



BIRD NEWS
Vol. 26 No. 1 Spring 2015

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CBC Indoor meeting programme winter 2015/2016

Friday 2nd Oct (AGM): Penrith United Reformed Church 7.30pm

Title to be announced - *Kane Brides*

Fri 6th Nov: Marchesi Centre, Windermere

Joint with RSPB South Lakeland group



Wednesday 6th January 2016: Tullie House 7.15pm

Joint with Carlisle NHS

'Ethiopia - Disappearing Paradise' - *Angus Hogg*

Monday 25th Jan 2016: Friend's Meeting House Stramongate 7.30pm

Joint with Kendal NHS

'Hen Harriers' - *James Bray of the RSPB*

Surveyors required

Webs, WBBS and BBS surveys - there are plenty of sites available. To effectively monitor Cumbrian birdlife we urgently need more surveyors. To find out what is involved contact Dave Shackleton (see below) for Webs and the BTO reps (see inside cover) for WBBS and BBS. Two important sites with vacancies are:

Webs - Ormsgill Reservoir at Barrow. Contact Dave Shackleton for full details. tel: 01931 713693 d.shackleton@btinternet.com

WBBS - NY 7804 (River Eden, Cumbria) urgently needs a new surveyor. Contact Colin Gay (details inside cover).

News from the Records Panel

Derek McAlone has retired from his position as Regional Recorder for Allerdale and Copeland and from the Records Panel, having served as Regional Recorder since 2004. The Panel would like to express its gratitude to Derek for all his effort and commitment over the years.

Derek's replacement as Regional Recorder is Nick Franklin, Nick lives in Carlisle and summarises his 'birding career' as follows –

Like many birdwatchers I started at a young age, influenced by my parents who were keen birdwatchers, and by my great-uncle Raymond Laidler, a long-time member of the Carlisle Natural History Society. In my mid-teens I became passionately interested in rock climbing and fell walking and, to some extent, drifted away from birdwatching for the next 15 years.

However, I still maintained an interest in mountain birds and wildlife, recording Dotterel on several Lakeland fells, and being lucky enough to find breeding Purple Sandpipers on a Scottish hill in the early 1990s. I always found it a joy to watch breeding Snow Buntings and Ptarmigan in the Cairngorms, or Golden Eagles soaring over Glencoe, and it was these regular trips into the hills that gradually re-ignited my enthusiasm for birdwatching.



Nick Franklin & son

In the mid-1990s I started birdwatching again on an almost daily basis, buying a scope and re-acquainting myself with the Solway and its surrounds, as well as twitching the occasional rarity. Over the last 20 years my enthusiasm for local birdwatching has grown and grown, and my great pleasures now are Skua watching in late spring on the Solway, and walking the Rivers Esk and Eden.

I am also a regular visitor to Mallorca and some of my most memorable birding moments come from there. I can still be tempted on the odd twitch, but these days prefer to spend my time locally, out and about, or helping my little boy learn about birds instead of sitting in the car.



Red-necked Phalarope, Nick Franklin

Locally, I have been lucky enough to find some good birds, with a Kentish Plover at Bowness Railings in 2011, Red-necked Phalarope on the Eden in 2010 and Red Breasted Goose in Jan 2012 all giving me great pleasure.

Most recently, I stumbled across a Black Guillemot at Talkin Tarn, which has been suggested as the first of the Mandtii race of Black Guillemot (the high Arctic sub-species) to reach British shores.

In addition to birdwatching, I have spent the last ten years or so taking photographs and I have recently been asked to be the Photographic Editor for the Cumbria Avifauna, currently in preparation. If anyone is interested in contributing photographs please email me nicolas@franklin1966.freeseve.co.uk and I will send you a list of species still requiring a picture.

Nick Franklin



Kentish Plover, Nick Franklin

The Records Panel - a summary

In 2013, the Panel assessed a total of 34 records, of which 28 were accepted; a particularly high acceptance rate though the total number of descriptions received was the lowest since 2001. Whether this was the result of it being a poor year for county rarities or a reluctance on the part of observers to submit descriptions is unclear; hopefully, from a recording point of view, it was the former.

We would urge observers to support the Bird Club recording system by submitting their records and, where necessary, descriptions via the appropriate Regional Recorder; information on how to do so can be found on the Bird Club website at <http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk/reporting>

*Ian Kinley
Records Panel Secretary*

Willow Warbler attempting to take food from Tree Pipits feeding young

At about 11.00 hrs on Saturday 12th July 2014, at Cliburn Moss NNR, Cumbria, I was monitoring the nest of a pair of Tree Pipits. The nest, a second clutch, contained four young and was situated on the ground amongst grasses in a wildflower meadow. The adults were using a low Hawthorn to land upon and pause, before making their final approach to the nest. The same bush had been used by the male as a song post throughout the breeding season.



