

BIRD NEWS
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Twinned with Cumberland Bird Observers Club

New South Wales, Australia

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Club news and announcements

AGM

The AGM will be held at Penrith United Reformed Church on Friday 7th October 2016 at 7.30pm. The business of the AGM is intended to be as brief as possible and will be followed by a talk by Alan Fielding on Golden Eagles.

Vacancies on Council: Secretary, Treasurer, up to two vice-chairmen 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 30th September).

Talks, events and outings

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

CBC indoor meeting programme winter 2016/2017

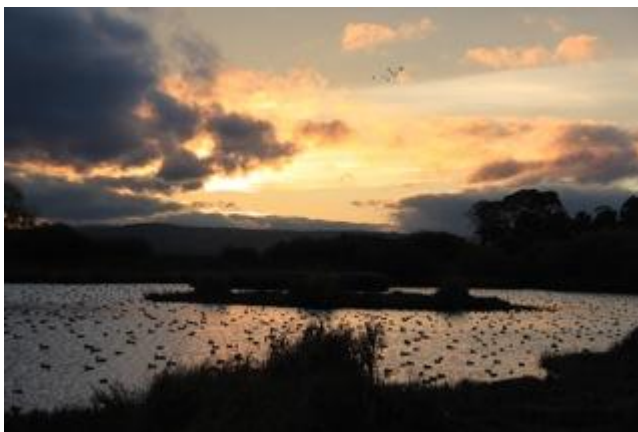
Friday 7th Oct (AGM): Penrith United Reformed Church 7.30pm
'Golden Eagles' – Alan Fielding



CBC indoor meeting programme winter 2016/2017

Alan started as a marine botanist but has been working on birds of prey, particularly Golden Eagles for over 30 years. He has been a scientific advisor to the various Irish bird of prey re-introduction programmes, an expert advisor to a study of the possible impacts of wind farms on Hen Harriers in Ireland and is currently a member of the Scottish Natural Heritage Scientific Advisory Committee Experts Panel. He is also involved in plans to bring more Golden Eagles into Southern Scotland. He is a director of a charity called Highland Renewal, which manages a small, but beautiful estate on the south west tip of the Island of Mull that has its own eagles and Hen Harriers.

In his talk Alan will use extensive photographs to describe the ecology of the Golden Eagle and examine the current threats and opportunities affecting them.



Monday 14th November 2016 Friend's Meeting House

Stramongate 7.30pm Joint with Kendal NHS

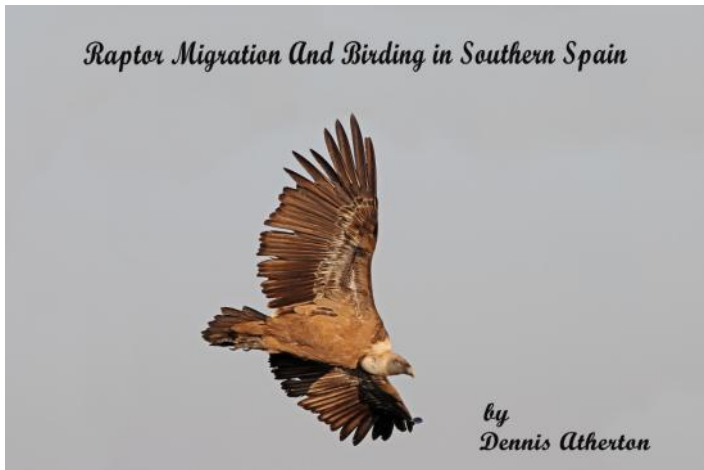
'The RSPB and the Dee Estuary. Past, present and future.' - *Alasdair Grubb*.
A journey through the time the RSPB has spent on the Dee Estuary (Cheshire) from its small acquisition in 1979, through much more acquisition and development of visitor facilities and wildlife spectacle.

Wednesday 11th January 2017: Tullie House 7.15pm

Joint with Carlisle NHS

'Incredible Journeys' - *Brian Morrell* (WWT Caerlaverock)

Thurs 6th April 2017: Marchesi Centre, Windermere 7.30pm Joint with RSPB South Lakeland group.



'Raptor migration in Southern Spain and Gibraltar' – *Denis Atherton*



Redstart, Geltsdale, Adma Moan

Dusky Warbler – a new bird for Walney Island

On 14th May 2016, following a period of moderate to fresh ENE winds, the day dawned bright and sunny with just a light northerly wind. The daily check of the usual sites on the south end of Walney Island had yielded little so, as the wind began to freshen from the WNW, I decided to carry out a late morning check of the sheltered hedgerows along Rakes Lane near Biggar.

The outgoing journey proved uneventful with just the usual breeding species noted, however, at 1220hrs as I started the reciprocal route back a bird called (a “chacking” rattle repeated 5-6 times) from a small Hawthorn bush along the dampest section of the lane before going quiet. Despite the close proximity of the bird it was not visible until after a few minutes it called again and appeared briefly in full view on the side of the bush before flying past me to disappear into an area of brambles a few metres away. A combination of these brief views of a small and noticeably plain brown warbler combined with the call allowed a tentative initial identification of Dusky Warbler to be made. This was soon confirmed when the bird called again, reappeared at close range, and showed well in full view on a bare bramble with a caterpillar in its bill which it preceded to eat before again disappearing back inside the bush. Over the next 50 minutes the bird called on a further eight occasions and was seen five times as it actively flitted from bush to bush across the lane before eventually ending back in the same bush that it was first seen.

