratitude to Tim for all his hard work over the years.

Tim's replacement on the Panel is Colin Auld. Colin lives in Carlisle and summarises his 'birding career' as follows:

"I've been lucky to have worked in nature conservation for over 25 years and most of this has involved a 'birding' element including species protection and general wardening. For the last 15 years I've managed National Nature Reserves in the north of the county. I enjoy all sorts of birding, from occasional twitches, to searching for scarcities during migration and contributing to local and national surveys. I love seeing birds in great locations so trips to Fair Isle, Scillies, America, Sweden and Greece are particularly memorable. Gyrfalcon is probably the bird I'd most like to see. "

In 2012, the Panel assessed a total of 63 records, of which 47 were accepted; as usual non-acceptance was, in the vast majority, of cases a question of the identification not being satisfactorily established. At a recent meeting of the Panel, it was agreed to set a deadline of 31st July for the receipt of descriptions if they are to be eligible for inclusion in the next edition of *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria*. This means that to be eligible for inclusion in the 2013 report, descriptions relating to 2013 records must be submitted to the appropriate Regional Recorder by the end of July 2014. Descriptions received after this date will, of course, still be gratefully received and assessed but will have to wait until the following year's report before they can be published.

Information regarding the submission of records and descriptions can be found on the Bird Club website at <http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk/reporting>

Ian Kinley
Records Panel Secretary

Recent reports

The period covered is December 2013 to February 2014. 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



Black Brant, Roa Island, Lou Cross

Whooper Swans apparently declined on the Inner Solway in December, the largest flock reported being 120 near Kirkbride and numbers remained rather low in January, though a total of 267 were counted in several flocks. Numbers elsewhere included 86 at Longtown and 65 at both Kirkby Thore and Walby.

Pink-footed Geese increased in numbers on the Inner Solway in February, with at least 17000 in the area, accompanied by a first

-winter **Greenland White-fronted Goose** at Whitrigg on 7th.

Barnacle Geese included at least 10000 on the Inner Solway while, in the less favoured south of the county, there were up to 130 in the Flookburgh area and 84 at Walney. The **Todd's Canada Goose** was seen intermittently with the **Barnacle Geese** on the Inner Solway, initially on Skinburness Marsh on 20th December before relocating to Cardurnock on occasions between 28th December and 5th January. The Walney/Foulney **Brent Goose** flock peaked at 172 pale-bellied and 60 dark-bellied birds, accompanied throughout by the adult **Black Brant** that mostly favoured the Roa Island area.

A drake **American Wigeon** at Haverigg from 22nd to 25th February was the first in the county since 2006 while drake **Green-winged Teals** were found on flooded fields near Lindal-in-Furness on 1st January and at Ravenstown near Flookburgh on 20th February, both new sites for the species but none was seen at any of the more regular wintering haunts.

Scaup included seven at Hodbarrow, three at Walney, two on Derwent Water and singles at Longtown and Longlands Pond.

A smattering of **Long-tailed Ducks** consisted of three off Nethertown on 19th February, two off Bowness-on-Solway on 13th February and singles at Walney, on the canal at Ulverston and on the Leven Estuary at Old Park though only the Walney bird took up residence.



Scaup, Longlands Pond, Steve Dutton



Long-tailed Duck, Ulverston, Tony Phizacklea

Coastal counts of **Common Scoters** included 350 at Walney and 160 at Silecroft. Two **Smew**, a male and a female, on Derwent Water from 20th January into March were the first and only ones of the winter in the county.

Other wildfowl counts in the period included 220 **Goosanders** at Soddy Gap and 4400 **Eider** in the Foulney/Rampside area.

Divers to grebes

Red-throated Diver totals at coastal locations included 38 at Silecroft and 12 at Walney in December followed by 30 at Workington and 24 at Walney in January and 34 off Parton in February. A **Black-throated Diver**, invariably the scarcest of the three diver species in Cumbria, appeared off Parton on several occasions in January and February. **Great Northern Divers** were relatively widespread with at least two in the Walney/Rampside/Barrow Docks/Hodbarrow area throughout the period, up to two inland on Coniston Water from 25th December into January and a single off Nethertown on 31st December. Gales early in January produced a very unseasonable **Manx Shearwater** at Bowness-on-Solway on 3rd with four early **Fulmars** also logged there on 13th February while **Gannets** were noted at several sites.



