

## *BIRD NEWS Vol. 25 No. 2 Summer 2014*

**Club news and announcements** 

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### **Officers of the Society**

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Talks Organiser: Vacant

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C.B.C. Bird News

Editor: Dave Piercy

B.T.O. Representatives

Cumbria: Colin Gay <u>colinathodbarrow@btinternet.com</u> tel. 01229 773820 Assistant reps: Dave Piercy & Steve Westerberg The AGM will be held at Penrith United Reformed Church on Friday 3rd October 2014 at 7.30pm. The business of the AGM is intended to be as brief as possible and will be followed by a talk by Stephen Westerberg on Whinchats.

### Vacancies on Council: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, up to three vicechairmen and two ordinary members.

We would welcome any members willing to help in the running of the club. We are currently struggling to keep the club moving forward. There is so much we can achieve but we need more help. Please volunteer.

According to the terms of the constitution the above posts will become vacant at the AGM though there is a proviso that the current incumbents may remain another year if there are no other suitable candidates. This note is to seek nominations from members to fill these posts. According to the terms of the constitution, nominations should be submitted to the secretary not later than seven days before the AGM (i.e. by 26th September).

### Talks, events and outings

The club desperately needs one or more organisers. Please offer help if you can.

### Wintering sawbill survey 2013/14

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to last winter's Goosander and Red-breasted Merganser survey. The main river systems of the county were well covered by an army of 87 observers and records from around 100 still waters and most of the Cumbrian coastline have been made available by Wetland Bird Survey counters.

Recording forms from a few river sections remain to be submitted and it would be much appreciated if



Red Breasted Merganser, River Esk near Longtown, Roger Ridley

these could be forwarded as soon as possible.

A preliminary report on the survey will appear in the CBC Newsletter when all the results have been received and collated.

Malcolm Priestley

### Friday 3rd October (AGM): Penrith UR Church 7.30pm

'Whinchats at Geltsdale RSPB'- Stephen Westerberg



Whinchat is a species that has declined in the UK,but has maintained a good population at the Geltsdale reserve.

With the help of Amanda Proud and Martin Ketcher from Hertfordshire and inspired by John Callion, we have been looking in detail at Whinchat on the reserve.

As well as colour-ringing about 500 Whinchats, habitat data has been gathered from around nests. The talk will present some of the information from this work.

### Friday 7th November: Cockermouth UR Church 7.30pm

'Campfield Marsh' - Dave Blackledge

An update on developments at Campfield Marsh.

**Friday 6th Feb 2015: Penrith UR Church 7.30pm** 'Northumbrian County Atlas 2007 - 2011' - *Tim Dean* A fascinating preview of the results of Northumbrian Atlas fieldwork. Comparisons with previous Atlases and breeding and wintering abundance will no doubt illuminate both marked contrasts as well as echoes of the Cumbrian experience.



# Monday 9th March 2015: with Kendal NHS Friend's Meeting House Stramongate 7.30pm

'Swifts' - *Tanya and Edmund Hoare* More information in the next newsletter.

Don't forget that all our talks are free to non-members so please help to boost attendance by telling friends, acquaintances and even relatives.

### An inland Black Guillemot - with a twist in the tale



Black Guillemot, Talkin Tarn, Nick Franklin

Friday the 20th of December, 2013, was a thoroughly uninspiring day, damp, dull and cold, but I was off work and the dog needed a walk somewhere. The most interesting thing I could come up with was to head for Talkin Tarn to see if there were any Brambling about. I'm glad I did.

There was little to see as I walked round the Tarn as it was just too damp and cold, but about three-quarters of the way round I saw a water bird dive in front of me and, as it popped up again, I had one of those moments of sheer disbelief. It was a Black Guillemot, one of the most unlikely birds I would ever expect here. The problem now was that it was so dull and dreary I had made a classic schoolboy error, and left my camera in the car. At least it was in the car I thought, not at home, so a quick march took me back to it, where I swapped the dog for the camera and jogged back to the Tarn side.

The Guillemot was still there, diving regularly and trying to feed. It looked generally happy so I spent half an hour taking numerous shots, then headed home and reported it to the Birding Cumbria group online, where several subsequent messages suggested that this was a very odd occurrence.

It was reported as not present on the tarn on Saturday so I was surprised to relocate it on Sunday, the 22nd December, when I was on a family walk. The Sunday was a much brighter day and so I set about taking some better photos, as the Guillemot was now closer in.

### An inland Black Guillemot - with a twist in the tale



Black Guillemot, Talkin Tarn, Nick Franklin

It did not, however, look as well as it had two days previously - not diving and sitting low in the water with its eyes shut some of the time. There were also a lot more people present as it was a Sunday, so the Guillemot was regularly moving out into the middle of the Tarn where it became almost invisible, sitting low in the water. This made me wonder if this was why it had been reported as not present the previous day.

It being a Sunday there were also a few interested people present, and I was able to point the bird out to a couple of bird watchers. I also texted a few friends, one of whom, Darren Robson, fortunately came out and also got some excellent photos.

When I returned home that afternoon I started to do some research into inland Black Guillemot records, and had trouble finding any. I then received an email from Lee Evans saying that, as far as he knew, there had never been an inland British record, though it was later suggested that there may have be an old record from near Leighton Moss. This made me wonder about different races of Black Guillemot, and if this bird was inland because it was not the normal British race. I had already concluded that the bird was a first winter bird due to the barring on the wing patch, but was surprised to see no dark cap to the head or dark streaking to the neck, and by how white the bird looked overall. My research indicated five different races of Black Guillemot but I could not find any images of the other races. The only clue to anything more unusual was in one of my identification handbooks which stated that the Mandtii race had much more white on its upper parts and scapulars. But, with a busy Christmas ahead with both family and work, I did not have time to follow it up any further.

It was with great interest then that my attention was drawn to the edition of Birding World that came out in the middle of January, which had one of Darren Robson's photographs of the Guillemot with the comment underneath:

"This individual shows characteristics of the high Arctic form mandtii previously unrecorded in Britain. In addition to the pale brown tips to the wing coverts and much reduced dark markings in the scapulars, note the virtually pure white head, nape, mantle and rump."

Shortly afterwards in their winter round-up, Rare Bird Alert commented:

"...but in many ways the absolute star at the top of the tree was Britain's first record of Mandt's Black Guillemot ~ seen inland in Cumbria at Talkin Tarn on December 20th-22nd.

Once regarded, back in the days of yore, as a separate species by the BOURC, this super looking snowy-headed bird would have posed an interesting insurance conundrum for some but we should marvel at the distance travelled by this distinctive form and wonder 'what have we missed?'".

Given that most of these birds appeared three or four weeks ago, it feels as though, if (and that's a mighty big "if"), something even more stellar than the birds listed above did come along then maybe we've actually missed the boat already - it feels as though we were due another crazy Alcid or similar, indeed there's the faintest whiff of similarity between the Swiss Long-billed Murrelet and the Cumbrian Mandt's Black Guillemot record."

These comments obviously sparked my interest, particularly the "previously unrecorded in Britain" comment, and I engaged in an email conversation with Nigel Hudson, the secretary of the BBRC, which has led to the record being submitted for consideration as the first Black Guillemot of the Mantii race seen in Britain.

Nick Franklin

### **Recent research into understanding Ring Ouzel declines**



Male Ring Ouzel in Glen Clunie (Andrew Hay, RSPB Images)

### Ring Ouzel taxonomy, distribution and status

The Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* breeds in mountainous regions throughout northern and central Europe, as far east as south-west Asia, and three races are recognised (redlistmap). The nominate race *T. t. torquatus* breeds in the UK and Scandinavia and winters in southern Spain and north-west Africa, especially in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco and Algeria. The central and southern European race, *T. t. alpestris,* breeds in mountainous regions of continental Europe and winters in the south of the breeding range or in north-west Africa, thus largely overlapping the winter range of the nominate race. Finally, the Turkmenistan race, *T. t. amicorum,* breeds in the far south-west of Asia, and is thought to winter in Iran and southern Turkmeniya (Cramp 1988, Janiga & Poxton 1997).

The British breeding population of Ring Ouzels has been in long-term decline. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were widespread, with breeding records from Orkney in the north to Surrey, Kent and Essex in the south (Holloway 1996). The decline appears to have begun in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Baxter & Rintoul (1953) reporting large decreases in parts of Scotland during the previous 30 years, and by the early 1970s breeding had ceased in southern England. Serious declines in the British breeding 10-km range of 27% and 44% were recorded between 1968-72 and 1988-91, and 1968-72 and 2007-11, respectively (Sharrock 1976, Gibbons *et al.* 1993, Balmer *et al.* 2013). The first national survey in 1999 estimated the UK population at 6157-7549 pairs, with further range contractions and a likely 58% decline in population size since 1988-91 (Wotton *et al.* 2002). This led to Ring Ouzels being red-listed in the Birds of Conservation Concern, and made a priority Biodiversity Action Plan species, in the UK (Gregory *et al.* 2002, ukbap).

Provisional results from the second national survey suggest that the British population suffered a further 29% decline between 1999 and 2012, and may now number as few as 5,000 pairs (Simon Wotton pers. comm.). These results thus support the consistent large declines reported by local studies throughout Britain (Sim *et al.* 2010).

Breeding populations in Scandinavia and central and southern Europe are generally considered to be stable, but comprehensive monitoring data are lacking from many areas (Tucker & Heath 1994, Janinga & Poxton 1997, BirdLife International 2004). However, in parts of Switzerland recent range contraction to higher altitudes has been recorded, and this has been linked to warmer summers (*Schmid et al. 1998, Mattes et al. 2005*). This effect is predicted to continue, with a climate-induced decrease in suitable habitat shifting the predicted Ring Ouzel range by up to 440m higher by 2070 (von dem Bussche *et al.* 2008).

### Ecology and demography of Ring Ouzels

In Britain the Ring Ouzel is primarily a bird of the uplands, where it breeds mainly in steep sided valleys, crags and gullies, from near sea level in the far north of Scotland up to 1200m in the Cairngorms (Cramp 1988, Gibbons *et al.* 1993, Rollie 2007). Breeding begins in mid-April and continues through to mid-July, with two broods common, and nests are located on or close to the ground in vegetation (typically in Heather *Calluna vulgaris*), in a crevice, or rarely in a tree (Flegg & Glue 1975, Poxton 1986, Appleyard 1994, Arthur & White 2001, Burfield 2002a, Sim *et al.* 2008). Average clutch and fledged brood sizes range between 3.9 and 4.2, and 3.5 and 3.8, respectively (Flegg & Glue 1975, Durman 1977, Poxton 1986, Tyler & Green 1994, Appleyard 1994, Arthur & White 2001, Burfield 2002a, Sim *et al.* 2011). Nestlings are fed an invertebrate diet consisting mainly of earthworms and beetles (Burfield 2002a).

A detailed study of the demography of Ring Ouzels was carried out in Glen Clunie, near Braemar, Aberdeenshire during 1998-2009 (Sim *et al.* 2011). Using 12-years of comprehensive demographic data from this declining Ring Ouzel population, the mean, variance and covariance in all major demographic rates, and estimated potential and realised demographic contributions to population growth rate ( $\lambda$ ) were measured. Population size decreased from 39 to 13 breeding pairs (-67%) and mean  $\lambda$  was 0.91 during 1998-2009. This decrease did not reflect a substantial concurrent decrease in any single key demographic rate, but reflected varying combinations of demographic rates that consistently produced  $\lambda < 1$ .

Basic prospective elasticity analysis (i.e. how sensitive  $\lambda$  was to the various demographic rates) indicated that  $\lambda$  was most elastic to adult survival. In contrast, integrated elasticity analysis (which accounts for estimated demographic covariance between rates), indicated that  $\lambda$  was most sensitive to early-brood first-year survival. Retrospective decomposition of variance (i.e. how past variability in the rates affected  $\lambda$ ) suggested that first-year survival contributed most to observed variation in  $\lambda$ . However, demographic comparison with other related species suggested that adult survival, but not reproductive success or post-fledging survival, averaged lower than expected throughout the 12-year study.

These data demonstrate that multiple approaches, including comprehensive demographic and comparative analyses and due consideration of conflicting answers, may be necessary to accurately diagnose the demographic basis of population change. They do, however, highlight the potential for first-year survival, in particular during the first five weeks post-fledging when most mortality occurred, to be a major factor influencing  $\lambda$  in this study population.



The individual colour ringing of Ring Ouzels enabled the accurate estimation of survival rates (Andrew Hay, RSPB Images)

This led to a focus on the foraging ecology, and factors influencing the survival, of juvenile Ring Ouzels during the post-fledging phase of the life cycle. Key attributes of foraging plots selected by radio-tagged juvenile Ring Ouzels were compared with those on control plots (representing the broad habitat types selected by foraging juveniles) during 2007-08 (Sim *et al.* 2013a). A shift was detected from foraging on invertebrates in grass-rich plots during June to mid-July, to foraging mainly on moorland berries in higher-altitude, heather-rich, plots during mid-July to early-September.

Juveniles selected invertebrate foraging plots with low soil acidity, and increasingly selected plots with high earthworm (an important food) biomass and grass cover, but low grass and all vegetation height, as the season progressed. In contrast, earthworm biomass and grass cover remained constant, and grass and all vegetation height increased on control plots. Juveniles selected berry foraging plots with higher abundance of ripe Bilberries and Crowberries than found on control plots. Ring Ouzels thus appear to require access to short, grass- and invertebrate-rich, habitat during early summer, and taller, heather-dominated and berry-rich areas in late summer.

We radio-tracked 110 juvenile Ring Ouzels to test hypotheses regarding the timing and causes of post-fledging mortality, and to quantify the timing and magnitude of local movements and dispersal (Sim *et al.* 2013b). Juveniles fledged from early season broods had higher survival during each four-day period over 116 days post fledging (0.952  $\pm$  0.011 SE) than juveniles fledged from late season broods (0.837  $\pm$  0.021 SE). Most mortality occurred within the first five weeks post-fledging, and predation by raptors and mammals was the main apparent cause of mortality, accounting for 59% and 27% of deaths, respectively. Juveniles travelled increasing distances from their nests with time after fledging, and those fledged early in the season dispersed outside the study area at significantly older ages than those fledged late in the season.

After breeding adults undergo a complete, and juveniles a partial, moult, and during this period they become very elusive (Cramp 1988). Most UK breeders apparently migrate through France and Spain, to arrive on the main wintering grounds in north Africa from mid-October (Burfield 2002b). However, we have little idea as to how they make this migration (e.g. lots of small 'hops' or fewer, larger, ones), and what their main food sources are on their trip south in autumn, and north in spring. However, we do know that winter diet is dominated by Juniper berries, especially those of Prickly Juniper *Juniperus oxycedrus* or Phoenician Juniper *J.phoenicea* (Arthur *et al.* 2000, Ellis 2003, Ryall & Briggs 2006). In addition, ouzels appear to require easy access to water sources, since these juniper berries are very dry, and thus difficult to digest.

### Supplementary feeding experiment

The demographic analysis detailed above indicated that population growth rate ( $\lambda$ ) was most sensitive to first-year survival, which also contributed most to observed variation in  $\lambda$  (Sim *et al.* 2011). Additionally, most (63-68%) estimated first-year mortality occurred in the first five weeks post-fledging, indicating that low juvenile survival through this specific period may substantially affect  $\lambda$  (Sim *et al.* 2011). Juvenile survival was higher for individuals fledging from broods earlier in the season, although there was also support for models which included a positive effect of body condition on post-fledging survival (Sim *et al.* 2013b). In addition, early season brood size at fledging in successful nests showed a near-significant linear decrease during 1998-2009 (Sim *et al.* 2011). Taken together, these facts suggested that poor food supply to nestlings may have reduced survival from hatching to fledging, and during the subsequent post-fledging period.



Male Ring Ouzel with food for nestlings (Andrew Hay, RSPB Images).

We tested this hypothesis by carrying out a supplementary feeding experiment in Glen Clunie during 2011-12 (Sim *et al.* in prep.). In 2011, half the Ring Ouzel pairs were supplied with mealworms, with the other half left unfed. In 2012, we swapped the treatment such that those pairs which received food in 2011 were left unfed, and those that were unfed in 2011 were provided with mealworms in 2012. We found that feeding had no detectable effect on most measures of reproductive success, although females were apparently more likely to make late breeding attempts if they received supplementary food for longer during their early breeding attempts. Fed nestlings had higher body condition. However, fed nestlings were estimated to have only a 1% higher probability of survival to 100 days postfledging (0.334) than unfed nestlings (0.324). We conclude that the supply of invertebrate food sources for nestlings was not a major limiting factor for Ring Ouzels in our study area during the two-year study period.

### **Trial habitat management**

So, what is the best way to halt, and eventually reverse, the serious Ring Ouzel population declines observed? We are still uncertain if the main problems for this species lie on the breeding grounds, on migration or in the

### Recent research into understanding Ring Ouzel declines



RSPB's Geltsdale reserve, where management trials aimed at encouraging Ring Ouzels to return and breed will begin in 2014

wintering areas. However, even if we found evidence that the limiting factors are occurring in France, Spain or Morocco, we are unlikely to be able to implement conservation action in these countries in the near future due to political and other issues. Thus, the most pragmatic approach would appear to be to try to improve Ring Ouzel productivity and survival during the period when they are in this country.

Thus, during 2014-16 we will carry out habitat management trials on two RSPB reserves (Geltsdale and Dove Stone) in north England. Both these reserves have valleys where Ring Ouzel numbers have been stable in recent years, at around 8-10 pairs, and nearby valleys where numbers have declined from 7-8 pairs in the past down to only 1 or 2 pairs in recent years. Our aim is to manage the habitat in the valleys where Ring Ouzels have declined, to encourage them to return to their former numbers, and to breed successfully. The valleys where numbers have remained stable will act as experimental 'controls', as a check that populations have not increased or

decreased locally for reasons other than the trial management. The trial management will mainly involve altering livestock grazing pressure, to produce habitat mosaics that provide abundant foraging and breeding habitat, as well as providing cover from predators.

#### Future work

Although we have learnt a lot about the life-history of Ring Ouzels in recent years, we still need to discover more about the ecology of the species, especially on migration routes and in wintering areas. Thus, in summer 2013, we fitted 10 geolocators to adult Ring Ouzels in Glen Clunie. These lightweight devices enable the approximate position of birds to be estimated throughout the year, providing they can be recaptured and the data downloaded when they return to their place of tagging in the following summer.



Male Ring Ouzel fitted with geolocator (Innes Sim)

Thus, we will return to Glen Clunie in 2014 and attempt to retrap any adults that return carrying geolocators. In the longer term, it seems likely that more accurate tracking devices (e.g. satellite tags) will become sufficiently small to be fitted to birds the size of Ring Ouzels. If so, we will then be able to track them with great accuracy (to at least the nearest 100m) continuously throughout the year, enabling us to identify key areas used during migration and in the winter quarters. This information should help us to work out key 'pinch points' in the life history of Ring Ouzels, and to promote conservation measures aimed at resolving these problems.

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Innes Sim, RSPB Centre for Conservation Science, RSPB Scotland, 2 Lochside View, Edinburgh Park, Edinburgh, EH12 9DH

### Arrival dates 2014



Wood Warbler, Miltonrigg, Chris Hind

Overleaf are listed the earliest arrival dates for 2014, with locations, of the commoner summer migrants as reported at the time of writing. In some cases (e.g. Common Sandpiper, Blackcap and Chiffchaff) it is difficult to distinguish genuine migrants from overwintering birds so a bit of informed guesswork has been employed.



Pied Flycatcher, Powter Howe, Steve Dutton

Garden Warbler, Derwent Water, Dave Piercy

Species	Location	Date
Common Sandpiper	River Bela	11 <sup>th</sup> April
Sandwich Tern	Walney	23 <sup>rd</sup> March
Common Tern	Walney	26 <sup>th</sup> April
Arctic Tern	Walney	22 <sup>nd</sup> April
Little Tern	Hodbarrow	18 <sup>th</sup> April
Cuckoo	Walney	14 <sup>th</sup> April
Swift	Penrith	28 <sup>th</sup> April
Sand Martin	Tindale Tarn	9 <sup>th</sup> March
Swallow	Haverthwaite	29 <sup>th</sup> March
House Martin	Arnside & Killington	13 <sup>th</sup> April
Tree Pipit	Meathop Moss	16 <sup>th</sup> April
Yellow Wagtail	Haverigg and Longtown	18 <sup>th</sup> April
Redstart	Sedbergh	11 <sup>th</sup> April
Whinchat	Skinburness	17 <sup>th</sup> April
Wheatear	Mallerstang	3 <sup>rd</sup> March
Ring Ouzel	Northern Fells	25 <sup>th</sup> March
Grasshopper Warbler	Kendal	11 <sup>th</sup> April
Sedge Warbler	Campfield Marsh	11 <sup>th</sup> April
Reed Warbler	Mere Tarn	18 <sup>th</sup> April
Lesser Whitethroat	Rampside	14 <sup>rd</sup> April
Whitethroat	Lowick Common	15 <sup>th</sup> April
Garden Warbler	Derwent Water	23 <sup>rd</sup> April
Blackcap	Borrowdale & Waterside	31 <sup>st</sup> March
Wood Warbler	Upper Greta Valley	25 <sup>th</sup> April
Chiffchaff	Rockcliffe & Sizergh Castle	8 <sup>th</sup> March
Willow Warbler	Bowness-on-Solway	31 <sup>st</sup> March
Spotted Flycatcher	Sedbergh	9 <sup>th</sup> May
Pied Flycatcher	Borrowdale	12 <sup>th</sup> April

The period covered is March to May 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

Whooper Swan numbers on the Inner Solway generally declined during March but still included 74 Wedholme Flow near while passage birds in March included a total of 135 past Walney, 50 on the Kent Estuary and 20+ on Windermere followed on the Leven bv 49 Estuary at Greenodd in April. The odd bird lingered to late May at



Eurasian White-fronted Goose, Whitrigg, Darren Robson

sites such as Old Sandsfield and Longtown.

Numbers of **Pink-footed Geese** remained high on the Inner Solway in March and April, accompanied by four **White-fronted Geese** with adult and firstwinter birds of both **Greenland** and **European** races in the Whitrigg area. Some 13000 **Barnacle Geese** lingered on Rockcliffe Marsh into May. The Walney/Rampside **Brent Goose** flock still numbered 60 dark and 153 lightbellied in March and up to 136 pale-bellied birds in April, with three palebellied and two dark-bellied lingering for much of May. Meanwhile, the adult



Greenland White-fronted Goose, Kirkbride, Darren Robson

**Black Brant** continued to associate with the dark-bellieds, usually at Roa Island to at least 1st April. Elsewhere, a palebellied **Brent Goose** was seen at Flookburgh on 29th April.

Up to three **Garganey**, two drakes and a duck, lingered on the Inner Solway at North Plain from 11th April into May



Garganey, North Plain, Darren Robson

while elsewhere there was a drake at Ulpha Meadows on 21st April, a pair visited a small pond near Nethertown on 27th April and, in May, single drakes were at Mere Tarn on 7th and Hodbarrow on 15th. **Scaup** included up to eight on the lagoon at Hodbarrow while the drake lingered on Longlands Lake. **Long-tailed Ducks** were limited to the long-staying female at South Walney which remained to 10th April and singles on the Leven Estuary on 10th April and at Watchtree N.R. on 28th April.

**Common Scoters** at coastal sites included a maximum 233 at Walney in March and 135 off Bowness-on-Solway in May though these totals were overshadowed by a strong northbound passage off Walney in May which peaked at 1215. Meanwhile inland birds were limited to a first-winter drake on Talkin Tarn. A **Velvet Scoter** at Walney on 4th March was followed by two there on 7th May and, more unusually, one off Bowness-on-Solway on 4th May. The two **Smew**, a male and a redhead, remained on Derwent Water to 4th March with the redhead still present on 9th.

### Divers to grebes

**Red-throated Diver** totals at coastal locations included 16 off Bowness-on-Solway and 10 at Walney in March; 40 off Bowness-on-Solway, 34 at Walney and 25 at Silecroft in April and 30 off Bowness-on-Solway and 26 at Walney in May. The only **Black-throated Diver** was seen off Silecroft on 18th April. **Great Northern Diver** sightings consisted of a single at Walney on 2nd April followed in May by two off Nethertown on 10th and one at Silecroft on 7th.

A **Blue Fulmar** passed Walney on 21st March. **Manx Shearwater** totals were unspectacular while **Gannets** included site maxima of 128 at Walney and 30 at Bowness-on-Solway. Up to four **Shags** were off Walney Island throughout and singles were at Parton in March and Nethertown in May. At least one **Bittern** remained at Siddick Pond in early March whilst, much more unusually, one was seen at Farleton View Fishery near Milnthorpe on 28th March. A **Great White Egret** was found on the Duddon Estuary at Askam-on-Furness on 28th May while **Little Egrets** peaked at 12 on Walney Island, 11 on the Kent Estuary, eight in the Lyth Valley, five on the Inner Solway, four on the Leven Estuary and two on the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass. One **Slavonian Grebe** remained in residence at Hodbarrow to 9th March.

### Raptors to waders

A handful of Red Kites were reported from widely scattered locations. Two early Marsh Harriers appeared at Campfield Marsh on 21st March with singles there on 2nd and 16th May while an individual lingered at Walney from 25th to 26th April and there were several sightings around the Kent estuary of birds wandering across the boundary from county Leighton Moss.



Osprey, Bassenthwaite, Tony Marsh

At Bassenthwaite Lake, the **Ospreys** returned to breed for another year, incubation went smoothly and the first egg hatched on 30th May. News was also released that a pair was nesting at Foulshaw Moss where incubation also proceeded without incident. Meanwhile, passage birds were observed at Silloth, Longtown, Windermere and Walney in late March followed by further sightings at Carlisle airport, Longtown, Bowness-on-Solway and Winderemere in April and May. A **Hobby** appeared at Campfield on 19th May.



Whimbrel, Drumburgh, Darren Robson

A Common Crane flew east over Walney Island on 30th April. An Avocet at Carr Beds on 19th April was followed by two alongside the Kent Estuary on 21st. Trips of up to six Dotterel were observed at several felltop sites. In April Little Ringed and May. **Plovers** were largely restricted to known or potential breeding sites. Passage Whimbrel

included 81 at Walney, 45 at Allonby, 31 on the Irt estuary, 24 at Campfield Marsh, 23 in the Lyth Valley and 18 at Nethertown. **Black-tailed Godwit** numbers increased in April and included 32 on the Leven Estuary, 22 at Wedholme Flow and 18 at Campfield Marsh followed in May by an exceptional 154 near Arnside. **Ruff** were limited to three at Campfield Marsh and singles on Heversham Moss and at Walney.

A winter plumage **Curlew Sandpiper** at Bowness-on-Solway on 19th April was followed by one in summer plumage at the same site on 16th May and the spring's only **Little Stint** on 26th May. Lingering **Purple Sandpipers** comprised 25 at Workington and 10 at Walney in March before numbers dwindled in April. Two **Wood Sandpipers** visited North Plain Farm on 4th May. **Greenshank** were, as usual, largely restricted to Walney where monthly maxima comprised 10 in March, 'several' in April and a single in May. Elsewhere, a single passage bird appeared at North Plain, Reports of **Jack Snipe** consisted of three at Kents Bank and singles at Walney, Wedholme Flow, Lowca and Weddicar. Other wader counts in the period included 8000 **Knot** at Walney in March.



Pomarine Skuas, Bowness-on-Solway, Darren Robson

### Skuas to gulls

An early **Arctic Skua** appeared off Silloth on 23rd March. Solway skua passage began promptly on 6th April with an **Arctic** and a **Great** but by the

### Recent reports

end of the month totals were little short of abysmal with just one **Pomarine**, eight **Arctic** and eight **Great** logged. Passage continued to be disappointing during May with monthly totals of just 37 **Pomarine**, 18 **Arctic**, 26 **Great** and nine **Long-tailed**. Elsewhere, Walney logged a single **Great Skua** and a total of five **Arctic Skuas** in April followed by totals of four **Pomarine** and 14 **Arctics** in May while Nethertown produced a **Pomarine** and a **Great** in May and a couple of **Arctics** were seen over the Duddon estuary.