Tree Pipits, Cliburn, Steve Turnbull

At one point, a juvenile Willow Warbler landed in the bush and began searching for food. When a Tree Pipit landed on the bush with food in its bill, before flying to the nest, the Willow Warbler immediately approached the Tree Pipit and began to try to take insects from the pipit's bill. The Tree Pipit moved its head and body position to avoid the attention of the Willow Warbler, and then flew towards the nest. The Willow Warbler pursued it in flight, continuing to try to take insects from the bill of the flying pipit. As a result, the Tree Pipit aborted its approach and returned to the Hawthorn, followed by the Willow Warbler. The latter then began to feed normally. The Tree Pipit made two further attempts to fly to the nest to deliver food but on each occasion the Willow Warbler flew alongside and attempted to take insects from its bill. On both occasions the Tree Pipit aborted the approach and returned to the bush. The Willow Warbler then flew off, and the adult Tree Pipits resumed feeding their young.

The same behaviour was observed on 17th July, when the Tree Pipits were still feeding young in the nest, and again on 21st July, when the young had left the nest (observations on both occasions between 07.00 and 08.00 hrs). Although I cannot prove it, it seems very likely that the same individual Willow Warbler was involved. Its behaviour was not that of a very young bird instinctively begging food from adults; instead, it appeared old enough to be independent and, rather than begging, it pecked insistently at the insects carried in the bill of the adult Tree Pipits. The behaviour certainly had an impact on the pipits, which aborted their feeding flights on several occasions as a result although, at least in the interactions that I observed, the Willow Warbler was not successful in stealing any insects from the Tree Pipits. The persistence of the behaviour, over three separate visits, is interesting, and I wonder if the behaviour of the young Willow Warbler was spontaneous or had been learned.

Steve Turnbull, e-mail kingfisher@leithbeck.wanadoo.co.uk

Dipper nesting strategy in prolonged cold weather

In common with most of the UK, spring 2013 was late and cold on the River Greta in Cumbria and Dippers *Cinclus cinclus* began nesting later than normal. The nesting period of one pair studied lasted some 84 days, during which time no fewer than four nests were built. This pair first began nest building on 18th March and by 20th March their nest, on a steel girder of the superstructure beneath a disused railway bridge spanning the Greta (about 130 m above sea level), was half complete.

That nest progressed no further during a period of extremely cold, snowy weather and in due course was abandoned. The pair remained on territory, and eventually started a second nest below the same bridge; it was about half-built on 20th April and nest-building stopped shortly after. That nest was also abandoned, as was a third (completed and lined) nest at the same site. The pair's fourth nest, on the rock face of small side stream, c. 300 m downstream of the bridge, contained three newly hatched young on 22nd May; four young fledged successfully on 9th June.

Dippers on the adjoining territory, with a nest built beneath an old Pack Horse bridge over a small tributary stream, adopted a similar stop-start strategy, although only one nest was involved. Three young fledged successfully from this particular nest on 20th June, some 93 days after the first record of nest-building.

The impact of cold spring weather on the nesting cycle is perhaps not surprising, although the building of four nests during repeated weather-induced delays seems worth placing on record.

Steve Turnbull, e-mail kingfisher@leithbeck.wanadoo.co.uk

(Articles on pages 6 and 7 both originally published in *British Birds*)

Leucism



Leucistic Golden Plover, Cardurnock, Tony Marsh



From a print by Julia Dixon, Near Brampton, Sept 2014



Barnacle goose, Anthorn, Darren Robson



Chaffinch, Cleator Moor, Alan & Margaret Frost

House Martin Survey 2015



House Martin, Roger Ridley

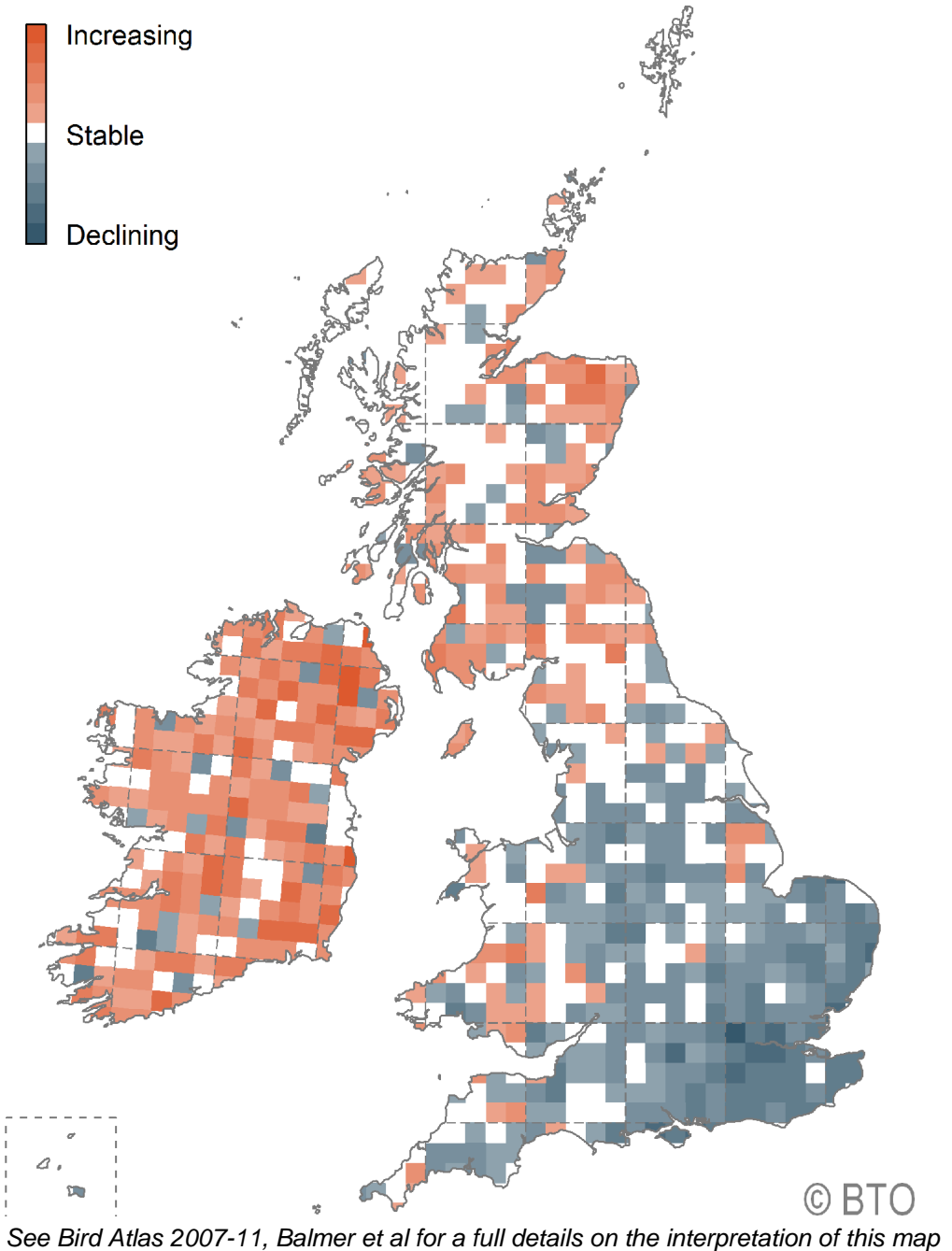
Cumbria Bird Club would like to encourage members to help with the BTO House Martin survey taking place this year. Note that this survey is based on surveying 1-km squares as opposed to the tetrads used for the Atlas. At this finer scale we should be able to find the majority of the nest sites in these squares and thereby gain a better insight to the population and ecology of this amber-listed species within the county. This is a simple survey that anyone can take part in and requires only a limited commitment of time.

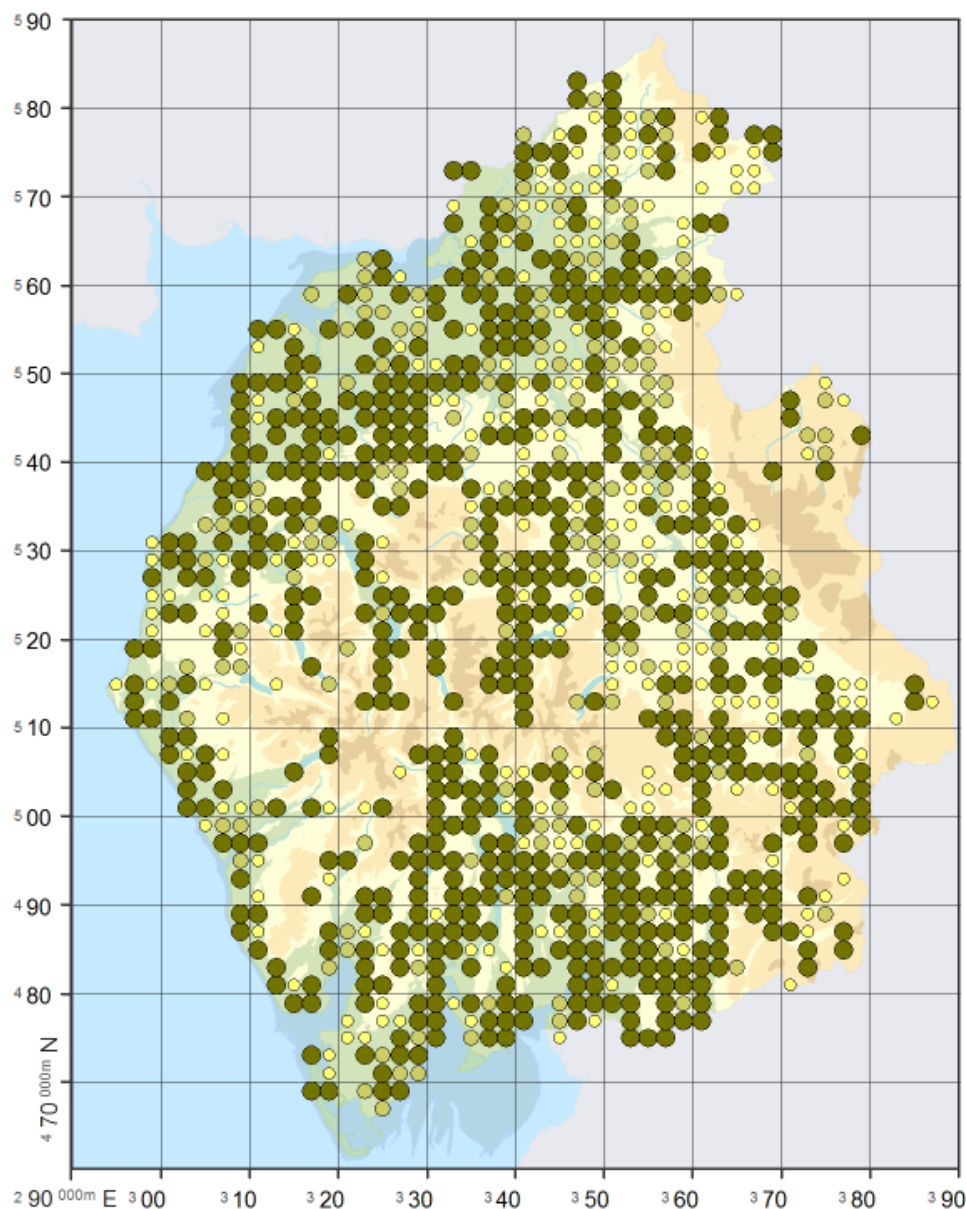
The current status of House Martin in Cumbria

Overleaf you will find the maps generated from the Atlas data to tetrad scale for Cumbria. A full interpretation of these maps is not yet available so I leave you to draw your own conclusions.

Opposite I have also reproduced the Atlas abundance change map for Britain and Ireland which shows a stark regional contrast in fortunes. It is apparent that major losses in tetrad occupancy are occurring in southern Britain contrasting with increases in the north. Perhaps this survey and the subsequent nest monitoring study planned for 2016 will help tease out these regional differences.

Breeding Abundance Change 1988–91 to 2008–11





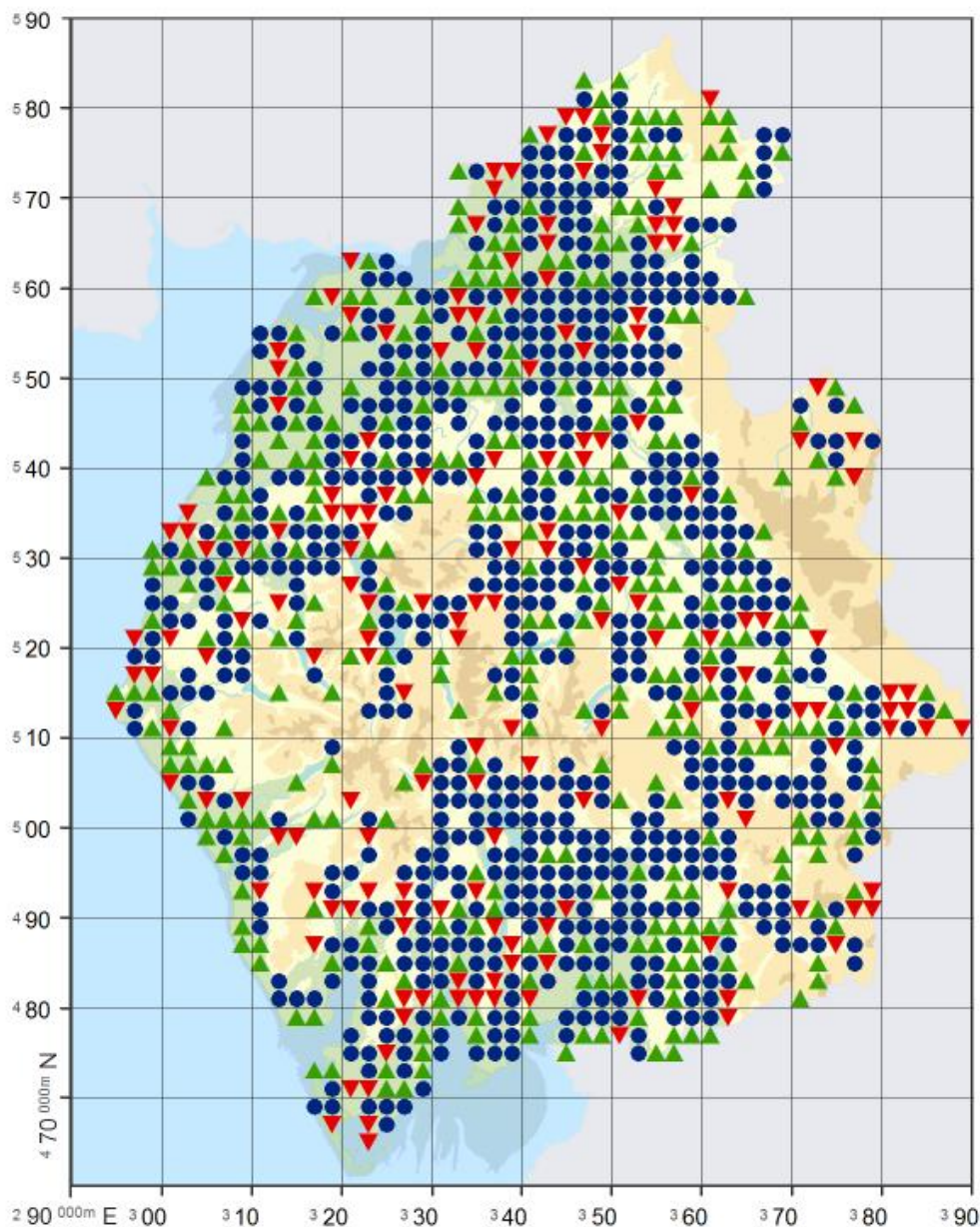
House Martin

● Possible	220
● Probable	165
● Confirmed	627

Evidence of breeding in the 2008-2011 survey. Category determined by the strongest recorded evidence of breeding by birds in suitable nesting habitat in the tetrad

Includes records from Timed Tetrad Visits and Roving Records

Maps are copyright Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre and contain Ordnance Survey Data Database Right 2015



House Martin

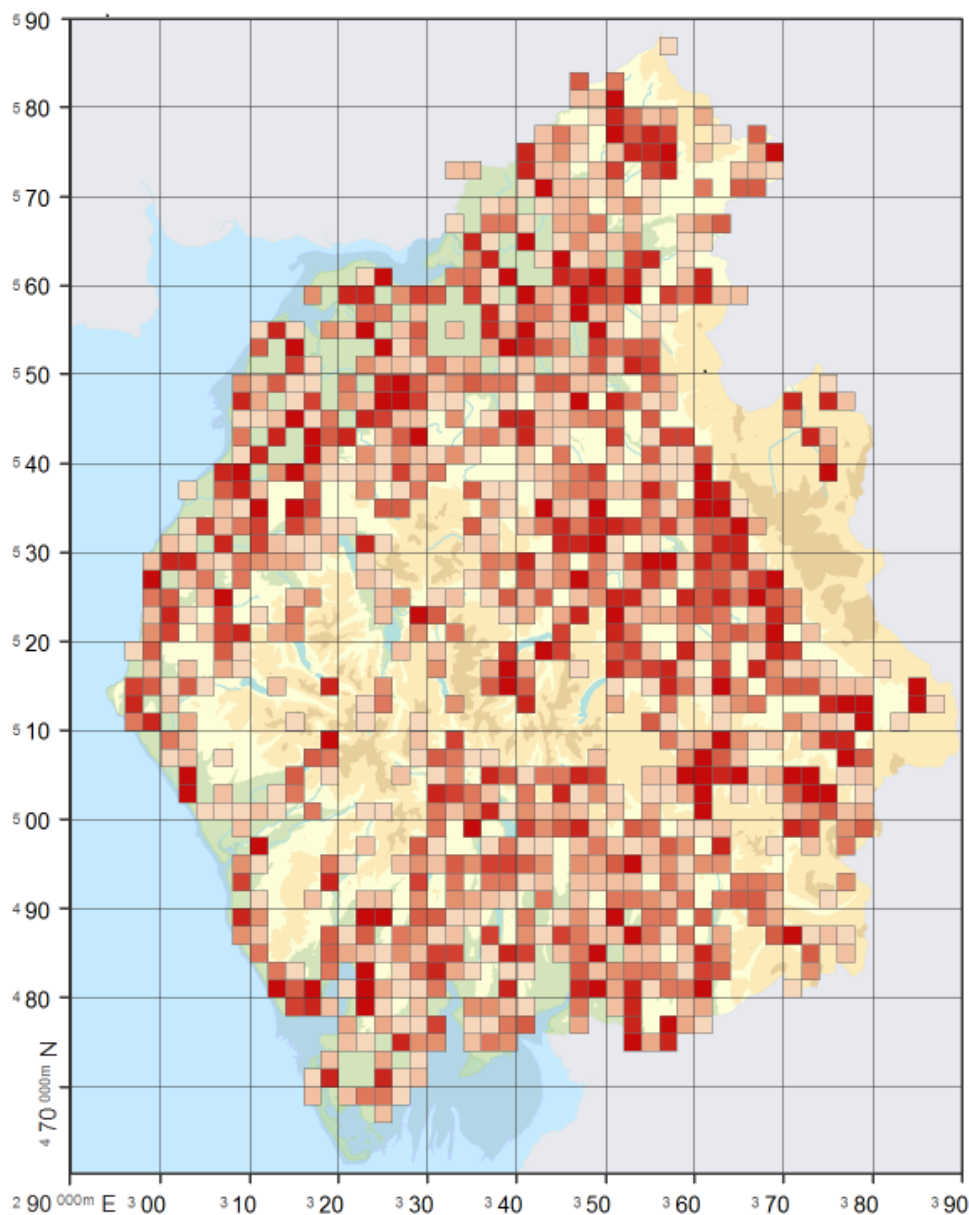
▲ Gain	353
● Stable	659
▼ Loss	175

Evidence of breeding in the 2008-2011 atlas compared with the 1997-2001 atlas

Gain: Only present in national 2008-11 atlas.

Stable: Present in Cumbrian 1997-2001 and 2008-11 atlases.

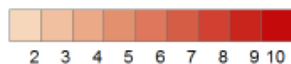
Loss: Only present in Cumbrian 1997-2001 atlas.



House Martin

Relative abundance during the April to July timed tetrad counts in the 2008-11 survey. Relative abundance category derived from the maximum number of birds recorded in one hour.

Categories: 2 = 2, 3 = 3 - 4, 4 = 5, 5 = 6, 6 = 7 - 8, 7 = 9 - 10, 8 = 11 - 12, 9 = 13 - 18, 10 = 19 - 100



Selecting a survey square

All squares available have been randomly selected by the BTO. For those without internet access who require paper forms please contact your local BTO rep (see inside cover).

For surveyors with internet access use this link: [BTO House Martin survey](#)

You can then view all the available survey squares on a map as shown overleaf. You will then need to log in or register to submit a request to cover a square, which will then be sent to the BTO Regional Organiser for the House Martin survey (Colin Gay).

Visits to your squares

In most squares each visit will normally take around one to two hours – however the visit length will be highly variable between different squares: visits to urban squares may take longer than two hours, whereas some squares with only a small number of buildings may take less than half an hour to survey. If the square you have selected contains only a small number of buildings, please consider taking on one or more extra squares if any others are available nearby.

Recce Visit (mid to late May)

The purpose of the recce visit is to cover the whole of your 1-km square to check which areas contain suitable nesting habitat, ask for access permission if required and mark and number each colony on the map of the square (a colony is defined as one or more nests on a single structure). Other than mapping where they are, you do not need to record any further information about the nests during the recce visit.

A recce visit may not be necessary, particularly if your square contains only a small number of buildings. Further guidance online or from your rep.

Visit 1 (1st to 24th June)

During Visit 1, you should re-visit any colonies found during the recce visit and also cover all other areas of the square that contain suitable nesting habitat and mark and number any new colonies on the map.

If you do not find any House Martins during your visit, please do not assume that we will not want to know about your visit. In fact, such 'zero counts' are extremely important to the survey and we need to know about them to ensure our population estimates are robust.

House Martin Survey 2015



Map of unallocated squares as at 24th April - for more up to date information see <http://blx1.bto.org/housemartins/home> or contact your BTO rep.

Please note that if there is sufficient demand more squares may become available therefore please contact your regional BTO rep if you are interested but no suitable squares are available

Visit 2 (25th June – 19th July)

During Visit 2, you should re-visit any colonies found during your earlier visits and also cover all other areas of the square that contain suitable nesting habitat to look for any new colonies on the map.

A second visit may not be necessary, if you did not find any House Martin nests during Visit 1, or any signs that House Martins have recently used the square. Further guidance is available online or from your BTO rep.



House Martin, Coker House, Bailey

There will be a follow up House Martin Nest Study in 2016.

Dave Piercy

Roudsea Wood - volunteers needed

As you probably know, Roudsea Wood had its first successful year of nesting ospreys in 2014, with two young being fledged from the nest on the artificial platform in the south of the site. There was increasing public interest in this site through the season, where visitors were able to get excellent views from a viewing point some 600 metres from the nest.



Osprey, Bassenthwaite, Tony Marsh

I am anticipating that there will be even more interest in 2015, so I am hoping to get together a volunteer team to help managing the increase in visitor numbers at key times. The initial duties would be to provide a presence on rota at key times such as weekend and public holidays, to talk to visitors, and to gather information of any interesting behaviours that the ospreys display.

I would be very grateful if you would circulate this request around the Cumbria Bird Club membership in case anyone would like to help with this project.

They should contact me by e-mail at rob.petley-jones@naturalengland.org.uk or by phone on 07747 852905.

Very many thanks Rob Petley-Jones

Senior Reserves Manager South-east Cumbria and North Lancashire NNRs
Roudsea Wood Base, Fish House Lane, Haverthwaite
Ulverston LA12 8PE

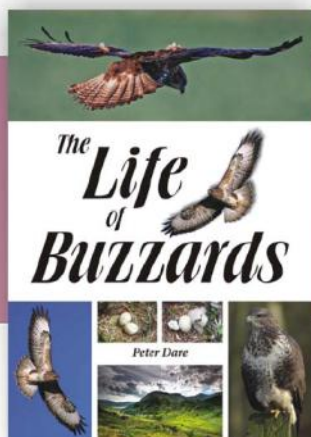
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Recent reports

The period covered is December 2014 to February 2015. 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



Whooper Swans, Walby, Roger Ridley

Whooper Swan numbers included 209 in the Kirkbride area while away from the Solway flocks included 66 at Walby. **Pink-footed Geese** increased to at least 16000 on the Inner Solway in February while two juvenile **Tundra Bean Geese** near Abbeytown on 31st December were followed by a single bird at Cargo on 27th January. **Eurasian White-fronted Geese** comprised two adults at Whitrigg on 30th December, one adult near Linstock on 1st February, a juvenile on the Duddon Estuary from 3rd to 5th February and an adult on the Inner Solway at Raby Cote on 19th February.

Meanwhile, a flock of 18 **White-fronts** was reported flying up the Kent estuary over Arnside viaduct on 16th December. **Barnacle Geese** on the Inner Solway included 11000 on Burgh Marsh with up to 53 at Walney and 42 at Flookburgh in the south of the county. Numbers of **Brent Geese** in the Walney/Foulney area reached maxima of 206 pale-bellied and 80 dark-bellied birds.



Smew, Derwent Water, Dave Piercy

A pair of **Mandarin Ducks** were on Derwent Water on 19th January. Inland **Scaup** consisted of two on Bassenthwaite Lake and singles at Soddy Gap and on the River Eden near Linstock while long-staying twosomes on the pools at South Walney and the lagoon at Hodbarrow probably also deserve to be described as such. Two **Long-tailed Ducks** lingered at South Walney throughout the period and a single was off Lowca on 19th January. The first **Smew** of the winter appeared, a drake on Derwent Water on 30th December, and seen again on 6th February, followed by a redhead on the River Eden near Linstock on 2nd and 3rd February.

Divers to grebes



Great Northern Diver, Roa Island, Lou Cross

Red-throated Diver totals at coastal locations included 15 at Walney in December and 30 off Workington in January. The sole **Black-throated Divers** were seen off Silecroft on 4th December and Nethertown on 3rd February. A **Great Northern Diver** at Roa Island on 8th December was presumably the same bird that lingered off the east shore of Walney and one

Recent reports

appeared inland on Windermere on 28th December, presumably the same as seen there on 10th February. Singles were also seen off Parton on 6th January.

A late **Gannet** was recorded at Walney on 7th December. Exceptional numbers of **Shags** lingered off Walney peaking at 30, while elsewhere Whitehaven harbour hosted three with singles also seen at nearby Parton and on Ramsden Dock in Barrow. Up to three **Bitterns** were to be seen at the traditional site of Siddick Pond. **Little Egrets** peaked at 51 on Walney Island, 25 on the Kent Estuary, 16 in the Lyth Valley, 11 on the Inner Solway, four on the Duddon at Green Road Marsh and two on the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass. Scarcer grebes consisted of single **Red-neckeds** off Nethertown on 3rd January and Allonby on 20th January, a **Slavonian** in the channel by the lighthouse at Hodbarrow on 4th December and one at Walney on 21st December.



Merlin, Duddon Estuary, Andrew Cockcroft

Raptors to waders

There were regular sightings of two different **Marsh Harriers** around the Kent Estuary throughout the period while, unsurprisingly, **Hen Harriers** were more widespread. A handful of **Red Kites** were reported, some well away from the Grizedale release site.



Water Rail, Foulshaw Moss, Andrew Cockcroft

An unseasonable **Little Stint** was at Port Carlisle on 2nd December and Bowness Railings on 2nd January. At their main sites, **Purple Sandpipers** peaked at 37 at Workington and 33 at Walney. **Jack Snipe** reports consisted of five near Rockcliffe, four at Walney, two at Carlisle airport, two on Brigsteer Wetland and singles at Rampside and Cliburn Moss. A **Ruff** was at Blencogo in December.

Black-tailed Godwit numbers were generally unimpressive, 14 at Ravenstown near Flookburgh in January being the only double figure count. **Spotted Redshank** were limited to a single on the Duddon Estuary in January. **Greenshank** were rather less restricted to Walney than usual; monthly maxima there comprised eight in December, two in January and six in February, while wintering birds elsewhere consisted of up to five on the Mite estuary and singles on the Esk south of Ravenglass, at Cavendish Dock and on the River Eden east of Carlisle.

Green Sandpipers were fairly widely reported while wintering **Common Sandpipers** comprised two on the Esk south of Ravenglass and one on the Inner Solway at Drumburgh.

Skuas to auks



Glaucous Gull, Lyth Valley, Ronnie Irving

An unseasonable **Pomarine Skua** off Walney on 6th December was followed by two that flew north past Roa Island on 10th December and further singles in January at East Plain, Flookburgh on 3rd, off Harrington on 18th, Walney on 19th and Parton on 21st: it's anyone's guess how many individuals were involved. A **Great Skua** was off Parton on 27th January.

Modest numbers of **Kittiwakes** included a maximum of 86 at Walney. **Mediterranean Gull** sightings in December comprised at least two adults and a first-winter at Broughton Moor and single adults at Workington and Roosebeck outfall while January produced just two adults at Workington and February sightings were limited to two adults at Workington, an adult in the Lyth Valley and a first-winter at Soddy Gap – a poor winter showing.

A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was attracted to a sheep carcass in the Lyth Valley between 17th and 30th December before relocating to the nearby Kent Estuary from 31st December to 5th January. Meanwhile, a second-winter bird appeared briefly at Roosebeck outfall on 6th January.

A **Little Auk** off Walney on 6th December was followed by another off Parton on 6th January.

Owls to buntings

Short-eared Owls were fairly widespread and included up to five on Binsey. **Hooded Crows** comprised singles at regular sites on Walney and near Burneside plus one, or a hybrid, at Workington. Wintering **Chiffchaffs** were noted at Walney, Foulshaw Moss and Low Mills, Dalston.

The male **Black Redstart** remained in residence at Carlisle airport throughout while others appeared much more briefly at Whitehaven harbour on 1st December and on the beach at Maryport on 8th December.



Black Redstart, Carlisle Airport, Darren Robson

A **Water Pipit** continued to be seen intermittently at Roa Island throughout the period while February's so-called 'super tides' flushed an impressive 60 **Rock Pipits** from Walney's saltmarshes.



Water Pipit, Roa Island, Lou Cross

Recent reports

The **Great Grey Shrike** remained in residence at Dalton Craggs to 6th December, disappeared for a while, then reappeared on 5th January then another was found at Torver Back Common on 16th February.



Great Grey Shrike, Dalton Craggs, Tony Marsh



Brambling, Derwent Water, Tony Marsh

By far the highest count of **Bramblings** came from the far northeast of the county with 136 at Talkin Tarn and 100 at Hallbankgate though 50 at Derwent Water were also noteworthy.

Twite flocks included 220 at Walney, 170 at Calvo marsh and 80 around Grange-over-Sands. **Hawfinches** included six at Witherslack and four at Sizergh Castle.

Snow Buntings were mainly confined to the felltops with 15 on the Howgill Fells, 11 on Bleaberry Fell, 10 on Dollywagon Pike, four on High Street and one on High

Seat while coastal records comprised two at Grune Point and one over Walney.

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



Skylark, Workington, Tony Marsh

Guidance for Contributors

My aim is to produce an “inclusive” magazine that has something for everybody. All contributions, from a two-line anecdote (a “Champagne Moment”) to a six-page semi-scientific article, will be considered. Priority is always given to items of Cumbrian relevance. All photos, artwork etc are most welcome.

I am always happy to advise or assist in preparing a submission. How to submit your offering is indicated on the back cover.

Editor

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Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is June 1st 2015

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