Shag, Talkin Tarn, Darren Robson

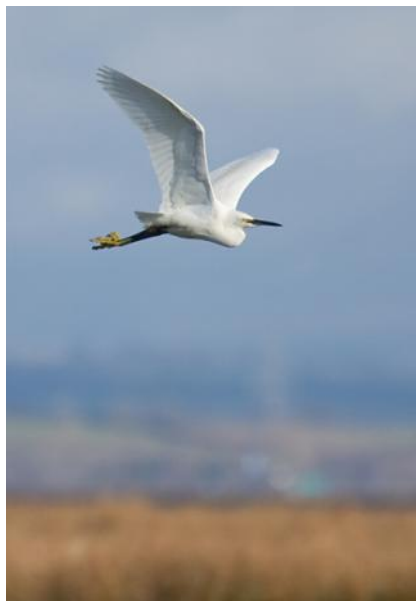
Shags at Walney peaked at an impressive 20 in December and 11 in both January and February while a juvenile on Talkin Tarn from 25th December to 29th January was a good inland sighting that was followed by three more birds inland on Coniston Water on 21st February.

At least four **Bitterns** were to be found at Siddick Pond. **Little Egrets** included site maxima of 33 on Walney Island, 24 on the Kent Estuary, 13 in the Lyth Valley, seven on the Inner Solway, three on the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass and two on the Duddon.

A **Great White Egret** turned up briefly in the far south of the county near Hale on 4th December and another made an equally brief appearance at Whitrigg on 15th January; a disappointing performance compared to recent winters.

Up to two **Slavonian Grebes** graced the lagoon at Hodbarrow intermittently from 19th January onwards, presumably the two seen there earlier in the winter.

A **Red-necked Grebe** seen off Nethertown on several occasions during January and February was joined by a second bird on 20th February.



Little Egret, Inner Solway, Darren Robson



Sparrowhawk with Blackbird kill, Stanwix, Roger Ridley

Raptors to waders

A female **Marsh Harrier** hunted Ulpha Meadows alongside the Kent Estuary on 16th January. More expectedly, **Hen Harriers** were reported from a number of widespread locations across the county but seemed rather less numerous than normal, perhaps due to some birds attracted to winter on upland sites by high vole numbers.

The unseasonable **Little Stint** remained on the Kent Estuary to 1st December. Peak **Purple Sandpiper** counts at their favoured locations comprised 55 at Workington and 20 at Walney. **Ruff** were limited to a single at Bowness-on-Solway on 18th January. **Jack Snipe**, traditionally under-recorded, comprised five at Walney and singles at Cliburn Moss. Burgh Marsh and on a moor south of Nenthead at 600m a.s.l.

Black-tailed Godwit numbers were unexceptional with just a handful of reports and nothing approaching a double figure flock. Overwintering **Green Sandpipers** were also relatively few and far between while the sole wintering **Spotted Redshank** was seen on the Duddon at Borwick Rails. **Greenshank** were, as usual, largely restricted to Walney where monthly maxima comprised 13 in December, 11 in January and six in February though, unusually, four wintering birds were noted on the Mite Estuary and a single was at Borwick Rails on the Duddon. Two wintering **Common Sandpipers** were found on the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass in January.



Little Gull, Workington, Steve Dutton

Skuas to auks

An unseasonable **Great Skua** appeared off Walney on 27th January. **Kittiwakes** included site maxima of 60 at Walney in December and the same number at Bowness-on-Solway in January followed by a more impressive 748 at Bowness-on-Solway in February. **Little Gulls** were limited to a total of three at Walney and a first-winter at Longtown in December but a mini influx in January produced five at Bowness-on-Solway and singles off Nethertown and Walney plus an inland bird on Windermere. The strong southwest winds in February brought a total of 18 at Walney, two at Bowness-on-Solway and singles at Arnside and Parton.