I then departed but met up with several local observers and returned at 1350hrs. Upon arrival the bird called immediately on cue from the same bush that I had last seen it. The bird then called and was seen briefly on four further occasions up to 1400hrs. However, thereafter it only called and showed briefly on two further occasions at 1445hrs and 1530hrs as the crowds began to arrive. Although I left the area at 1535hrs the bird still continued to show intermittently for the observers present, however, an early morning visit next day revealed no sign of the bird and it was presumed to have departed overnight.

The Dusky Warbler breeds from Siberia eastwards into central China and Manchuria and winters in northern China and southeast Asia including India. While still a vagrant to the north-west of England the species is not the extreme rarity it once was elsewhere in Britain with annual records, especially during the autumn, from the Northern Isles and along the south and east coasts although the species remains a rare bird in the spring with just a

handful of previous records. This is the second Cumbrian record following the presence of a bird on the mainland at Westfield Point (only c3km to the north east) between 29th October and 1st November 2004.

Colin Raven

Lowgill and Sedbergh Swifts

At Lowgill and Sedbergh fewer Swifts than usual were seen in the first three weeks of May. We believe this may be due to the cold spring and this pattern was observed throughout the country and in Europe. Despite this, all of our Lowgill 14 pairs have returned. Although our first pairs arrived in the nest on May 5th – 8th, others did not come until much later in the month. Two of the three pairs on camera have three chicks each, hatching on June 16th – 18th.

Since 20th May there has been dramatic change in activity, with big increases in the numbers of Swifts - maybe 40+ seen in one view – and in both the numbers and frequency of screaming parties. The 'bangers' too have been exceptionally active, practising their technique and prospecting for future nest sites. At Lowgill we have gained at least one potential new pair that roosts overnight.

Our Sedbergh Community Swift group has continued surveying for natural nest places and has had considerable success in putting up Swift bricks and boxes. Some have been occupied which is remarkable in the first year. This will be better summarised in a later report after the Swifts have left at the end of the season in August.

Tanya & Edmund Hoare

A ringed Goshawk and an unusual goose

On the 14th December 2015 a visitor to Finglandrigg Wood NNR telephoned the Natural England office at Kirkbride to say there was a dead Buzzard lying on the path. Reserve Warden Chris Mawby went to investigate and on finding the bird realized that it was not a Buzzard. He suspected it might be a Goshawk. When he brought it home we checked out its credentials and identified it as a juvenile female Goshawk. To make the find even more interesting it was carrying a BTO ring and a red colour ring with white letters.

The bird was exceptionally thin with very little flesh on the breast bone. It weighed 705 grams which is considerably less than the 1000 + it should have been. We concluded the bird had died of starvation. I commenced investigations to find out where it was ringed and was led to Newcastleton where it was ringed as a single juvenile at a late nest. The BTO recovery form later confirmed that it had been ringed at Tweedenhead, Newcastleton Forest on 9th July 2015.

The corpse was donated to Tullie House museum, but not before it was subjected to an x-ray to look for shot. Fortunately, none was found and the bird was returned to Tullie House. I say fortunately because we were later informed by the RSPB investigations person that if any was found the bird would become evidence of a crime and would have to go to London for forensic examination and then handed into police custody.

Unusual Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhyncus*)

In the book Wildfowl (Steve Madge) he says the Pink-footed Goose is often considered merely a race of Bean Goose. Two races of Bean Geese can be found in the UK - the Taiga race *A. fabalis* and the tundra race *A. rossicus*. Madge also states that there is considerable difference in sizes making field identification very difficult. Generally, though *A. fabalis* is larger than both *rossicus* and Pink-footed Geese. *A. Rossicus* is very similar in size to the Pinkfoot. The Bean geese have a distinctly orange bill band and orange legs. Compared to the pink bill and legs of the Pinkfoot.

I was informed on 16th December 2016 that a Bean Goose had been acquired by a wildfowler at Beamont whilst shooting at Pinkfeet. Aware of my interest I was offered the bird, which duly arrived in January. On first sight the bird certainly had orange legs but the bill band had faded a little and was almost pinkish, although I was assured that it was orange when fresh and had been photographed. I began to have some reservations about the identity when I took some measurements and immediately ruled out *A.fabalis* in size. My attention turned to *A. rossicus* but the main cause to for my doubts was its bill length, which was short of the range for *rossicus* but within the Pinkfoot length (bill tip to culmen).

Watchtree Nature Reserve (winter 2015)

The plumage description as given in BWP also seemed to err more towards Pinkfoot. I decide to contact Larry Griffin at WWT Caerlaverock and a few days later went round with it. I met Brian Morrel, Larry Griffin and a third colleague all of whose initial reactions was Pinkfoot based on the grey colour of the wings and most of the back. However, we checked it out against the books to eventually decided that it was indeed a Pinkfoot with orange legs.

One key feature that I had not observed was the wide, white sub-terminal tail band, whereas the Bean has a narrow band. The books of course all clearly state that a few Pinkfeet do have orange legs and the bill marking may also tend towards orange.

There is no doubt it was not easy even with the bird in the hand as it were! What this bird does reinforce is the considerable difficulty picking out the smaller *rossicus* Bean goose within a flock of Pinkfeet, the main feature being the darker head and neck and more of a brownish cast as opposed to the grey of the Pinkfoot, the white tail band might help at close range if it is visible. The Taiga race *fabalis* is generally easier on size, colour and bill size. The bird has been donated to Tullie House Museum as a reference specimen.