Single **Puffins** were noted off Walney on 11th and 25th May. Away from St Bees, **Black Guillemots** were limited to singles at Walney in April and Workington in May. Walney logged daily peaks of 101 **Guillemots** and 51 **Razorbills** in April.



Black Tern, Longtown, Darren Robson

A White-winged Black Tern that flew east past Walney Island on 25th May was the first in the county since 2001. A mini influx of **Black Terns** in late April produced three on the Kent Estuary, two past Allonby and a single at Longtown though May passage was singularly disappointing with a meagre two on the River Esk at Longtown on 18th. **Arctic Tern** passage was also almost non-existent, 52 past Walney being by far the largest count.

### Recent reports



Little Gull and Black Terns, Longtown, Nick Franklin

**Kittiwakes** included site maxima of 210 at Bowness-on-Solway in March. 150 at Bowness-on-Solway and 55 at Walney in April and 120 off Bowness-on-Solway in May. **Mediterranean Gull** sightings in March comprised four, two first-winters, a second-winter and an adult, at Flimby, three adults, including 'Stumpy', at Workington and an adult at Parton while April sightings were limited to two, an adult (not 'Stumpy') and a first-year bird, at Workington. None were seen in May. **Little Gulls** in March were limited to three at Walney on 19th followed in April by singles inland at Talkin Tarn and Longtown and in May by up to five on the River Esk at Longtown, a total of three off Bowness-on-Solway and a single at Hodbarrow. A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was seen flying south near Maryport on 21st March.

### Corvids to buntings

Hooded Crows comprised singles at Walney, the Irt Estuary, St Bees Head and Burneside. The near presumed Siberian Chiffchaff lingered around the water treatment works at Dalston during March. Α Black Redstart frequented a garden at Holme on at least 8th March. A Blue-headed was found Waqtail on flooded fields near Siddick sewage works on 19th April. An early White Waqtail



Wheatear, Steve Dutton

appeared on the Furness coast at Newbiggin on 5th March though no particularly high numbers were reported thereafter.

Diurnal migration at Walney steadily increased through March and was dominated by **Meadow Pipits** with a peak day count of 1505 on 31st. Migration there in April was generally low key with two **Ring Ouzels** and daily maxima that included 90 **Willow Warblers** and 76 **Wheatears**. It remained generally poor during May with two **Yellow Wagtails**, a **Redstart** and three **Whinchats** the pick amongst a daily peak of 26 **Wheatears**.



Yellow Wagtail, near Longtown, Roger Ridley

**Twite** flocks dwindled away though 50 were still to be found at Walney in March. Up to six **Hawfinches** continued to frequent the Sizergh Castle car park while impressive numbers of **Snow Buntings** were found on some fell tops in March with 35 on Fairfield and 20 on High Street.

As ever, I'm indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list individually. Feel free to send records by e-mail to <u>ian.kinley@btinternet.com</u> **NB** It is important that observers also submit records to the appropriate Regional Recorder at the end of the year. Please see either the latest edition of Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria or the Cumbria Bird Club website www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk for details of how to do so.

lan Kinley

# HAVE YOU SEEN...



# ...A HAWFINCH?

We are trying to learn more about the range and habits of this scarce and declining species to help us conserve them.

We would like any sightings from woods, gardens parks or elsewhere.

Some birds have been colour ringed and have a red ring with two white digits on their left leg. We would like reports of these even if you cannot read the digits.

We want to know where, when, how many and observer name.



PLEASE REPORT ANY SIGHTINGS AND SEND ANY PHOTOS TO robert.pocklington@nationaltrust.org.uk

OR CALL ROB ON 0779 5090539 (South Cumbria Hawfinch Project)











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### Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is September 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 <u>daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk</u>

**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: <a href="mailto:daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk">daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk</a>