An unseasonable juvenile **Sabine's Gull** appeared off Nethertown on 11th January and was followed by a first-winter at Bowness-on-Solway on 13th February. **Mediterranean Gulls** were relatively scarce and consisted of peak counts at least five on the Outer Solway, including 'Stumpy' the regular adult, at Workington, an adult at Walney and a first-winter at Borwick Rails. A juvenile **Iceland Gull** made a brief appearance at Parton on 6th December followed by an equally brief second-winter **Glaucous Gull** at Workington on 6th January and another brief juvenile there on 25th January. In February, two **Glaucous Gulls** were reported from Cavendish Dock on 3rd and a juvenile was found at Maryport on 16th while an adult **Yellow-legged Gull** at Whitehaven harbour on 8th was presumably a returning bird.



Glaucous Gull, Workington, Steve Dutton



Black Guillemot, Talkin Tarn, Nick Franklin

The winter storms resulted in a seabird wreck with **Razorbills** and **Guillemots** most affected along with smaller numbers of **Kittiwakes** and **Fulmars**. A **Black Guillemot** on Talkin Tarn from 20th to 22nd December was a truly exceptional inland record, probably the first in the county; moreover in some quarters it was mooted as being of the high Arctic form *mandti*, the first to be recorded in Britain if accepted.

Owls to buntings

Short-eared Owls were notable by their absence. **Hooded Crows** were limited to a single at Tarn Bay, Bootle and one, or a hybrid, at Whitehaven.

A presumed **Siberian Chiffchaff** lingered at Low Mills, Dalston from 1st January into March while an 'ordinary' **Chiffchaff** wintered in Kendal.

A **Water Pipit** was seen fairly regularly, at least on the higher tides, at Rampside throughout the period, along with at least 21 **Rock Pipits**.



Siberian Chiffchaff, Dalston, Roger Ridley



Twite, inner Solway, Darren Robson

The only **Waxwings** of the winter appeared in Carlisle from 22nd to 25th January with up to 11 birds present.

By far the largest **Brambling** numbers reported were at the traditionally favoured Talkin Tarn where they

peaked at 400. **Twite** flocks included 100 on Newton Marsh, 80 at Wedholme Flow, 55 at Walney, 35 at Holme Island, 25 at Mawbray and 16 at Barrow docks.

Common Crossbills were poorly reported with seven at Cliburn Moss the best of the bunch. **Hawfinches** included an impressive 30 at Whitbarrow while at least five continued to frequent theSizergh castle car park.

Snow Buntings

comprised a splendid coastal flock of 21 at Sandscale Haws on 9th January, a flock of seven at Walney in February and singles flying over a windfarm near Abbeytown and at Workington on 11th December.



Hawfinch, Sizergh Castle, Darren Robson

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

Red Kite records, For Sale & Twitter



Red Kite, Cartmel Fell, G.Halstead

Red Kite records wanted

The kite group put together to monitor the recent red kite reintroduction at Grizedale, South Cumbria would like our help. If you could ensure that you send in all Red Kite records in the county to Iain Yoxall, Wildlife Ranger, Forestry Commission, iain.yoxall@forestry.gsi.gov.uk Mobile 07867501391 Office 01229 862014

Please also forward to your regional recorder at the end of the year.

For Sale: In Winter 2013 I advertised the sale of a number of “the iconic Cumbria Bird Club newsletter” this should of course have read “the iconic BIRDING WORLD”!

Contact: Michael Williams (michaelwilliamshh@gmail.com)

Twitter: Note that this is a private initiative by Brian Ward and is not associated in any way with Cumbria Bird Club.

If you have a smart phone or I-phone you can get bird news via Twitter. If you create an account then you can follow all the rare bird alerts for free. There is also a page for Cumbria called @cumbriabirds, where you can send any sightings you think other people would like to see. They don't have to be rare, just birds you find interesting. *Brian Ward* brianward853@btinternet.com

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Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is June 1st 2014

If you have a computer: please send contributions to Dave Piercy

- on disk (your disk will be returned if requested); or
- as e-mail attachments to daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk

If you do not have a computer: please send in as clear a format as possible to Dave Piercy, Derwentwater Independent Hostel, Borrowdale, Keswick CA12 5UR; tel 017687 77246

Opinions expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of Cumbria Bird Club, its Editor, nor any of its Officers.

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Cumbria Bird Club Website

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

Contributions for the website to: daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk