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***BIRD NEWS***  
***Vol. 28 No. 2 Summer 2017***

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CBC indoor meetings  
Club news and announcements  
Snippets of good news  
Linking moth survey groups to bird surveys  
The Parton railway Oystercatchers  
Have you seen any Common Sandpipers?  
Little Egrets walking into a night roost  
Lowgill and Sedbergh Swifts  
Spotted Sandpiper - Buttermere  
Recent reports  
First arrivals

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*Contents - see back page*

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## Officers of the Society

### Council

**Chairman:** Malcolm Priestley, Havera Bank, Howgill Lane, Sedbergh, LA10 5HB  
tel. 015396 20104; [mmphavera@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mmphavera@hotmail.co.uk)

**Vice-chairmen:** Mike Carrier, Peter Howard

**Secretary:** David Piercy, 64 The Headlands, Keswick, CA12 5EJ; tel. 017687  
73201; [daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk)

**Treasurer:** Treasurer: David Cooke, Mill Craggs, Bampton, CA10 2RQ  
tel. 01931 713392; [cooke856@btinternet.com](mailto:cooke856@btinternet.com)

**Field trips organiser:** Vacant

**Talks organiser:** Vacant

**Members:** Colin Auld  
Nick Franklin  
Chris Hind  
Jake Manson  
Dave Shackleton

### Recorders

**County:** Steve Westerberg, Stagsike Cottage, Hallbankgate, Bampton, CA8 2PY  
[Stephen.Westerberg@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Stephen.Westerberg@rspb.org.uk) tel. 07818806991

**Barrow/South Lakeland:** Ronnie Irving, 24 Birchwood Close, Kendal LA9 5BJ  
[ronnieirving2017@gmail.com](mailto:ronnieirving2017@gmail.com) tel. 01539 727523

**Carlisle & Eden:** Chris Hind, 2 Old School House, Hallbankgate, Bampton, CA8 2NW  
[chris.m.hind@gmail.com](mailto:chris.m.hind@gmail.com) tel. 016977 46379

**Allerdale & Copeland:** Nick Franklin, 19 Eden Street, Carlisle CA3 9LS  
[nicolas@franklin1966.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:nicolas@franklin1966.freeserve.co.uk) tel. 01228 810413

### C.B.C. Bird News

**Editor:** Dave Piercy

### B.T.O. Representatives

**Cumbria:** Colin Gay, 8 Victoria Street, Millom LA18 5AS  
[colinathodbarrow@btinternet.com](mailto:colinathodbarrow@btinternet.com) tel. 01229 773820  
Assistant reps: Dave Piercy & Steve Westerberg

### Friday 6th Oct (AGM): Penrith United Reformed Church 7.30pm

'Investigating the declines of Wood Warblers across the African-Eurasian flyway' - Dr John Mallord.



*Wood Warbler, Kakum Ghana, 1st Feb, John Mallord*

Growing up in London and spending my formative birding years on the outskirts of the capital and in East Anglia, Wood Warblers were an unfamiliar sight (and sound) to me. However, this has become increasingly true for more people across the country, as the population of this species declined dramatically over the last two decades. But as a result of this dire situation, Wood Warblers have become a constant companion, as since 2009 I have lead research for the RSPB studying their ecology and trying to understand what has driven the alarming declines, and how we might go about reversing them. I will tell you about work we have been conducting both in the UK and Africa, the landscapes they like, what they eat and what eats them, and other wildlife they share their homes with, from foxes and squirrels to elephants and baboons. Finally, linking the two continents, we have fitted tracking devices to birds to learn, for the first time, where 'our' birds go for the winter, and hopefully we may have just analysed the results.....

#### **Dr John Mallord, Senior Conservation Scientist, RSPB**

I currently lead research into the ecology of migrant birds on their wintering grounds in Africa, where our focus has initially been on Wood Warblers and Turtle Doves. I started working for the RSPB in 1996, beginning in the reedbeds of East Anglia radio tracking Bitterns. Subsequently, I worked on a number of other species, such as Spotted Crakes, Song Thrush, Woodlark, Dartford Warbler and House Sparrow, before first heading off to the forested hills of mid-Wales to look for Wood Warblers in 2009. I continued with this before my geographical focus shifted in 2013.

**Monday 9th October: Friend's Meeting House Stramongate 7.30pm**

Joint with Kendal NHS 'The distance between' - *Peter Mawby*

I describe my own involvement in the study of territory in birds and consider the significance of living spaces to those involved in the conservation of endangered species.

**Wednesday 10th January 2018: Tullie House 7.15pm**

Joint with Carlisle NHS 'Our Disappearing Swifts – what we can do' - *Tanya & Edmund Hoare*

Tanya & Edmund Hoare are Swift enthusiasts and part of the national and international Swift network. They have a colony of Swifts nesting in the eaves of their cottage and the talk will include video clips of many aspects of Swift behaviour, from cameras in the nest spaces. The latest research on their remarkable migration, using geolocators, will also be presented. Sadly these iconic birds are in serious decline and the reasons for this, and what can be done to help, will be discussed.

**Thursday 18th January: St John Meeting Room, 7.15pm**

Joint with South Lakeland RSPB

'Life of Birds: Isle of May & Eden Valley' - *Mike Carrier*

**AGM**

The AGM will be held at Penrith United Reformed Church on Friday 6th October 2017 at 7.30pm. The business of the AGM is intended to be as brief as possible and will be followed by a talk by John Mallord on Wood Warblers..

**Vacancies on Council: Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-chairman 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 29th September).

**Talks, events and outings**

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

### **Introducing council member Jake Manson**

I moved to work in west Cumbria in 1980, with the aim of staying a year or two before moving on. Thirty-seven years later I can't think of a better place to be, and regard the county very much as my home.



I've been watching birds all my life; one of my earliest memories is of being kept awake by Corncrakes calling all night next to my childhood home in Caithness. When I'm not watching birds I love to get out and about in the mountains, both here and in Scotland, and am also a member of Wasdale Mountain Rescue Team.

Away from Cumbria I am regular visitor to the Scottish Islands, and in particular Orkney and Shetland. I have also travelled the world in search of birds, and too often witnessed first hand the massive habitat loss happening across the globe. This has heightened my awareness of the need to conserve precious species where ever they may be. Here in Cumbria, we have already lost species, with others facing serious decline, and I believe that the eyes and ears - and of course the voices - of Cumbria Bird Club members have a real role to play in helping to save them.

*Jake Manson*

### **Introducing council member Colin Auld**

I work as a Reserve Manager for Natural England based at Kirkbride and work on National Nature Reserves across the north of the county. Prior to this I've spent time with the RSPB on heathland management and surveying in Dorset, species protection and information wardening in Wales and Yorkshire and Reserve management in Staffordshire.

I've been a Bird Club member since moving to Cumbria in 1995. Apart from some tetrad bashing for the Atlas and paying my subs I've often felt I'd like to do more. Therefore I'm pleased to have been invited to join the Council and I look forward to making a contribution.

If I'm not birding I'm probably on a Munro somewhere or indulging a mid-life crisis at the nearest climbing wall.

*Colin Auld*

## Snippets of good news

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### Tawny Owls

A photo for you of our Tawny Owls which have just recently taken up residence in our owl box. Literature with the box said it could take up to three years before owls might use it. Well we only put up the box in early Spring so we are absolutely delighted and are hoping for babies in the near future. We have our telescope set up in the bedroom so we can watch them. We have also suspended work in this area of our wood so that we do not disturb them.

*Alan Frost*



### Whinchat

In the late 1990's, about six pairs of Whinchats nested annually, on the south-east slope of Ling Fell, Wythop, close to Tom Rudd Beck. Then, like lots of other places, a decline set in, reducing numbers drastically, until by 2010 only one pair occupied the site. From 2012 two pairs were present each year until last year when three pairs bred successfully, fledging 17 young.

This year, there were four pairs, plus two singing males; a very heartening visit, especially with lots of other stuff - two Cuckoos, Stonechats, Tree Pipits, Reed Bunting and Grey Wagtail.

*John Callion*

### Lapwings

Yesterday evening I came across a recently harrowed and seeded field on the edge of Penrith and was delighted to see ten or more Lapwing displaying over it. I went back this evening and counted eight different birds apparently sitting on scrapes and another pair displaying, mating and apparently choosing a nest site, all within the same field which was the only one with bare ground suitable for nesting. Brought back some happy memories of the Eden Valley 40 years ago!

*Stephen Hewitt*

### News from Coker House, Bailey Botanicals near Newcastleton

Here on the Nursery, the main news is that we seem to have become host to upwards of 160+ fledgling Starlings! They have just started to 'murmurate', last week or so around two hours before dusk, but eventually settling into several disorganised groups – some in conifers, some in Berberis, some in our Hawthorn/Beech hedges. House Martin numbers are again very low, from a high of eleven nests in 2013, to just three this year and just two last

year. Several artificial House Martin nests have been commandeered by House Sparrows, most of whom are already on their second brood. Other nesters are Wren x 2 [1 in a glasshouse, 1 in a polytunnel], Blackbird x 3 [conifer hedges], Goldfinch x 1 [garden shrubbery] Greenfinch x 1 [garden shrubbery], Chaffinch x 4 [conifers], Long-tailed Tit x 1 [shrubby, first time here], Blue Tit x 3 [nestboxes], Great Tit x 3 [nestboxes], Coal Tit x 2 [tree holes], House Sparrow x 6 [nestboxes and House Martin artificial nests], Song Thrush [at least 2 nests], Swallow x 2 [both in my porches], Robin x at least 6 [glasshouse, polytunnels, nestboxes]. Within 200m of the Nursery other nesters include Greylag Goose [a ten-year high of 24 adults, several of which overwintered for the first time], Green Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Lapwing, Curlew, Snipe, Oystercatcher, Skylark, Meadow Pipit x several, Pied Wagtail x 2 nests, Grey Wagtail, Barn Owl in my neighbours barn, Tawny Owl x probably 3 pairs, Kestrel in a neighbouring Norwegian fir, at least 3 Stock Dove nests and 1 x Collared Dove. On the downside, the absence of Siskin and Great Spotted Woodpecker for the last two years is worrying.

*Ian Tyrell*

### **Ring Ouzel**



*Ring Ouzel, RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

After four years with no breeding records at all, was delighted to find a Ring Ouzel nest in my Dipper study site on Friday (Sedbergh area). It contained one dead chick and one very large chick that was about to fledge. The male was feeding it regularly. I see them most years on passage in April, but with so little heather in the Howgills/Baugh Fell/Brant Fell they never seem to stick around and breed.

*Stuart Sharp*



## **New species for Ennerdale!**



Gannet, Ennerdale, David Recchia, 13th June

## **Stock Doves**

On 7th April I ringed two young Stock Doves in a nest box here in Armathwaite. They were quite big and left the nest on 12th April and became free flying. I checked the box again on 26th and most suprisingly found two more young about three days old.



*Stock Dove, How, Tony Marsh*

The incubation time for Stock Doves is 16 or 17 days and it was evident therefore that the female had laid the eggs of the second brood whilst the young of the first brood were still in the nest.

*Mike Carrier*



## Linking moth survey groups to forest insectivorous bird surveys

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Much work has been done on linking Blue and Great Tit brood success to timing of Geometrid Moth caterpillar abundance. It is established that the birds have some ability to time their broods to maximum caterpillar abundance. It might be reasonable to translate this concept to species such as Pied Flycatcher, Redstart and Wood Warbler. With ever increasing climate chaos and variation it is questionable whether birds can still cope with what are now considerable fluctuations in insect abundance and timing of emergence.

Cumbria Moth Group and other similar county groups now provide reliable on line data as to timing and abundance of adult moth species. This data can be extrapolated to timing of caterpillar abundance that key bird species rely on predating larvae rather than adult moths. RSPB has also participated in the National Garden Moth scheme for some years. Historic data on population fluctuations and emergence timing is available for comparison.

Results from Spring 2017 are not yet available but experiences from Cumbria Moth Group Facebook page dialogue suggests a crash in Spring moth populations this season. Moths that should have emerged in March/early April would normally produce abundant larvae in May/June that would be available to these bird species when rearing chicks. It is likely that this food source is not available right now in 2017. The presumed reason for the moth population crash is the cold nights, lack of rain and drought.

Adult insectivorous birds can survive on small flying adult insects such as Diptera flies but they probably depend on high protein yield moth larvae for raising chick broods. Here's a Redstart from 2013, a year of moth abundance. The caterpillar will contain a lot more protein than the adult Tipula (Daddy Longlegs).

*Guy Broome*

## The Parton railway Oystercatchers

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1st June - two pairs of Oystercatchers are back on their nests. I assume they are the same two pairs that have nested in almost exactly the same places as they have for at least the last nine years. They can both be seen from the Wagon Road at Parton. One nest, containing three eggs, is within two feet of the Northbound railway track; the

other (the contents cannot be seen from the path) is on a raised section above the tracks. This nest used to be on top of the wall but since the last couple of years it has been built on the grassy area below – perhaps more sheltered from the South-westerly winds.

A few years ago, the nest by the tracks was disturbed by maintenance work on the railway wall. I reported it. Network rail have an area on their website where environmental and wildlife concerns can be reported. I received a sympathetic response but they evidently thought it sufficient to move the eggs out of the way, placing them carefully under a workman's hardhat until the job was done over several days. I don't know if they survived.

Several times over the years, the nests have been robbed – by whom, or by what I don't know. Often the pairs have had another shot at it but often again I doubt that either of the two pairs managed to get the chicks fledged and away; bad weather is a risk in this spot and so are gulls and Ravens.

The photo above was taken in 2009. Oystercatchers are long-lived: again many years ago, I found the body of one that had been ringed on the other side of the Solway, twenty-one years previously.

On 9th June, I saw that the more southerly pair has hatched two (at least) chicks. The other pair is still sitting. Later on 19th June the nest near the line had one of the three eggs removed from the nest – broken I think. One bird was pecking by the side of it as if it were some of the contents. The other two eggs were then visible and I thought they were going to be abandoned as infertile. But they are being incubated as you can see in the photo.

*Jim Hewitson*



## Have you seen any Common Sandpipers?

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The Common Sandpiper is an amber listed, Afro-Palearctic migrant whose British population has declined by 50% over the last thirty years despite being regularly seen on rivers and reservoirs throughout the country. As part of a PhD project at Lancaster University, we are attempting to understand the reasons for their decline. We are colour ringing birds and monitoring nests in our Cumbrian breeding population to measure reproductive success and investigate breeding ecology; studying their migration behaviour using geolocators; and studying wintering behaviour and survival in Senegal.

Our main study population is on the River Lune catchment around Sedbergh, and any sightings of colour-ringed birds from this area would be greatly appreciated. Of particular interest, however, would be any sightings from outside the study site, so please remember to check the legs of any Common Sandpiper you see in Cumbria or beyond!

All marked birds have an engraved yellow ring on the left tarsus (lower leg) with two black digits, and most also have a smaller plain red ring on the right tibia (upper leg). Those birds fitted with geolocators instead have a red leg flag on the right tibia to which the device is attached.



If you see or photograph any colour-ringed birds, even if you cannot read the digits, please contact Dr Stuart Sharp at [s.sharp2@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:s.sharp2@lancaster.ac.uk) and Thomas Mondain-Monval at [t.mondain-monval@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:t.mondain-monval@lancaster.ac.uk). If we can work out which individual you have seen then we will of course provide a full history. Thank you very much!

## Little Egrets walking into a night roost

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Little Egrets roost communally at night during the non-breeding season. In Cumbria there are several such roosts around Morecambe Bay. All are located in trees and birds fly into them generally in the last hour before dark. Most fly directly in to the roost, but some land in the surrounding fields first, either to continue to feed or occasionally to pre-roost before flying in to the roost itself. The roost involved in the observations described here is in a small wood surrounding a small pond.



*Little Egret, Bowness, Tony Marsh*

Between November 2014 and March 2017 I made 26 roost counts here and observed 990 bird “arrivals” during those counts. All but two of these arrivals have involved the birds finally entering the roost itself by flight. However on 1st April this year two birds independently of each other and from different directions, walked into the roost, before being lost to sight and presumably before jumping up into their final roosting tree. The first appeared about 35 minutes before dark in a field next to the field surrounding the roost and walked directly and without stopping through an open gate and continued until disappearing into the roost. Its initially starting point was not seen, nor whether it had flown to it first, but it walked for at least 15 minutes and covered at least 280 metres. It did forage occasionally by probing the ground while on the move. The second bird was first seen only about 20 minutes before dark two fields away from the field surrounding the roost. It walked into view from behind a ridge in the field and so again the initially start point of this birds journey was unknown. It too walked directly but without foraging and more urgently and “fluttered” over two fenced hedges to arrive at the roost just as it was becoming too dark to see it. This bird walked a minimum of 400 metres and for 19 minutes.

Why these birds would do this can only be guessed at, but the obvious assumption is that both were incapable of flight, though neither showed outward sign of injury.

*Dave Shackleton*

## Lowgill and Sedbergh Swifts

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This year there was a mass arrival of Common Swifts all over the country on May 5th, including ours at Lowgill and Sedbergh. All 17 pairs have returned to their nest sites at Lowgill, including a new pair that roosted for the first time last year.

Of the four pairs on camera, two have three chicks and two have two chicks. The earliest eggs were laid on 18-20 May which means that fledging will be around 17-19 July. For our Swifts it is usually a week later than this.

The Sedbergh Community Swifts webcam project at Settlebeck school has been successful. Last year we put up 11 boxes at four locations around the school, each playing attraction calls. Two pairs roosted in two of the boxes last year, which is preliminary activity to breeding the following year. Over the winter we installed webcams for streaming via the internet and display on a monitor in the school reception.



*Settlebeck school chick at three days,  
under the wing of a parent,*

Both pairs returned this May, one laying two eggs and the other three eggs. Unfortunately all but one egg have been knocked out of the nest concaves, and at least one of these was deliberately thrown out by the adult. The pair without eggs continues to roost in the box every night and intermittently during the day, which bodes well for future years. The remaining chick is thriving. Live activity can be seen at <http://www.settlebeck.org/swifts/live.html> , and there are instructions (scroll down below the video screen) for downloading a free app for viewing on a phone or tablet.

The four nest bricks that were installed at the Sedbergh Peoples Hall Gym have also all been occupied: this year there are two breeding pairs and two pairs roosting.

*Tanya Hoare*



## Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* - Buttermere



*Spotted Sandpiper, Buttermere, Nick Franklin*

At the time of writing, the thirteenth of June, a summer-plumaged Spotted Sandpiper has been present on the shores of Buttermere since mid-May. The bird was first reported on the thirteenth of May, and my first reaction was one of scepticism due to the lack of information and the unusual location. A negative report that evening seemed to confirm my thoughts. However, the following afternoon a report came out that the bird was still present, and as I was five hours into a fruitless Skua watch at Bowness-on-Solway, I thought a pleasant drive down to Buttermere on a sunny evening might be an enjoyable, if possibly pointless, exercise.

Imagine my surprise when, on walking towards the south-west corner of the lake, I met another birder who said that the bird was still present, and directed me to a particular 200m stretch of lake edge. I increased my pace in anticipation, but on arrival spent 45 minutes finding only Common Sandpipers, and was again beginning to think negative thoughts. At that moment a calling Spotted Sandpiper flew across in front of me and landed. It was close enough for good binocular views and could clearly be seen to be a full summer-plumage Spotted Sandpiper, sporting the most magnificent spotted chest and belly.

I spent the next two hours watching the bird as it displayed to Common Sandpipers, calling, wing fluttering and showing extremely well down to only ten metres at times. It seemed remarkably faithful to a particular length of shoreline in the south-west corner of Buttermere, dividing its time between displaying and feeding busily along the lake edge. It was slightly larger than the Common Sandpipers present, with a heavier pot-bellied structure and a bill that could be seen to be orange with a black tip. It was also calling regularly with a loud weet-weet-weet call reminiscent of a Common Sandpiper, but stronger, louder and with a lower pitch. When displaying it would beat its wing and stand very upright, pushing its chest out. To say the least, it was an unusual feeling to watch a Spotted Sandpiper, in full summer plumage, displaying and calling on a lakeside in the English Lake District

I subsequently visited the bird again on the 18th and 23rd of May, and whilst it was still favouring the same length of shoreline, it had started to wander further afield and on my third visit the bird was elusive.

There have only been three previous records of Spotted Sandpiper in Cumbria. The first of these was a bird on the River Esk at Longtown, from the 4th to 6th of June 1986. The second was a long staying bird at Cavendish Dock. First recorded on the 3rd of November 1989, it remained until the 1st of May the following year. The most recent record was of a bird on the 27th of September 1998 at South Walney.

It is also worth noting that Spotted Sandpiper is the only American wader to have made attempts to breed in the UK. Astonishingly, a pair attempted to nest on the Isle of Skye in 1975, laying four eggs, but the nest failed. Then in Yorkshire in 1990 a Spotted Sandpiper was seen paired with a Common Sandpiper at Elland Gravel Pits, and in 1991 it was seen accompanying a Common Sandpiper and three fully grown young at Welbeck, raising the possibility that these were hybrid offspring. The paired Spotted and Common Sandpiper were again seen in 1992, this time at New Swillington Ings, Yorkshire.

This raises the interesting possibility that this bird may pair with Common Sandpipers and attempt to breed, and it will certainly be worth keeping an eye on the Buttermere area as the summer progresses.

*Nick Franklin*



## Recent reports

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The period covered is March to May 2017. 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**

Mid March saw 200 **Whooper Swans** still near Kirkbride but what were presumably passage birds, were 16 at Killington Lake on 10th, 40 at Siney Tarn, Eskdale on 20th, 32 at Walney on 22nd and 60 moving north over Coniston on 23rd; 89 were at Kirkbride on 29th .



*Red-breasted Goose, Derwent Water, Tony Marsh*

Geese were clearly underreported in the period but the Svalbard **Barnacle** flock built up on Rockcliffe Marsh in April and early May; there was however an earlier than normal departure by 9th May with large numbers being reported moving north on the Norwegian west coast on 10th. What were presumably the regular feral flock were in Derwent Water/Bassenthwaite area throughout with 240 on Derwent Water on 29th March; also present on that day was a **Red-breasted Goose** of unknown origin being present at least to 6th May. In March there were five **Eurasian White-fronted Geese** near Longtown with 2000 **Pink-footed Geese** and still three the next day.



*Pink-footed Geese, Campfield Marsh, Judith Rogers*

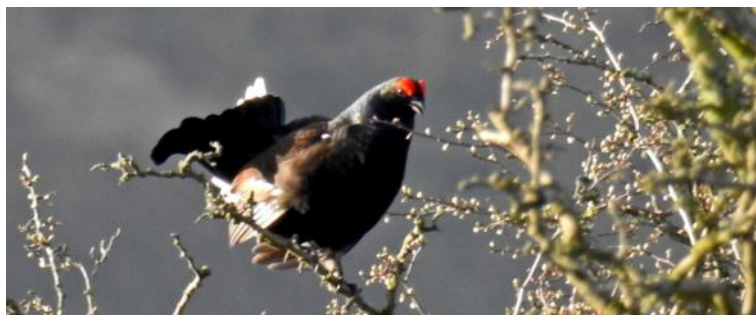


*Scaup, Longtown, Roger Ridley*

Single **Greenland White-fronts** were at Drigg (with six Greylags) on 9th May and at Buttermere on 16th. Other **Pink-footed Goose** records included 240 heading north on Walney on 25th March, a further 165 a day later and 80 on 9th April; 550 were moving north over Skelwith Bridge through the “High Close Gap” in two skeins on 30th April and on 18th May a further six went north at Bowness-on-Solway. 340 **Pale** and 60 **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** were at Walney on 26th March.

Twenty **Shelduck** were at Longtown on 26th March as were a pair of **Gadwall**. Regular counts of **Gadwall** from Hodbarrow peaked at eight and Foulshaw held two males and a female on 22nd May. **Garganey** males were reported from Park End Moss on 31st March and at both Campfield RSPB and Wedholme Flow on three dates up to 14th April. Drake **Scaup** were at both Sizergh and Longtown Ponds up to 9th April. A **Green-winged Teal** was found at Wedholme Flow among 120 **Common Teal** on 2nd March.

At Bowness on Solway there was a single male **Eider** on 3rd April, two pairs there on 27th and finally five there on 23rd May. A pair flew south off Flimby on 13th March and three pairs also headed south here on 17th May. After the long staying birds earlier in the year at Grune Point there was a female **Long-tailed Duck** still present on 24th March. Exceptionally, perhaps, there were two pairs of summer plumage birds passing Bowness on Solway on 14th to 16th May and finally a female still at Walney on 31st May. Of the long staying **Smews** the female was at Siddick Ponds until 12th March and the Derwent Water male was last seen on 7th March. The only **Velvet Scoter** reported was from Walney on 31st March. At Walney 600 **Common Scoter** were present on 23rd April but were far exceeded by 4000 birds at the mouth of Morecambe Bay on 14th May.



*Black Grouse, RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

### **Grouse to Herons**

Six **Grey Partridge** were near Carlisle Airport on 24th March and on 6th April and a day later two were at both Allonby and Wolsty Banks – observers at both sites commented that they had not seen the species in the area for some years. A **Quail** was calling at Soulby on 27th May.

The only **Black-throated Diver** reported was at Bowness on Solway on 10th April – it is perhaps worth mentioning that prolonged easterly winds regrettably reduced the amount of observer activity on south Solway during April and May. **Red-throated Diver** were observed from Bowness but not in the usual numbers. There were at least 25 off Silecroft on 24th March. The first three weeks of April saw **Manx Shearwaters** reported in low numbers at Seascale, Nethertown and Silecroft where there were also two on 11th May. They were present off Walney in April and May. **Gannets** were observed in the Solway on several dates with a maximum of 55 on 21st April, coming in an hour at least after high tide – not the usual pattern which tends to be just before high tide.

A **Bittern** was recorded at Siddick Ponds up to 19th March. Two **Little Egret** were on Skinburnness Marsh on 1st March and one at Sunbiggin Tarn was well inland on 25th March as was a bird at Cockermouth on 31st March and 23rd April; two were at Siddick ponds from 3rd April to 5th May at least. On 3rd April two parties of four birds crossed from Scotland to the English side at Bowness; this sort of activity was seen on other occasions but in smaller numbers. Regular counts throughout the period from Foulshaw and Eskmeals peaked in March at seven and eight respectively. Apart from a bird present near Rockliffe village on 28th May all **Great White Egrets** reported were from the south of the county with one frequenting the canal at Holme in the first week of March, at Arnside on 11th and 19th and 7th April and three were at Foulshaw Moss on 22nd May.

### ***Raptors to Waders***

The first **Osprey** was reported at Geltsdale RSPB on 16th March with birds being seen throughout the county. A sighting of note being a bird seen “at eye level” from an aircraft at 1500 ft over Carlisle. In April birds were recorded in known breeding areas in the south and at Bassenthwaite and on several dates in north of the county inland and at Bowness on Solway eating a fish on south shore of the Solway on 18th. A ring tail **Hen Harrier** was reported going north over the Solway on 17th May and a male was in the south of the county on 1st March. Six **Common Buzzards** were near Wigton on 18th May suggesting a healthy population.

There were at least 21 reports of **Red Kite** in the period from the south, the Durham border in the east and Bowness on Solway and Tindale in the north. A **Hobby** was at Kendal on 27th May. A male **Merlin** was at Foulshaw on 31st March and a female/immature on 13th April. A “cream crown” **Marsh Harrier** passed through Walney on 5th May.

A **Water Rail** was at Wath Brow by the River Ehen on 5th March, numbers at Foulshaw peaked at three on 31st May. The spring build up of **Oystercatchers** continued with 45 at the confluence of the River Eden and River Irthing.



*Avocet, Wedholme Flow, Mike Porter*

Two colour ringed **Avocets** were on Wedholme Flow on 9th April before flying off south.

## Recent reports

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*Dotterel bathing, Western fells, Dave Piercy*

925 **Ringed Plover** were at Walney on 13th May with 500 at Bowness Railing on 20th May; both **Ringed** and **Little Ringed Plover** were on a small field flood on different dates in mid Eden Valley in May – causing a typical “two birds” confusion between observers. **Little Ringed** were also noted at three other sites in the north of the county and one in the south. A **Little Stint** frequented the Port Carlisle/Drumburgh Marsh area in March and April.

Passage **Dotterel** were represented by a trip of seven on 28th April and eight on the same western fells on 7th May, two males and two females on Rockcliffe Marsh on 14th and finally one at 1000ft on the Furness Peninsula on the same day. Passage **Golden Plover** were 134 vocal birds in flight at Sandale on 24th March, 180 at Crosscanonby on 7th April and 80 “northern race” birds on Cross Fell on 23rd. Breeding **Lapwing** seemed again in short supply but a welcome sight was two broods near Southerfield on 2nd May



*Golden Plover, Tony Marsh*



and ten on a newly seeded field outside Penrith on 17th May. There was a good passage of **Sanderling** at Workington and Bowness on Solway. An unexpected **Purple Sandpiper** was with Dunlin (ten) and Golden Plover on the Pennines on 22nd April.

Ninety **Turnstone** were at Selker on 17th April. 5000 **Knot** were at Walney on 29th April, and 5750 **Dunlin** and 1260 **Sanderling** also there on 13th May. With water levels in the River Eden being high a single **Green Sandpiper** appeared on a small field flood at Wetheral on 2nd March and thereafter up to six birds frequented the pool until the 13th when some drainage work started; a similar number of birds were later observed on the the River Eden at Linstock, a regular site. Two birds also appeared at Walby, a site used earlier in the year, on 31st March. On the west coast birds were seen at Allonby and Siddick Ponds on 5th and 6th May.

The first **Common Sandpiper** was reported on 8th April at Sedbergh and were widespread thereafter. Wintering birds were at Waberthwaite Church and Ravenglass in early March. Most unexpected was a summer plumage **Spotted Sandpiper** at Buttermere from 13th May till the end of the month at least providing great photo-opportunities; this bird was displaying to Common Sandpiper at times.



*Spotted Sandpiper, Buttermere, Roger Ridley*

Thirty-five **Black-tailed Godwit** frequented Campfield RSPB and Wedholme Flow at the end on March into early April with a similar number at Holme Dub on 27th April, being unusual there. Numbers at Hodbarrow peaked at 76 on 19th April and there were 53 at Foulshaw on 26th May. **Whimbrel** passage seemed to start on 14th April with one at Walney and then on 17th April 12 were on Moricambe Bay and on 19th 12 were at Kirksanton; birds were mainly on the coast from Walney (157 on 29th April reducing to 144 the next day), Allonby (max 120 on 2nd May) round to Glasson with 140 passing east into the Solway on 18th in small groups. Further evidence of passage were 15 on Burgh Marsh on 26th and 70 over Watchtree Nature Reserve on 27th.