Watchtree Nature Reserve (Notes from winter 2015)

Our wetland areas have been the most interesting during the winter with Teal (max 133), Gadwall 7 to 14, Tufted Duck, Mallard and a pair of Goldeneye regularly present. A Little Grebe was back by early February and by mid-month Coots were back. Mute Swans have been present all winter with at peak seven birds present, but by February they down to four birds. As the month has progressed it has become obvious that they are two pairs and it has been interesting watching them seemingly vying for territory.

We are hoping that this year they will stay to breed. We had a breeding pair for the first seven years and they produced two broods after a very difficult start. The first three broods all died and post mortems indicated that they were having difficulty finding enough food, which combined with a high parasite load proved fatal. My enquiries revealed that this is a common problem for swans breeding on new water bodies. With some supplementary feeding two broods of four and three eventually fledged. Then two subsequent broods died this time because they were carrying very heavy infestations of a parasite that cycles through water snails and waterfowl to complete its life cycle. The male of this pair was an interesting bird as he was carrying a colour ring that had been fitted to him as a cygnet at lake by the M6 south of Lancaster. The female also had a misadventure when she flew into a barbed wire fence and was fortunate to be found by Anne Abbs who

Watchtree Nature Reserve (winter 2015)

took her into care and with her veterinary skills nursed her back to health to release her back to her family a few weeks later. Sadly, she did not come back in 2011 and we deduced she died in the very cold weather of late 2010. The male came back for a couple of years but has not been seen since 2013.

In February I received a very interesting ring control of one of the four cygnets ringed in 2007. It turned out to be a male and he was recaptured at WWT Caerlaverock in February 2015. It is the second time he has been captured at Caerlaverock the first being in 2014.

We feed quite heavily at Watchtree and have a large flock of at least 40 Tree Sparrows eagerly consuming the food from the feeders near the office and in the wetlands. There have been a few Yellowhammers and Greenfinch visiting the feeders too. We had quite a large flock of Goldfinch in the autumn but they went elsewhere and over winter we have had just occasional sightings. Lesser Redpolls have also been quite scarce. I mention these two species because they have provided some very interesting ringing controls. The first was a Lesser Redpoll that we ringed as a 3J on 17th July 2013 possibly from a nest on site, it was recaptured by a ringer on 18th March 2015 at Sourbrodt, Leige, Belgium. More recently another we ringed as an adult on 25th July 2015 was controlled by South Notts Ringing Group at Ramsdale Park Golf Centre, Calverton Notts on 8th December 2015.

On the 7th December and not that far away at Creswell Crags in Derbyshire the Sorby Breck Ringing Group controlled a Goldfinch that we had ringed as a juvenile on 4th September 2013. Goldfinch and Lesser Redpoll are perhaps our most controlled species.

A bird causing us some interest at the moment is Nuthatch, we have had them before occasionally but we now have two and they seem to be a pair. Liz Still heard the male displaying only the other day. There are a number of pairs established in nearby Finglandrigg Wood NNR for well over ten years now.

The Blue and Great Tits are around in good numbers as are Coal Tits. Coal Tits seemed to have a good breeding season last year but Blue and Great Tits struggled a bit and the latter certainly laid fewer eggs on average and several of my nests also contained addled eggs. Despite re-spacing several of the nest boxes in Pond Wood the Stoat still managed to get into four broods all quite close to fledging. One bird I am not hearing a lot of at the moment is Wren. They seem very quiet and I hope it is not for lack of them, we shall soon find out. Great Tits, Robins, Skylarks and Song Thrush are all

singing now and as we move into March there should be a good dawn chorus within the next week or two.

Two Barn Owls, possibly a pair, have been seen hunting regularly during the day, often as early as mid-day to add to the large number of daytime hunting

records I have received since mid-December as recorder for Carlisle Natural History Society. It is quite unprecedented and I do not think it is that we have just become better at recording. Last spring, we also had our first breeding Tawny Owls, not one but two pair in the boxes we have provided. One pair reared three and the other two chicks. Sadly, we know that at least one chick died as its remains were found not far from the nest a couple of weeks after it had left the nest box.



Nuthatch, Ashness Woods, Tony Marsh

Watchtree provides some excellent birding and I rarely have a list less than 25 species on any visit, even in winter. The feeding clearly plays an important part of keeping birds on site. It enables any visitor to see our birds and I believe encourages a wider interest in birds amongst the many non-birders in our midst. Sadly, to my mind it is indicative of the general countryside much impoverished of food resources for wintering birds, especially the seed eaters. On a few farms the wild bird food crops have helped.

I use BTO Birdtrack for my recording and would encourage you all to put your records in. The app can be downloaded to any phone and is a really handy feature to instantly record your sighting complete with an accurate map reference, time and date. Even if you do not have a signal it will hold the record until you get a connection.

Frank Mawby

Hen Harriers and driven grouse shooting



Hen Harrier, Gordon Yates

Hen Harriers and driven grouse shooting

I have been involved with monitoring and protection of Hen Harriers in various parts of the county for around ten years. This has brought me uncomfortably close to the activities on the intensively managed grouse moors around Geltsdale. When I read Mark Avery's book "Inglorious" I understood a lot more about this 'sport'. Maybe not everyone has the time to read the book – so when Mark offered to write a piece for the Newsletter it seemed a good way of getting the message over. So here it is –

Chris Hind

My grouse with grouse shooting by Dr Mark Avery

Driven grouse shooting is an unsporting and pointless sport that damages the ecology of our hills and depends on illegal killing of protected wildlife. Some say birdwatching is an odd hobby, but compare it with driven grouse shooting and we all seem completely normal. In driven grouse shooting, a line of people with shotguns wait for a line of people with flags and whistles to drive Red Grouse past them so that they can shoot at them as they fly over. There is no hunting involved in this – it's merely using wildlife as living

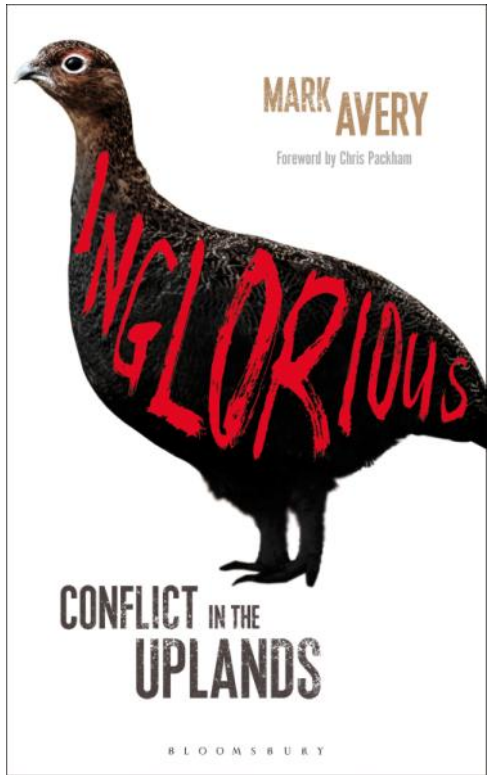
targets. An individual may pay upwards of £5,000 for a day of such 'sport'.

The record 'bag' for a day of such shooting is 2929 birds, shot by eight guns in the Trough of Bowland in Lancashire on 12 August 1915. That's over 350 birds/gun that day. Modern bags are approaching such levels again.

To generate such high densities of Red Grouse, to justify such high prices; heather moorland is burned into a patchwork of long and short vegetation; Foxes, Stoats, Carrion Crows etc are killed in large numbers; Mountain Hares are killed off too (because they carry a tick which can transmit a virus to the grouse); the moorland is drained and medicated grit is provided to kill intestinal worms.

Red Grouse are not reared and released (like Pheasants), but driven grouse shooting depends on intensive management of the prey, their predators and their habitat. Many raptors are illegally killed because they are unsporting enough to include Red Grouse in their diet, eg Golden Eagle, Goshawk, Peregrine and Hen Harrier. This year is a survey year for Hen Harrier – the last, in 2010, found c650 UK pairs whereas the science shows that there should be c2600 pairs. English uplands should hold around 300 of those 2600 pairs, and yet in recent years, breeding numbers have rarely reached double figures.

A scientific study on a grouse moor in Scotland in the 1990s showed that when birds of prey are properly protected, as the law requires, then their numbers will rise and they can remove much of the 'shootable surplus' of birds on which driven grouse shooting depends. There is a real conflict, you can't have protection of birds of prey and massive grouse bags. You have to choose! What is your choice?



Hen Harriers and driven grouse shooting

The grouse shooters say that it's only a few bad apples that kill raptors, but they don't deny the massive impacts that bad apples (I believe there are more than a few) have on protected wildlife. So you do have to choose whether you want an unsporting sport to continue or whether you want the legal protection given to birds of prey to be real. I choose legality and birds of prey over criminality and a pointless 'sport'!

Grouse shooters contend that other ground-nesting birds benefit from grouse moor management (some do, it's true, but not all), that the hills would be covered with conifers, sheep and windfarms if grouse shooting were stopped (they wouldn't – it's environmental legislation that controls these activities not grouse shooters) and that all those people paying for grouse shooting are delivering wealth to the economy (economists say the figures are greatly inflated and do not take everything into account anyway). You must choose who you believe.

All that intensive management for grouse, the burning and the drainage, have other important ecological impacts. Grouse moors shed water more quickly than moorland not managed for grouse shooting - and this increases flood risks for masses of people downstream, people who never go grouse shooting and have never heard of a Hen Harrier. Greenhouse gas emissions are higher from grouse moors where burning occurs on peatlands; grouse moor management was criticised by the Committee on Climate Change last year. Water companies spend more money on water treatment in catchments dominated by grouse shooting and those costs go to the customer not the grouse shooter. And aquatic biodiversity is lower in watercourses draining managed moorlands too. Intensive grouse moor management that imposes big costs on the rest of society. And so, again, you have to choose – grouse shooting or sustainable uplands?

Over the years of wrestling with these issues my views have hardened. I used to think that grouse shooting was a bit odd but if only we could reduce the moderate levels of wildlife crime then it wasn't a high priority. As time has passed I have realised that our uplands are the scenes of unrelenting wildlife crime, and all for a hobby (sport, pastime) that is enjoyed by the few and which imposes costs on the many.

I've made my choice and it is that we should do away with driven grouse shooting which is why I have launched a number of e-petitions to ban this sport. The current e-petition has far surpassed the total signatures of the previous two and runs until 20 September. If it reaches 100,000 signatures by

then this whole issue will be debated in Parliament and that will flush out the arguments and put them even more strongly in the public domain. If you are keen on wrecked uplands and wildlife crime then please don't sign my e-petition, but if you choose change in the uplands, even if you don't favour a total ban (and I think you should!) then please sign because this is the strongest way you can make your voice heard. It really is your choice!

Sign the e-petition for a debate in parliament here <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/125003>. Cumbria has done very well for signatures already – so thank you! You have both the responsible minister Rory Stewart as MP for Penrith and the Borders, and the LibDem leader Tim Farron MP in your patch and every signature will make these two think harder about the issue. Every signature counts so please give yours now. For more information then check out my blog at www.markavery.info/blog/ and/or read my book *Inglorious – conflict in the uplands* for the 100,000 word version of the case against driven grouse shooting. But thank you for letting me have 1000 words here.

Dr Mark Avery is an author, blogger, birder and campaigner. He worked for the RSPB for 25 years until 2011 and for 13 of them was the RSPB Conservation Director.

Any comments, views for or against Mark's argument are most welcome

Some good news for Hen Harrier?

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cumbria-36638784>

Some notes about behaviour of Little Ringed Plover and Ringed Plover



Ringed Plover, Anglesey, Stephen Mott

I am aware that Ringed Plover are sensitive to disturbance on their breeding grounds and that Little Ringed Plover is a Schedule 1 species and cannot be studied at the nest without a licence. All observations were taken from a distance of a minimum of 200m using a powerful telescope, over

water from an opposite bank.

Antagonistic behaviour of Ringed Plover towards Little Ringed Plover

A single Ringed Plover (RP) was seen to persistently harass two Little Ringed Plovers (LP) for a period of around 30mins on the morning of 12th June 2016. This behaviour is consistent with similar behaviour observed on 12th June 2014 and 18th July 2014. On 16th June 2015 my field-notes read: *"Ringed Plover very aggressive towards the single Little Ringed Plover. There are extended aerial chases and hot pursuits. The LP was rarely allowed to settle or be left alone"*

On June 12th 2016 the Ringed Plover ran at one of the pair of Little Ringed Plovers with head low and body held parallel to the ground. The response of LP was to flee, usually by running away but occasionally with short flights. RP then repeated the same behaviour towards the other of the pair of LP. After several attacks, the two LP took flight to a small island of rocks and mud just offshore. RP did not follow at first. Both LP false-fed and head bobbed, relaxing only when sight lines with RP were lost by boulders, rocks or direction, when real feeding and preening took place.

At this point, the RP flew to the island to resume attacking the other pair, but after a while the ♂ LP left the island and flew back to the main shore. ♀ LP stayed on the rocky island for longer before flying to the shore to join the ♂. The RP flew back to the shore, but not to join the pair of LP. At this point ♂ LP flew a considerable distance up the slope of the shore and commenced heterosexual display behaviour.

Heterosexual display behaviour of Little Ringed Plover

The male Little Ringed Plover flew directly from the foreshore to a point about 100m up the slope on a rocky pebbly mix, with some large boulders and then walked to a nest-scape. He commenced a scraping-display. He sat down, squirmed from side to side and with a fanned tail, moved it from side to side, opening and closing it rather like a Chinese fan. His throat and chest feathers were particularly prominent and he was facing the direction of the female (♀). He did this three times, rather quickly and without a lot of conviction. He then rose, ran away from the scrape and returned to it describing an oval shape with his passage, and repeated the display, facing the same direction. There was no response from the ♀.



Little Ringed Plover, Cumbria, Stephen Mott

At this point, he left the nest scrape and ran off, in a straight line to a pebbly ridge about 20m away. He here repeated the nest scraping display at another scrape. He did this once. After pausing to preen his underwing feathers most fastidiously, he took off and flew back to the foreshore. This may mean that egg-laying has not yet started because she has not yet chosen a nest-scape. However, it is now June 12th and it may be too late for this migratory plover to be successful.

Conclusions.

The antagonistic display of Ringed Plovers may not helpful to a satisfactory outcome for the breeding attempt of Little Ringed Plovers. On previous occasions, chicks have been hatched. (In 2014, chicks were identified). However, if LPs are always being harassed by RPs, then the settled state needed for successful breeding may not occur.

Hypothesis: That Little Ringed Plovers do not breed successfully when in close proximity to Ringed Plovers where numbers of the former are low, because of the antagonistic behaviour. This may explain the late attempt to breed at this site. If the pair of Little Ringed Plovers are constantly being driven away from their nesting territory by the Ringed Plover, there will be an increase risk of predation of their eggs or enforced neglect.

Stephen Mott

Very tall Jackdaw nest



The story is that Jackdaws entered the building through a small vent hole, visible on the right hand photo. Many of the nesting material sticks were too long and they were dropped onto the road outside, hence the pile. The gentleman on the photo above is the property owner, a Mr Michael Royds, he is six feet tall which indicates the height of the nest.

Mike Carrier

Very orange Chaffinch



Chaffinch, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Wheatears in woodland



Wheatear, Burgh, Darren Robson

On April 28th 2016, after a period of unseasonably cold weather with heavy snow settled on the fells, I witnessed a pair of Northern Wheatears feeding on the woodland floor in Guerness Wood at Haweswater. They were at least 300 metres from the woodland edge and feeding under closed canopy Hazel/Ash.

I have never seen this species inside woodland before although at times they will use woodland edge on the fringes of the uplands. On the same day I also noticed a male Stonechat feeding on the woodland floor in association with a Robin in another area of woodland in Naddle Forest.

No doubt these usually open country species were responding to the extreme weather by sheltering and foraging inside woodland.

Spike Webb

Recent reports

The period covered is March 2016 to May 2016. 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*.



Richardson's Cackling Goose, Nick Franklin

Wildfowl

Whooper Swan continued to be present at the same sites as in February – 70 at Walby on 18th March and 30 still there on 27th, the Wampool at Kirkbride had 119 on 24th March but as birds were moving they occurred elsewhere with 143 over Walney on 13th, 51 moving north, high, over Jockey Shield on 14th the same day as 60 were at the north end of Windermere in the morning - they had not been there the previous evening. Ten birds drifted in on the tide past Scargavel Point, Bowness on 26th and 95 were at Rockcliffe Cross on 29th with a further 12 close by on the west side of the M74 at Moss Band, once a regular site. Continuing passage was evidence by 28 birds north over Binsey “just a bit shy of the height of Skiddaw” on 1st April and there were 116 at Kirkbride Airfield on 7th.

The only record of **Tundra Bean Goose** was at Whitrigg on 11th March with **Pink-Footed Geese** (1000) there having been 600 Pink-footed on Wedholme Flow on 3rd, 1500 also at Whitrigg on 12th March and 300 west over North Plain on 21st. 330 passed north at Walney on 9th April and there were still 2000 on Wedholme Flow on 10th and lastly six birds were at Nethertown on the late date of 8th May. A **Richardson's Cackling Goose** was found at Whitrigg on 11th March and was present for two days. The **Brent** flock at Walney numbered 152 on 6th March and there was a **Dark-bellied** at Bowness on Solway on 3rd May. **Barnacle Goose** numbers were high into May with a large build up on Rockcliffe Marsh probably as a result of northerly and easterly winds but by mid month they were down to 2000 and 200 by the month end – a **Snow Goose** was still with them on 5th April.

Tarn Wadeling flood remained at High Hesket and **Shelduck** numbers there increased to 45 on 21st March - also at this site were a pair of **Gadwall** on 17th April. Other Gadwall sightings included seven at Hodbarrow on 16th March and four at Ulpha Meadows on 14th March. A drake, wing tagged **Mandarin** drake was on Windermere on 20th April. The only report of **Garganey** was of a pair at Siddick Pond on 9th May. A drake **Green-winged Teal** was at Hodbarrow on 16th March and one frequented Siddick ponds from 12th to 21st April. 75 **Pintail** were on Wedholme Flow on 7th March. Derwent Water continued to hold **Pochard** with 15 there on 15th March. A single **Scaup** remained at Hodbarrow till at least 16th April and two males and a female were on Derwent Water on 7th April, with a single at Grune Point on 10th March and 16 from Bowness on Solway on 1st May.

450 **Eider** were at Hodbarrow on 11th April and a pair was on the tideway Bowness on 1st May and a number of other dates. 550 **Common Scoter** were off Walney on 29th March and there were still 240 there on 22nd May. Birds were often present on the Solway in April and May with 38 on 6th April and 50 on 3rd of May being of note. Two drake **Velvet Scoter** were with Common Scoter off Walney on 30th March. Two summer plumage drake **Long-tailed Ducks**, one at Walney and the other at Bowness on Solway were present on 17th May. The **Smew** on Derwent Water remained from February and was last reported on 31st March. A drake **Bufflehead** was on Windermere on 30th May, presumably the bird that was at Ullswater and Grune last winter and on the River Wyre at the end of February.

Divers to Cranes

In March there were 112 **Red-throated Diver** off Walney on 19th and numbers at Silecroft peaked at 40 on 23rd with six at Tarn Bay on 23rd and a single at Hodbarrow the same day. Twenty were observed at Bowness on 6th April and 42 were also there on 2nd May. **Black-throated Divers** were recorded from the west coast – with two at Bootle on 16th March and a single at Silloth on 28th.

The **Great Northern Diver** remained on Derwent Water throughout March with two there on 31st and were still present on 21st April. One was at Hodbarrow on 23rd and 25th March. On 7th May four birds were in the Solway off Bowness before moving back west with two Red-throated. Birds were also seen off Walney at the end of March.



*Great Northern Diver, Hodbarrow,
Richard Gillson*



Demoiselle Crane, near Cockermouth A5086, Roger Ridley

The **Slavonian Grebe** remained at Hodbarrow until at least 2nd April with another at Askham Pier on 26th March.

225 Manx Shearwaters passed Walney on 21st May. Small numbers of **Little Egret** were seen regularly throughout the period on the south Solway west from Burgh by Sands to

Campfield where there were five on 10th April. There were 46 at Walney on 6th March and other dates at this site. Up to six were on Ulpha Meadows where they were present throughout the period and numbers at Eskmeals peaked at six on 16th March. A **Spoonbill** was at Walney on 8th May.

An adult **Demoiselle Crane** was present at Mockerkinn Tarn on 16th March and, although it was free flying, photographs clearly showed that the primaries had been cut at some stage – it remained in the area till the end of March. It is interesting to note that it/or another was at Grindon Lough over the Northumbrian border until the end of May.

Raptors to Waders

There were many, well spread reports of **Osprey** the first being at Longtown on 28th March and on 29th one was seen (from an aircraft) moving north at 1,500 feet over Rockcliffe Marsh with another moving in the same direction over RSPB Campfield reserve the same day. Movements north over the Solway continued in April with a single bird on fence post in the estuary before departing north from Campfield on 21st. Two, again observed from an aircraft, at an estimated height of 2,000 ft near Port Carlisle on 23rd and a single bird north over Kirkbride Airfield on 29th. April and May records were widespread. Two chicks were taken by Magpies from the Bassenthwaite pair.

Red Kite were reported in the Lowther area at the very beginning of March, Esthwaite in mid April, Tindale Tarn on 21st and moving west over Houghton. Carlisle on 4th May. An exceptional **Black Kite** was observed moving east at Hodbarrow on 11th May. The only report of **Hen Harrier** was of a “ringtail” at Campfield Marsh RSPB on 15th March. A **Marsh Harrier** was in the south on various dates from 11th April, one was at Mere Tarn on 19th April and on 21st a dark male passed over Hallbankgate; a female passed through

Walney on 6th May and another female was at Carlisle Airport on the evening of 31st May before drifting off north east.

April **Goshawk** sightings from the south of the county were of an adult on 8th, a male on 19th and a single bird on 21st. One was at Watchtree Nature Reserve in April and another in West

Cumbria on 9th May. There were regular sightings of **Peregrine** from the south Solway and Foulshaw. Two **Merlin** were at Grune Point on 10th March and one was at Ulpha Meadows on 5th April.



Sparrowhawk, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Avocet continued to be seen, perhaps more sporadically, in the Campfield area with Oystercatchers right through until 25th April. Flocks of **Golden Plover** were at Walney (550) on 12th March, at Tarn Wadeling, High Heskett (120) on 16th and Allonby (200) on 18th. At Campfield RSPB 210 were present on 3rd April, 100 summer plumage birds were present on 20th reducing to 50 by 24th. **Dotterel** were quite well spread with three on Helvellyn on 21st April, a single bird near Tebay on 23rd and a male and a female on Burgh Marsh on 28th and then four again in the Tebay area on 2nd May and seven in the Pennines on 15th. A pair of **Little Ringed Plover** were back on territory in the south of the county by 7th April.



Peregrine, Bowscale Tarn, Tony Marsh

Whimbrel passage was first noted at Walney with four on 15th April and then six at Longtown on 19th April, 35 at Allonby and six at Campfield on 20th April, 70 at Walney on 23rd with ten at Allonby and 19 on the shore at Siddick on 25th. The west coast produced significant numbers in May with 109 moving north at Allonby in flocks of 57, 35 & 17, 43 at Mawbray beach on 3rd, 31 again at Allonby, 45 at Braystones on 8th and 26 at Allonby on 13th. Elsewhere 24 were at Bowness on 2nd May increased to 30 the next day and down to eight on 16th. Thirty were at Watchtree NR on 5th May and there were two at Longtown on 19th.



Pectoral Sandpiper, River Esk Longtown, Roger Ridley

The flock of **Black-Tailed Godwit** at Campfield RSPB numbering 23 on 10th April had increased to 101 by 20th, dwindling away there after with 70 on 2nd May and 24 on 4th. There was also a flock at the private scrape at Rockliffe but details are not known apart from 12 in flight there on 15th. Hodbarrow held 11 on 23rd March and five on 11th April. Four **Bar-tailed Godwit** passed north over Carlisle Airport on 23rd.

Sanderling at Walney increased from 1200 on 11th May to an exceptional 4000 on 21st and 25,000 **Knot** were there on 23rd April. A **Ruff** was at Wedholme Flow on 8th May. Four **Purple Sandpipers** were at Colderston on 12th March, with three at Braystones the same day and one was at Tarn Bay on 23rd March. The only **Little Stints** reported were at Hodbarrow on 11th April and at Bowness on 8th May. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was found on the Longtown Esk from 18th to 20th May. A bird with five Dunlin at Walney was "tentatively identified" as a **White-rumped Sandpiper** on 3rd May. **Common Sandpiper** which had been on the Ravensglass Esk all winter were still present on 14th March with two birds present; migrants arrived in early April with three at Rockliffe on 12th, two at Whale on 13th, two at Milnthorpe on 14th and several present on Longtown Esk on 19th. On 19th May six were on the Longtown Esk.

A **Green Sandpiper** remained on the River Esk at Ravensglass on 14th March with another at the confluence of the Rivers Eden and Irthing on 28th. In March there were still two **Greenshank** on Ravensglass Esk on 14th, three at Eskmeals on 16th and 31st with singles at Hodbarrow on 16th and 23rd

and Halforth on 8th April, Tarn Wadeling on 10th May. The only **Wood Sandpiper** reported was on the River Esk at Longtown on 13th May. Cliburn Moss held four **Woodcock** on 8th March and **Jack Snipe** continued to be seen there with four on 8th March - the highest count of the winter.

Skuas to Auks

A **Pomarine skua** was at Walney on 28th March but thereafter weather patterns were not conducive to a significant skua passage through the Solway with the first birds being recorded the late date of 1st May – thereafter birds passed only on a few days with totals of 17 **Arctic**, 60 **Pomarine**, 17 **Great** and a single **Long-tailed**.

The only records of **Mediterranean Gull** were at least one bird present for a week at Allonby in early March and two were feeding on a field at Carlisle Airport on 5th April. Ten **Little Gull** were at Bowness on Solway on 4th May. **Kittiwake** passage east through the Solway continued throughout the period with 24 at Bowness on 6th April, 60 on 2nd May, 96 on 4th, and “hundreds” on 17th. Prolonged northerly and then easterly winds in April and May will have affected the passage and its observation. A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was found at Bowness on 16th May being seen on several days subsequently.

Walney had 275 **Sandwich Terns** on 7th May. Two **Little Tern** were at Hodbarrow on 23rd April and an impressive around a 100 on 21st May. Walney's first were three birds on 24th April with subsequently one at Bowness on 18th May and three there 22nd May. Four **Black Terns** were on Longtown Esk on 4th May and three at Bowness on 6th at a time of large influx in to the country.

Pigeons to Buntings

A **Turtle Dove** passed through Walney on 8th May. The first **Cuckoo** was at Walton Moss on 17th April with widespread records from St Bees on the coast to Forest Head in the Pennines. Daylight hunting **Barn Owls** continued to be seen widely into the first few days of March. The earliest **Common Swift** was north over Talkin Tarn on 14th April with others at the end of the month and into May. **Hoopoe** appeared in a Kendal garden on 14th and 15th April and another was west of Lake Windermere on 24th.

Sand Martin were first seen on 24th March at Wetheral and a **Swallow** was over Ulpha Meadows on 30th March. Swallows arrived in numbers in early April with two at Sellafield on 3rd April and a bird at Carlisle airport on 4th April and widespread but sporadic thereafter. Heavy northward passage of

Hirundines (2/300 in an hour in morning) was noted at Lowca on 7th May as well as birds crossing the Solway to NE from Bowness/ Campfield on the same day. "Hundreds" were passing north at Allonby on 10th.



Cuckoo & Meadow Pipit, Tindale, Adam Moan

There were four **Water Pipits** at Walney on 11th March and up to three from 9th to 13th April - birds in near summer plumage. **Tree Pipits** arrived in mid April.

Fifty **Pied Wagtails** frequented a roost in middle of Penrith early in March. **White Wagtail** were reported from Halforth (4) on 8th April, St Bees (1), Hodbarrow (2) also in April and a single bird at Longtown on 20th May. **Yellow Wagtails** were on Longtown Esk (21st April) and also in mid Eden Valley. **Common Redstart** were first reported on 10th April from Skelton. A male **Black Redstart** was present on Walney on 22nd April. **Wheatear** were at Calvo Marsh on 13th March, Eskmeals on 23rd, Braystones on 26th and on Loughrigg Fell and by the Solway at Bowness on 27th with further evidence of passage being 20 in a single field on St Bees Head on 31st. Later movements included 24 at Mockerkinn on 24th April, 27 at Walney on 23rd April, 23 on 2nd May and 38 two days later.

Whinchat returned by 20th April with a bird on Binsey and Torver Low Common on the same day and eight at the latter site on 7th May. Main arrival at Geltsdale RSPB was 28th April. The first "fall" of the spring produced 16 **Stonechats** at Walney. **Fieldfare** continued to move in March with up to 300 at High Heskett at the end of the month and 140 at Cliburn Moss on 30th. Small numbers remained in north of the county till mid April with 40 feeding on a ploughed field being the last. There were no records of **Redwing**. **Ring Ouzels** were back on the "northern fells" and Geltsdale RSPB on 5th April but three were on Walney on 12th, two a day later and a single male on 15th.

Lesser Whitethroat was first seen at Church Moss on 15th April and was singing on the west coast on 3rd May, at St Bees and New Hutton, Kendal on 8th and were present in some numbers on south Solway thereafter. The first **Common Whitethroat** was on Glasson Moss on 24th April. The first

Chiffchaff of the year at Walney occurred on 23rd March and in April 19 were singing in Finglandrigg NR on 7th. **Willow Warbler** arrived in the first few days of April. **Wood Warbler** seemed more plentiful and widespread this year with the first at Torver on 26th April. Singing **Garden Warblers** were subjectively reported as being very numerous this year but this could apparently suggest a lack of females rather than an especially large number of males. The first **Blackcap** at Watchtree NR was on 15th April and a “fall” at Walney on 5th May produced 21 birds. An exceptional **Dusky Warbler** was present on Walney island on 14th May.

Spotted Flycatcher were present but only in small numbers whilst **Pied Flycatcher** arrived from 16th April onwards. A **Great Grey Shrike** was reported near Renwick in first week of March and another was in Spadeadam forest on 31st. A **Hooded Crow** was at Eskmeals on 9th, 16th & 23rd March and 11th May. Odd **Bramblings** remained into early April. **Hawfinch** continued to be seen in March at Sizergh castle with seven there on 31st March. **Common Crossbill** continued to be present at Cliburn Moss with 14 there on 8th March as well as 30 at Great Wood, Derwent Water on 10th & 12th of March. The largest flock however was at Whinfell Forest, Penrith on 31st May when there were 80 birds including juveniles.

There were 120 **Twite** at Walney on 6th March with numbers reducing thereafter. **Siskin** and **Goldfinch** were involved in diurnal movements at Allonby with several flocks of the former moving north on 11th April and 100 of the latter in the same direction on the same day and on 10th May flocks of these two species plus Redpolls were passing north at Allonby. Two **Snow Bunting** flew north west on the Kent estuary on 30th March.



Ring Ouzel, Dale Head, Dave Piercy

As ever, we are indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list. Feel free to send records by e-mail to: rjgreenacres72@gmail.com

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

Bob Jones & Dave Piercy

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