*Bar-tailed Godwits, Scargavel Point, Judith Rogers*

The only **Ruff** reported were three with Golden Plover at Crossscanonby on 7th April and a single bird at Wedholme Flow on 10th. **Jack Snipe** were at Carlisle Airport (with 12 **Common Snipe**) on 22nd March, with singles on the River Esk Longtown on 25th and at Wedholme Flow on 7th April.

### **Skuas to Auks**

Persistent easterly winds in April and May meant that skua passage was very limited with birds recorded on only about 15 days and then in no significant numbers; the largest flock was 22 **Pomarine Skuas** which was seen on 16th. There were 17 on 13th and 14th May but on neither occasion did they pass east of Bowness, flying out west again. Ten **Long-tailed Skuas** were recorded on 16th May, three of which flew east and another seven seemed to fly out west again having been in the estuary. Five **Arctic Skuas** were recorded on 16th May.

A **Black Guillemot** was off Silecroft on 6th April. The only **Mediterranean Gulls** reported were two at Crossscanonby on 3rd May. An adult **Little Gull** was on the the River Esk at Longtown on 6th April and thereafter up to three were seen at Bowness (16th May) with a second year bird being seen on several occasions including as far up the estuary as Drumburgh. An **Iceland Gull** was at Sellafield on 14th March, in Workington Harbour on 20th March and one which had been observed at Heysham on 5th April was seen to cross over to Cumbria, the last bird was one at Soddy Gap on 20th May.



*Razorbill, St Bees, Tony Marsh*

A **Roseate Tern** frequented Hodbarrow RSPB in mid May and two **Little Terns** were at Walney on 22nd April. A Peregrine killed a **Sandwich Tern** at Walney in early May that was bearing a Belgian ring.



## ***Doves to Buntings***



*Short-eared Owl, Tan Hill, Tony Marsh*

**Cuckoo** was first reported at Haverthwaite on 16th April in south of the county, then RSPB Geltsdale on 25th and Wetheral on 27th in the north and then Wythop Woods, Wigton and Greystoke in May. Several observers commented that they were heard in places from which they had been absent for some years. **Little Owl** were reported from known sites near Wigton and St Bees Head. It being a good “vole year” there were more **Short-eared Owl** pairs in evidence in the Pennines including a bird at Tan Hill on 18th April.

**Common Swift** were first reported on 22nd April and at Wetheral on 29th however the main arrival seemed to be from 4th May – Kirkby Lonsdale and Penrith. On 5th birds were seen at many sites as far apart as Backbarrow and Burton in Kendal in the south to Siddick Ponds, Wigton and Carlisle in the north. Maximum numbers were 24 at Milnethorpe on 7th and 25 at the long standing “box scheme” at Kirkoswald the same day. **Kingfisher** were at regular sites at Longtown, Helton and Skelwith Bridge in April. Apart from four birds calling between Pooley Bridge and Glenridding on Ullswater on 13th April all **Green Woodpecker** reports related to birds in the northwest of the county presumably being underreported in other areas. **Sand Martins** arrived during the last week of March including 150 at Longtown Ponds on 31st. **Swallows** arrived at the end of March in small numbers but it wasn't until later in April that numbers started to increase.



*Tawny Owl, St Bees, Nigel Voaden*

**White Wagtail** passage seemed to take place from 23rd March (one on Binsey) through to the end of April. Maximum numbers were 17 at Selker on 17th and 15 on Wedholme Flow on 21st.

**Yellow Wagtail** were present at Tebay on 9th May and then at a regular site in the north of the county and at two other sites in mid Eden Valley. One of the surprises of the period was the continued presence of **Waxwings** in the county, apart from around 40 in a Kendal garden on 1st March, all being in the Carlisle and Penrith areas. Twenty-two were in Penrith around 5th April and a flock (or flocks) of initially 25 birds were in the Carlisle area in mid month. The last birds reported were two at Armathwaite on 1st May.



*Greenland Wheatear, RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

The only **Black Redstart** was a female at Forest Head on 11th April. **Common Redstart** arrived in first week of April with one at Haweswater on 7th. **Wheatear** arrived in the last week of March and were widely seen – of note were six at Selker on 17th April. At Walney 70 were present on 22nd April, and 100 grounded birds on 30th. Away from Geltsdale RSPB the first **Whinchat** seen was at Allonby on 28th April; four pairs (plus two singing males) at Wythop on 24th May continued an increase in numbers there which has been ongoing since 2010. Birds were moving at Walney in early May including five on the 2nd of the month.

Thrushes formed a large part of the first fall of the year at Walney with, on 12th March, 84 **Redwing**, 60 **Blackbirds** and 37 **Fieldfare**. A further fall there on 1st April included 400 **Redwing**, 54 **Fieldfare** and 32 **Blackbirds**. **Fieldfare** were still present upto 7th May (30 at Renwick) there having been

100 at Birdoswald on 26th March and 150 at Low Heskett on 29th; the latter area held birds through to 25th April. The first **Ring Ouzel** was reported from Haweswater on 29th March followed by three at both Skiddaw and Blencathara on 9th April. The Sedbergh area saw its first breeding pair in four years and two were in The Howgills in mid April.

First report of **Garden Warbler** came from Longlands on 9th April but large numbers appeared in first week of May – with comment to that effect from Sedbergh area and the north of the county. **Blackcap** were present from 24th March onwards in good numbers. **Lesser Whitethroat** were reported from Hodbarrow on 19th April and Campfield RSPB and Beckermeth on 21st April and elsewhere in the Solway basin thereafter. In the north of the county **Grasshopper Warbler** were present from 23rd April. **Chiffchaff** first appeared on 18th March with **Willow Warblers** a little later on 30th.



*Grasshopper Warbler, RSPB  
Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

It wasn't until 7th May that **Spotted Flycatchers** were reported in Sedbergh area and in north of the county thereafter. **Pied Flycatcher** were present from 9th April in the regular breeding areas with five in Ashness Woods of note. A **Great Grey Shrike** was at Wharton Tarn on 14th March and the overwintering bird was still present at Soddy Gap on 28th March but probably not thereafter. A **Hooded Crow** was at Walney on 23rd April. As expected all **Hawfinch** records came from the south of the county with 21 in the area surrounding the Brown Robin CWT reserve being exceptional. A **House Finch** of unknown origin was present in Haverigg for six days in early April.

*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](mailto: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](http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk) for details of how to do so.*

*Bob Jones & Dave Piercy*

## First arrivals

| Species                    | Location               | Date       |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| <b>Osprey</b>              | Geltsdale              | 16th March |
| <b>Common Sandpiper</b>    | Sedbergh               | 8th April  |
| <b>Sandwich Tern</b>       | Silecroft              | 24th March |
| <b>Arctic Tern</b>         | Walney                 | 29th April |
| <b>Little Tern</b>         | Walney                 | 23rd April |
| <b>Cuckoo</b>              | Haverthwaite           | 15th April |
| <b>Swift</b>               | ?                      | 22nd April |
| <b>Sand Martin</b>         | Armathwaite & Foulshaw | 13th March |
| <b>Swallow</b>             | Howman                 | 25th March |
| <b>House Martin</b>        | Wetheral               | 8th April  |
| <b>Tree Pipit</b>          | Catbells               | 20th April |
| <b>Yellow Wagtail</b>      | Tebay                  | 9th May    |
| <b>Redstart</b>            | Haweswater             | 7th April  |
| <b>Whinchat</b>            | Allonby                | 28th April |
| <b>Wheatear</b>            | Walney                 | 11th March |
| <b>Ring Ouzel</b>          | Haweswater             | 29th March |
| <b>Grasshopper Warbler</b> | Walney                 | 9th April  |
| <b>Sedge Warbler</b>       | Walney                 | 19th April |
| <b>Reed Warbler</b>        | Derwent Water          | 21st April |
| <b>Lesser Whitethroat</b>  | Hodbarrow              | 19th April |
| <b>Whitethroat</b>         | Haig                   | 18th April |
| <b>Garden Warbler</b>      | Longlands              | 9th April  |
| <b>Blackcap</b>            | Corby Castle           | 24th March |
| <b>Wood Warbler</b>        | Crummock               | 21st April |
| <b>Chiffchaff</b>          | Longlands              | 1st March  |
| <b>Willow Warbler</b>      | Wastwater              | 25th March |
| <b>Spotted Flycatcher</b>  | Hallbankgate           | 1st May    |
| <b>Pied Flycatcher</b>     | Ashness                | 9th April  |

# WHINCHAT SUMMER

Exhibition by Stephen Westerberg & Adam Moan

Photographic and field study exhibition of  
colour- ringed Whinchats on RSPB Geltsdale reserve



RSPB Geltsdale Stagsike Cottages  
Friday 16th June until Tuesday 22nd August  
Open 9.00am -5.00pm 7 days a week  
Tel : 16977 46717 or [geltsdale@rspb.org.uk](mailto:geltsdale@rspb.org.uk)



## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>CBC indoor meeting programme winter 2017/2018 .....</b>                                | <b>31</b> |
| <b>Club news and announcements.....</b>   | <b>32</b> |
| <b>Snippets of good news .....</b>  | <b>34</b> |
| <b>Linking moth survey groups to forest insectivorous bird surveys</b>                    |           |
| <i>Guy Broome.....</i>  | <i>37</i> |
| <b>The Parton railway Oystercatchers <i>James Hewitson</i>.....</b>                       | <b>38</b> |
| <b>Have you seen any Common Sandpipers? <i>Dr. Stuart Sharp</i> .....</b>                 | <b>39</b> |
| <b>Little Egrets walking into a night roost <i>Dave Shackleton</i>.....</b>               | <b>40</b> |
| <b>Lowgill and Sedbergh Swifts <i>Tanya Hoare</i>.....</b>                                | <b>41</b> |
| <b>Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularia</i> - Buttermere <i>Nick Franklin</i> .....</b> | <b>42</b> |
| <b>Recent reports <i>Bob Jones &amp; Dave Piercy</i> .....</b>                            | <b>44</b> |
| <b>First arrivals <i>Dave Piercy</i>.....</b>   | <b>54</b> |

## Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is September 1st 2017

**If you have a computer:** please send contributions to Dave Piercy  
[daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk)

**If you do not have a computer:** please send in as clear a format as possible to Dave Piercy, 64 The Headlands, Keswick CA12 5EJ; tel 017687 73201

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](mailto:daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk)