



BIRD NEWS
Vol. 30 No. 2 Summer 2019

Club news and announcements

Ring Ouzel and Kestrel contretemps

Black-headed Gulls following feeding Coot

Rock Pipit nesting at Maryport Harbour 2019

An unusual Wood Warbler song

**Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on
Rockcliffe Marsh**

Campfield Marsh makeover

Recent reports

Contents - see back page

Twinned with Cumberland Bird Observers Club

New South Wales, Australia

<http://www.cboc.org.au>

If you want to borrow CBOC publications
please contact the Secretary who holds some.



Officers of the Society

Council

Chairman: Malcolm Priestley, Havera Bank, Howgill Lane, Sedbergh, LA10 5HB
tel. 015396 20104; mmphavera@hotmail.co.uk

Vice-chairmen: Mike Carrier, Peter Howard, Nick Franklin

Secretary: David Piercy, 64 The Headlands, Keswick, CA12 5EJ; tel. 017687
73201; daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk

Treasurer: Treasurer: David Cooke, Mill Craggs, Bampton, CA10 2RQ
tel. 01931 713392; cooke856@btinternet.com

Field trips organiser: Vacant

Talks organiser: Vacant

Members: Colin Auld
Jake Manson
Lyn Mills
Mike Mills
Adam Moan

Recorders

County: Chris Hind, 2 Old School House, Hallbankgate, Brampton, CA8 2NW
chris.m.hind@gmail.com tel. 016977 46379

Barrow/South Lakeland: Ronnie Irving, 24 Birchwood Close, Kendal LA9 5BJ
ronnieirving2017@gmail.com tel. 01539 727523

Carlisle & Eden: Chris Hind, 2 Old School House, Hallbankgate, Brampton, CA8 2NW
chris.m.hind@gmail.com tel. 016977 46379

Allerdale & Copeland: Nick Franklin, 19 Eden Street, Carlisle CA3 9LS
nickbirder66@gmail.com 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 tel. 01229 773820
Assistant rep: Dave Piercy

30 Years of Cumbria Bird Club

This year sees the 30th Birthday of our club. We would love as many members as possible to come and celebrate at the AGM which will be held at Penrith United Reformed Church on Friday 4th October 2019 at 7.30pm.

The celebration will involve displays on the history and achievements of the club. There will of course be refreshments concluding with a fine home made **Birthday Cake.**

The business of the AGM will be very brief and followed by a talk 'The Dotterel and other Cumbrian birds - my journey' by John Callion.

From CBC News Vol. 1 No. 1

Welcome to the Cumbria Bird Club

First and foremost, the Cumbria Bird Club is all about enjoying birds. The pleasure can come in numerous ways: in watching the antics of tits at a bird table, admiring the stoop of a Peregrine or the effortless soaring of a Buzzard, revelling in the sheer beauty of a Spotted Redshank in it's dusky breeding plumage, and for many, the adrenalin surge associated with a good "twitch": best of all to be the one who first finds and identifies the rarity. But after enjoyment comes curiosity, and with it the wish to understand why a bird is where it is, what it's needs are, and whether it is threatened.

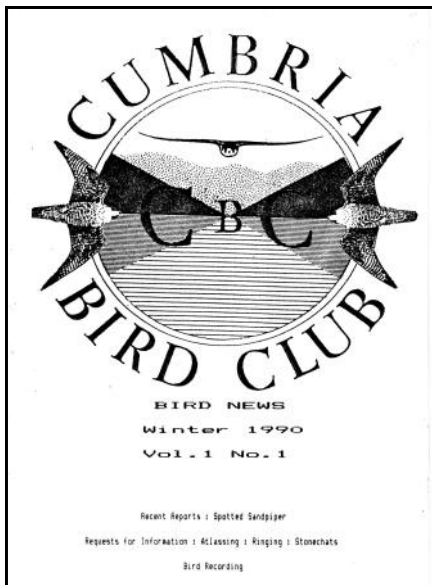
So the Cumbria Bird Club is a broad 'church'

Robert Spencer

The Inaugural General Meeting

The Club's Inaugural General Meeting was held on Saturday 18th November 1989 at Newton Rigg Agricultural College, Penrith and was attended by at least 87 people. After a welcoming address from the Chairman, John Callion, the first item on the agenda, the Constitution, was discussed.....During the course of the evening those present were able to view 14 logo designs of a remarkably high standard and then to vote for the winner which was adopted as the Club logo.

Ian Kinley



CBC News first issue cover

AGM

The AGM will be held at Penrith United Reformed Church on Friday 4th October 2019 at 7.30pm.

Vacancies on Council: Secretary, Treasurer and two ordinary members.

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 28th September).

Vacancies on Council: two ordinary members.

We would welcome two new faces on council. Please feel free to put yourself forward. There are generally just three council meetings a year. If you would like to know more about what is involved please feel free to contact any current officers or members whose details are on the inside cover.

Talks, events and outings The club desperately needs one or more organisers. Please offer help.

CBC Meeting programme 2019/2020

Friday Oct 4th (AGM): Penrith United Reformed Church 7.30pm

A celebration of 30 years of CBC plus 'The Dotterel and other Cumbrian birds - my journey' - *John Callion*

Wednesday 22nd January 2020: Tullie

House 7.15pm Joint with Carlisle NHS

'Twenty years of Pied Flycatchers in a Gal-loway wood' - *Brian Smith*

Monday 9th March 2020: Friends House, Stramongate, Kendal

The second Fred Gould Memorial Lecture
joint with KNHS

Talk by Paul Colley, winner of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2018.



Pied Flycatcher, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Swift Survey

Many thanks to all who took part in counting these wonderful birds. They will soon have left our skies so if you could return any forms as soon as possible after the end of August. Zero counts are undoubtedly disappointing but important to record as well. Council would be keen to continue with this survey in future years to help monitor their population.

All forms to Dave Piercy (see inside cover).

Dave Piercy

Long-eared Owl survey

A big thank you to everyone for all your efforts during the winter and summer phases of this survey. Your help has been really appreciated.

We are now approaching the end of the summer phase of the survey, which was indicated as June/July in the methodology. However, I do think this could be extended to include August visits to any potential sites. Long-eared Owls may remain in the vicinity of the nest for 1-2 months after fledging, during which time they remain dependent on the adults for food (and hence continue to beg with that characteristic 'squeaky gate' call). Also, there are indications that this may have been a late breeding season for Long-eared Owls, and vole numbers in many areas did seem to show signs of recovery in late spring. So if there are any sites you were hoping to re-visit and have not had the opportunity, then there is still time until the end of August.

Forms - Thanks to those who have already returned their survey forms. Please could folk e-mail me their completed forms as soon as is convenient after the end of August. Negative data is still valuable, so even if you had no success with Long-eared Owls please do send in your results. To keep it simple, the minimum useful data would be the site name and grid ref, date and timing of the survey, and Long-eared Owls and/or Tawny Owls heard. Other details such as weather conditions and other birds/wildlife would, of course, be most welcome. If you don't feel inclined to fill out the data spreadsheet, then please just provide the minimum data in an e-mail. Thanks.

Once all the results have been received I will then be able to produce a survey summary for the subsequent CBC Newsletter.

Many thanks again,

Pete Howard

p.howard691@btinternet.com

The CBC winter survey (2019-20) of non-WeBS still waters in Cumbria

The forthcoming CBC winter survey of inland still waters not currently covered by WeBS counts will begin in November. The aim of the project is to establish the importance of water bodies for wintering birds, including temporary flood waters, not regularly monitored in all parts of the county. Any information on the location of promising transient wetlands or recently developed waters which may not yet appear on OS maps would be most welcome at this stage.

Please contact Malcolm Priestley at: Havera Bank East, Howgill Lane, Sedburgh LA10 5HB tel. 015396 20104; mmphavera@hotmail.co.uk

Volunteers will be asked to make two visits to selected wetlands in early and late winter to record all water birds and mammals present. Full details of the survey will be available in the Autumn newsletter.

If you would like to register your interest in the survey please contact Malcolm Priestley (as above) giving your contact details and home area.

Malcolm Priestley



Bar-tailed Godwits, Port Carlisle, Tommy Holden

Ring Ouzel and Kestrel contretemps



Ring Ouzel, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

On 7th June this year, after climbing Hindscarth from Little Town, our return route was via Littledale, a beautiful valley between Hindscarth and Robinson. As we made our way down to the reservoir at the top of Scope Beck, we heard Ring Ouzels among the rocks on the Robinson side of the beck, opposite Littledale Crag. The Ouzels repetitive 'tac, tac, tac' suddenly changed to an alarm call and we spotted a female Kestrel with prey. A female Ouzel kept harassing the Kestrel as it tried to land to eat, then Meadow Pipits joined in the bombardment. The Kestrel finally managed to perch on a large rock but the ouzel kept up the attack until the Kestrel flew off down the valley carrying the tiny prey in its talons.

Travelling light due to the distance and height being climbed on the walk that day, we only had one pair of compact binoculars with us so we can't really say with any certainty what the Kestrel had caught.

Elaine Burnell

Black-headed Gulls following feeding Coot

On several days during January and February 2019 I watched one or more feeding Coot being followed by single Black-headed Gulls. There were around twenty Coot in a scattered flock feeding in the shallower parts of the tarn : sometimes upending and sometimes diving. The Black-headed Gull involved typically swam very close to the Coot, watching it intently as it swam, dived or upended. When the Coot brought vegetable material to the surface the Black-headed Gull would attempt to grab items of this from the water. The gull never tried to take food items directly from the Coot. On a few occasions the gull held pieces of vegetable matter but was never seen to swallow them.

A few photos illustrate this behavior – 22nd January



A first-winter Black-headed Gull looks on as the Coot prepares to upend



This same gull looks into the water following the Coot's upending.

Black-headed Gulls following feeding Coot



The gull grabs a piece of vegetation from the water

5th February



An adult Black-headed Gull watches intently as the Coot peers into the water.

Black-headed Gulls following feeding Coot



The Coot dives and surfaces with some vegetable matter as the gull takes a keen interest.



Both birds look into the water for the material brought near the surface by the Coot.



The gull 'snorkels' to take potential food items.

Having watched this association between Black-headed Gulls and Coot on many occasions at Talkin Tarn during this winter and the previous winter, there seemed to be a number of common threads –

- There was only ever a single gull following each Coot.
- Each gull involved would pursue this strategy over a protracted period of time.
- I never witnessed a gull swallowing a food item.
- The gull would only take items from the water and never directly from the Coot.

It is well documented and watched by many that Black-headed Gulls often perform kleptoparasitism in association with Golden Plovers. This would typically involved a flock of Golden Plovers feeding in grassland where numbers of Black-headed Gulls infiltrate the plover flock and wait for a plover to catch a worm and then steal it from them.

This behavior that I watched at Talkin Tarn probably does not qualify as kleptoparasitism as the items are not stolen from the Coot – but it is a fine line ! On checking the literature I found that Black-headed Gulls have been described as feeding in association with ducks and grebes – but not with Coot (BWP).

Chris Hind

Rock Pipit nesting at Maryport Harbour 2019

The Rock Pipit breeds in Cumbria in 'very small numbers', mostly on the rocky headlands and outcrops between St Bees and Workington, though occasionally, perhaps annually some nest on and around the post-industrial landscape features of Furness, Harrington, Workington and Maryport Harbours.

The Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Cumbria 1997-2001, calculates between ten and twenty pairs.

All of the evidence of breeding appears to come from birds carrying food, pairs displaying, holding territory or juveniles in late summer, rather than details of actual nests.



Nesting site, Maryport, John Callion

On the 3rd May, with Ruth Billinge and Thalia Sparke, I was at Maryport visiting a pair of Stonechats, that had a brood of five chicks. After ringing the chicks, we carried on walking towards the old lighthouse at the harbour mouth, along the disused and overgrown old coal carrying railway line. At the end of the line, we noticed a Rock Pipit sitting on the Lighthouse, the bird was carrying food. As we moved away, it was joined by another, also carrying food.

As most nesting pipit's of all species are generally wary, we were amazed that when we were no more than twenty paces away, both birds dropped to the ground into short vegetation that was growing at the base of two right-angled walls; quick inspection revealed a nest with four well grown chicks (about nine days old). We retreated to our original viewing point, and very quickly the birds returned with more food.

I returned alone four days later, and was pleased to see the chicks sitting at the edge of the nest, close to fledging. I spent some time, watching in which direction the parents were going searching for food; each time, they flew over the seawall towards the beach, returning in a matter of minutes, suggesting that food was plentiful, despite a cool east north-easterly and an air temperature of only ten degrees.



Rock Pipit nest, Maryport, John Callion

On this occasion, I also saw another adult not very far away but was unable to re-locate it. A final visit on 11 May, revealed an empty nest and anxious food carrying parents.

Calculating an incubation period of fourteen days, four eggs at one laid each day prior to incubation and nine day old chicks on 3 May, it seems the first egg would have been laid about 6 April.

On a follow up visit on the 28th May with the intention of locating a second nest, (they are double-brooded), I saw one of the adults and a juvenile (carrying a ring), from the initial nest. As I watched, I noticed another Rock Pipit by the roadside with a beak full of insects; soon, it took flight away from me, over the harbour, landing on the mast of a moored boat, quickly it dropped into the boat, out of sight; within a few seconds it reappeared without the food flying back towards me, landing at the roadside and re-commenced gathering food. It then repeated the journey, dropping down and out again without the food.

I walked around the harbour to where I could get a closer view. Almost immediately an adult returned with food; at this point as the bird dropped into the boat a fledged chick appeared and took the food. I watched for a further fifteen minutes or so, and observed several feeding visits, involving at least two fledged juveniles.



The Ulluva, possible Rock Pipit nesting site, Maryport, John Callion

The adults were ambivalent to the people in the immediate vicinity and carried on, without so much as an alarm call. Only when I tried to get closer did they show any concern.

The boat concerned had a 'for sale' notice attachment, so may have been moored and could have been unvisited for some time, providing a possible nesting site, however, the chicks looked capable of flight and could have moved there from elsewhere. The harbour walls have cavities which could also be suitable for nesting.

The distance between the two pairs was approximately 40 metres.

John Callion

An unusual Wood Warbler song

I was birding in one of my favourite west Cumbrian woods when I was stopped in my tracks by an unexpected sound. Having just returned from a trip to southern Spain, I had become reasonably familiar with the song of the Western Bonelli's Warbler (*Phylloscopus bonelli*), and I was fairly sure I had just heard one here in Cumbria. After a short while the bird sang again. It wasn't very close, but I was pretty sure it was the Bonelli's song. After a little exploration I found the bird and got good views of it. It was a displaying Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*), and once close up I could hear the entire song very well.

The song started much as any other Wood Warbler I had ever heard, but instead of becoming an accelerating, shivering trill, it changed quite abruptly into a phrase exactly like the Bonelli's, which, being fractionally louder, had carried further than the rest of the song. Collin's Bird Guide describes this as

a simple repetition of one high note 'svi-svi-svi-svi-svi-svi-svi-svi'. The bird also sometimes gave the 'alternative' Wood Warbler song, 'peu-peu-peu-peu-peu', and called from time to time; both of these were quite normal. Some of the literature does describe Wood Warbler song as being like Bonelli's *in tone*, which to my ear it is, but this phrase was virtually identical in every way.



Wood Warbler, Ashness , Tony Marsh

On inspection the bird looked quite washed out and the yellow on the face and throat was insipid and pale. In every other respect it resembled any other Wood Warbler I have ever seen and was displaying vigorously. It seems likely that the unusual song and aberrant plumage may both be related in some way to past events in the bird's life. It is perhaps worth noting also that the habitat the bird had chosen was largely unsuitable being an area mostly of mature conifer, and regenerating birch and only small scraps of its preferred closed deciduous canopy, in one of which this bird was displaying.

I have since listened to a lot of Wood Warbler songs on the excellent Xeno-Canto website and found several like this one.

An example of unusual Wood Warbler song can be heard here; <https://www.xeno-canto.org/318482>

For comparison here is the usual Wood Warbler song <https://www.xeno-canto.org/476632>

and the Western Bonelli's <https://www.xeno-canto.org/471514>

Willow Warblers (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) have been known to produce an extremely convincing Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) song, and variations on it, often intermingled with their own song. Interspecific competition has been suggested as a cause of this so called 'mixed singing'. This seems unlikely in this case, as the nearest Western Bonelli's Warbler breeding population is a long way to the south.

Jake Manson

Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on Rockcliffe Marsh

Rockcliffe is one of Britain's largest salt marshes and lies between the rivers Esk and Eden in the intertidal area at the eastern end of the Solway Firth. The gull colony is situated at the western end of the marsh which can be inundated during periods of very high tides which fortunately occurs only irregularly. The marsh is privately owned with limited access, but by agreement with the existing estate, Cumbria Wildlife Trust has, since 1969, employed a seasonal warden, to record and monitor all breeding birds. When this work began in 1969 there were just under 700 pairs of Herring/Lesser Black-backed Gulls (hereafter referred to as big gulls).

At that time, on a different area of the marsh there was a colony of Black-headed Gulls, totaling some 308 pairs. Numbers of Black-headed Gulls rose thereafter and reached a total of 2657 pairs in 1976. There were fluctuations after this, but a serious decline set in during the mid 1990s and very few pairs have bred in the last decade.

From a relatively modest start in the late 1960s and through the next couple of decades, numbers of the big gulls increased dramatically and in 1994 there were a remarkable 9559 nests. It did not stop there and in the 2000 season numbers had risen to 10322 pairs. By this time the ratio between the two species increased to five to one in favour of the Lesser Black-backs.

At this point there was a situation where a large area of the marsh was out of bounds to grazing cattle. Big numbers of gulls are quite capable of keeping cattle away from their nesting area by persistent mobbing and aggression. Some control became necessary and beyond an agreed point eggs were pricked under license to limit the continuing spread.

After this the colony remained at some ten thousand pairs each season until 2003 when the first major decline occurred. In that season the number of nests fell dramatically to around 2500. With some yearly fluctuations this number remained until the second major crash took place when the colony size reduced to under 1000 pairs in 2015. It has not stopped there and by 2018 the number of nests was down to a pitiful 362. Worse lay in the fact that very few, if any, young fledged from the colony, though a meager 14 did so last year (2018).

So why the remarkable rise in numbers from the start of monitoring in 1969 to the peak around 2003 and the subsequent worrying decline at the present time.

Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on Rockcliffe Marsh

There has been significant declines in breeding big gulls at other places (Walney, some Welsh islands, Alderney) and its just possible, and food for thought, that this is part of a fluctuating natural cycle.

Or is it more sinister than that. There is evidence that a reduction in food available to the birds have played a part. Could the big build up have been partly as a result of food available from the nearby waste management tip which is no longer available to them.

There is evidence from fisherman that numbers of small fish, previously exploited by the gulls, have fallen in recent years and there is always a constant tightening of regulations regarding waste matter of all types.



Herring Gull, St Bees, Tony Marsh

The change in available food is reinforced by visual observation backed by photographic evidence of adult gulls killing and eating their neighbours young. This is one of the reasons why very few young have fledged in recent times. Also as numbers have decreased so much, predation by foxes etc has a far greater effect on the colony as a whole.

Each season since 1987, I have ringed young big gulls on the marsh with numbers ringed reflecting the success of the colony in that particular year. Recently there have been few if any at all, though 14 Lesser Black-backs were ringed in 2018. The peak occurred in 1998 when 122 young Herring Gulls and 271 young Lesser Black-backs were ringed.

Will this ever be repeated? Not in my time I'm afraid.

Mike Carrier

My thanks to Mr. Giles Mounsey–Heysham owner of Rockcliffe Marsh for his permission to write this article.

Campfield Marsh makeover

RSPB Campfield Marsh has benefitted from two main sources of grant aid recently, and works are in progress to improve wetland areas across the peat bog, farmland and saltmarsh to benefit breeding and migrating wading birds along with a host of other wetland dwellers such as dragonflies and peat bog plants.



Work already completed looking south from Rogersceugh

Last year a partnership led by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and including RSPB, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and other peatland owners through the north of England won a £5.5 million bid to restore peatlands throughout the region as part of the DEFRA Peat Fund.

The fund aims to restore both upland and lowland peat to help lock carbon into these important habitats to reduce the impact of peat oxidation on climate change and improve conditions for a host of rare plants and wildlife at the same time. Around £100K of this money is being spent at Campfield Marsh to help produce a patchwork of wetland pools, fen and woodland to support species such as Curlew, Snipe, dragonflies and the recently colonised Marsh Fritillary butterfly.

The work will take place where the reserve borders the peat bog to remove the 'hard edges' where reclaimed agricultural land bites into the area of peat. When land is drained for agriculture, the peat dries and shrinks, leaving a large step in level up to the peat bog. The work will aim to reduce the gradient of this step and via a series of small low ridges or 'bunds' help hold the water at surface level right onto the peaty fields.



Work completed looking towards the Wampool estuary

Over time the high water level will encourage the growth of many different areas, from moss filled pools, reedbeds and fens to Willow woods. Re-

wetting the peat stops the release of carbon into the atmosphere, helping control greenhouse gas emissions and its effects on climate change. However, a more immediately visible effect is the range of species which will move in to take advantage of these new habitats. Campfield Marsh remains the only RSPB reserve on the UK mainland to support breeding Marsh Fritillary butterflies which will benefit from the provision of more suitable areas where their larval food-plant, Devil's Bit Scabious, will grow. The wet areas will also provide ideal breeding pools for a range of dragonfly species and other invertebrates.

These bog edges are important feeding sites for Snipe and the rapidly declining Curlew, while other less common species such as Grasshopper Warbler and Water Rail enjoy the cover of dense vegetation brought about by the reduction in cattle grazing. Our graziers now use Belted Galloway throughout the peat edge wetlands, a hardy breed which are quite at home munching rushes while up to their bellies in water. Willow Tits too, will benefit from the development of wet willow woods on the outer reaches of the peat.



Willow Tit, Glasson Moss, Adam Moan

The second major boost to the site has been the signing of a new countryside stewardship scheme to install a new wetland system across the farmland at North Plain. A £300K capital works programme will create a series of pools carrying water from the peat bog down to the saltmarsh providing ideal nesting opportunities for Lapwing and Redshank. A series of sluices will allow the farmland to be flooded and drained when required. Drying of the fields is an important part of the management cycle, allowing rushes to be controlled and soil invertebrate populations to recover, before re-flooding attracts breeding and migrating wading birds to the site. The ability to rotate the wet and dry areas around the farm will ensure that there is always some land in prime condition for wetland plants and animals.

This work will be starting towards the end of July this year and continuing through the autumn onto the saltmarsh where further wet features and viewing opportunities should enhance a visit to Campfield.

Dave Blackledge RSPB Site Manager

Recent reports

The period covered is March 2019 to May 2019. Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review.

Wildfowl

Walby Flash still had **Whooper Swans** at the beginning of March and 101 there on 7th was a high number for the site. There were 31 in the Lyth Valley on 17th. In the third week birds were clearly moving with 70 north over Skelwith Bridge on 22nd, and two days later 30 passed Walney and 20 were on Windermere: on the same day the flock at Kirkbride contained 211 birds, there were no reports thereafter apart from four passing Walney on 8th April.

600 **Pink-feet** were well inland at Little Salkeld on 1st March; at Walney northern bound birds were seen – 210 on 19th April, 61 a day later and another 65 on 7th May. Two **Greenland White-fronted Geese** were near Flookburgh on 21st March.

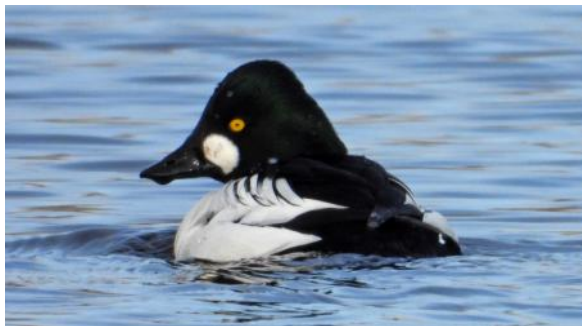


Red-breasted Goose with Barnacles

The regular feral **Red-breasted Goose** was on Derwent Water with feral Barnacle Geese on 30th March. **Barnacle Geese** built up on Rockcliffe Marsh in the persistent easterly winds with near 30,000 at the end of April but down to 6,500 early in May with a sudden clear out in the middle of the month with the last satellite tagged bird leaving overnight on 14th. Similarly tagged birds had previously been recorded on a number of occasions leaving the Solway in a north easterly direction only to return to try another day. The **Black Brant** was on Walney until 1st April at least. A redhead **Smew** was at Longtown on 31st March.

Shelduck started moving inland in March including two at Walby Flash on 1st. In mid-May at least 100 were feeding along the edge of the incoming tide in the River Eden channel off Boustead Hill. 400 **Wigeon** were in Ravenglass Esk on 2nd March. A pair of **Gadwall** frequented Walby Flash for a time in May – unusual there. Up to two pairs frequented the Foulshaw area. A pair of **Garganey** on Derwent Water in mid-April was unusual there. A pair were also near Foulshaw on 2nd April and two were at Sandscale Haws on 17th.

A **Goldeneye** female was on Ennerdale water on 1st May. A pair of **Eider** were off Workington in mid-March, one was by the cliffs at St Bees on 9th April and in May birds were regularly seen at Bowness on Solway with a maximum of five on 19th.



Goldeneye, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Unusual was a drone

Pochard at Thurstonfield Lough. Two were on Soddy gap on March 18th.

Numbers of **Common Scoter** at Walney were significant with 400 on 8th April increasing to 630 by 27th; however early in May a large flock was seen twice at mouth of Morcambe Bay with 6,000 on 9th May and doubled to 12,000 on 12th; numbers in the Solway were lower than in recent years with 36 (25 males) on 20th April being the largest. Ten **Velvet Scoter** were with the Common Scoter flock at Walney on 9th May. **Gannets** came into the Solway at high tide on many dates with 16 on 6th May of note.

Partridges to Herons

A pair of **Grey Partridge** were at Beaumont on 7th May with two birds at both Brownrigg and Mawbray on 18th. Three **Black Grouse** were in the Kirkby Stephen area on 18th March. Six **Red-throated Divers** were off Workington on 19th March and 12 were off Silecroft on 18th April. On 9th May a **Manx Shearwater** corpse was found next to the A66 at Stainton only the 5th inland Cumbrian record. 18 went south in an hour on the evening of 25th May past Workington. There were seven off Silecroft on 29th May. Three **Fulmar** went past Bowness on 26th May.

A **Western Cattle Egret** frequented the Lessonhall/Oulton area from 5th to 20th March, at least, with another at Hodbarrow on 27th April and 2nd May. Small numbers of **Little Egret** frequented the south Solway with regular "traffic" back and forth across to the Scottish side. Foulshaw numbers peaked at eight. Inland single birds were at Edenhall on 1st March, on the Lune at Tebay on 15th and Bassenthwaite on 27th May. Two on the Ravenglass Esk on 2nd March were unusual. A **Great White Egret** was in the Foulshaw area on 8th March and one was still at Brigsteer on 24th March and at Holme on 30th and again at Brigsteer on 28th April. A **Spoonbill** was seen at RSPB Campfield on several dates at the end of May.



Peregrine, Sea Cliffs, Tommy Holden

Raptors to Waders

Osprey returned to Esthwaite in mid-March with other birds being seen there after at regular breeding sites. In addition birds passed through Walney on 5th and 23rd April; a bird was off RSPB Campfield on 18th May and a wandering, tagged bird was seen on several dates/sites in the north of the county. Single **Red Kites** were in the south and the north of the county in mid-March with a single report of one over Kendal in mid-May. **Hen** and **Marsh Harriers** were seen regularly on the southern mosses.

The regular build up of **Oystercatchers** at inland sites began in March with a total of 593 in the Eden Valley between Kirkoswald and Kirby Stephen on 1st. An **Avocet** was on Walney at high tide on 25th March. 1200 **Golden Plover** were at Walney on 7th April with numbers reducing thereafter.

19th April saw a single **Dotterel** on Helvellyn and three on Blencathra. A single bird on White Maiden, Coniston was an unexpected surprise and 12 were reported from Great End on 12th May. The only report of significant numbers of **Lapwing** were 420 at Little Salkeld on 1st March. **Little Ringed Plover** were reported from regular sites with addition of up to three at Walby Flash in the first half of May before the flash started to dry out. Six birds were seen together in Penrith in April. Three **Green Sandpipers** were still on the Ravenglass Esk on 1st March and one was near Levens Bridge on 3rd March with another on the Longtown Esk on 21st. A **Wood Sandpiper** was reported from the same site on 12th May and another at Ulverston on 17th. Two **Common Sandpiper** which had been on Ravenglass Esk all winter were acting as a pair there by 21st March: spring arrivals were as expected though numbers were down at Bassenthwaite and Derwent Water.

Two **Greenshank** were still at Glasson Point at the beginning of March and at the same time nine were on the Mite/Esk complex at Ravenglass. Passage birds included two on the Esk at Longtown on 21st and at Walby up to three were present in the second week of April and a single on 12th May.



Whimbrel, Port Carlisle, Tommy Holden

Ruff continued to be present at Campfield with five there 11th March and then four at Wedholme Flow on 19th April. Away from that area two (male & female) were at Walby Flash on 14th May. At the beginning of March significant numbers of **Curlew** were 100 on the Ravenglass Esk and 373 at Orm-side. **Whimbrel** were first reported at Silecroft (7) and Kirksanton (9) on 18th April. Walney (18) on 19th April with 44 there a day later and 50 at Bowness the same day. 37 were at RSPB Campfield on 8th May and on the outer Solway 18 at Flimby on 18th. Of real note, but hard to find at times was a **Temmink's Stint** present at Walby Flash for several days from 12th May.



Redshank, Port Carlisle, Tommy Holden

Black-tailed Godwit were reported from Silverdale Moss – between 950 and 1000 – on 13th March and 1600 on 14th. Inland two were at Walby in mid May. An exceptional 700 **Common Redshank** were at Hodbarrow on 17th

March. In April Walney had up to 6000 **Knot**, 1050 **Sanderling** and 420 **Turnstone**. On 9th May Haverigg held 200+ **Ringed Plover** mixed in with 600+ **Dunlin**. Two **Woodcock** were at Watchtree NR on 1st May. A **Jack Snipe** was on Lowca beach on 16th March and one was around Foulshaw on 21st March.



Dunlin, Port Carlisle, Tommy Holden

Skuas to Auks

Once again weather patterns were not conducive to producing any significant skua passage At Walney Three **Bonxies** passed on 28th April and six **Pomarine** the same day. At Bowness **Arctic Skuas** trickled through but with rarely more than two or three in a day. The first **Pomarines** were 16 birds on 26th April – probably the highest day total. Very few **Bonxies** were reported. **Long-tailed Skuas** were reported on at least four days with a total of 12 birds.

Few observers provided records of gulls but among those that were submitted were an adult **Mediterranean Gull** at Allonby on 11th March, two birds at Siddick on 19th and two at Hodbarrow on 29th May. 45 **Lesser Black-backed** were at Walby Flash on 21st April. A **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Whitehaven on 17th April. A **Little Gull** was at Walney on 11th March with two there on 19th April. Another was reported from Ravenglass in midmonth with other birds being reported from Bowness.

Kittiwake were passing Bowness throughout the period with the following of note: 517 on 11th March, 130 on 22nd, 115 on 28th April, and 150 on 6th May. Thereafter numbers were reduced but continued to the end of May.

The first **Sandwich Tern** reported was a single at Haverigg/Hodbarrow on 18th March. “**Commic**” **Terns** passed as usual east past Bowness during April and May with 274 on 20th April being of note. The recent discovery that tagged Arctic Terns from the Farne Islands use the Irish Sea and the Solway as a migration route (rather than the North Sea) will add interest to sea watching at Bowness and may be more time needs to be spent watching there at times of return migration. Two **Black Terns** passed Walney on 8th May. **Black Guillemot** were present as usual off St Bees/Fleswick.

Pigeons to Buntings

Cuckoos seemed to be widely spread. Five were calling simultaneously around Rosthwaite. **Common Swift** arrived in early May (three at Walney on 1st). A **Long-eared Owl** roosted at Walney on 12th April and a **Short-eared** there on 5th May. A **Hoopoe** was at Coulderton on 18th April before flying south towards Nethertown.

Sand Martins arrived at Longtown Ponds on 19th March (four) with the first significant number being 50 at Siddick Ponds on 23rd. Early **Swallows** arrived by 23rd March at Siddick but arrival thereafter was mixed with some sites recording normal activity whilst others commented on a lack of birds.

Passage was however still taking place up the west coast at Whitehaven and Allonby in the last week of May. **House Martins** arrived at a similar time to Swallows but returning bird numbers varied considerably in various parts of the county.

A **Great Grey Shrike** was reported at High Newton on 17th April. **Meadow Pipits** were moving at Walney by 18th March (200) and 260 passed on 8th April. **Yellow Wagtails** were present at regular sites in the north of the county but two what may well have been passage birds were also seen at mouth of the River Esk and another briefly at Walby Flash on 12th May.



Redstart, Geltsdale, Adam Moan



Cuckoo, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Common Redstart and **Pied Flycatchers** seemed to be in good numbers. A **Black Redstart** was at Siddick on 21st March.

A **Firecrest** sang for a few days at Walney from 7th May. Four **Goldcrests** at Walney on 29th March were a sign of passage starting up.

An early **Northern Wheatear** was at Walney on 3rd March and then one at Geltsdale on 20th and another at Allonby on 23rd. At Walney passage started on 30th (seven) with numbers increasing throughout April: with 46 on 7th, 94 on 17th, 80 on 18th – there was “a mass clear out” on 20th but another 21 on 28th. Other records included six at Bowness on 20th April and 15 on Sandgate Marsh on 12th May. A returning **Whinchat** was back at Torver on 21st April. A passage bird was on the coast at Siddick on 30th April with two at RSPB Campfield on 7th May. The first **Ring Ouzel** reported was from Walney on 29th March.



Wheatear, Siddick, Tony Marsh

A **Western Subalpine Warbler** was photographed at Loweswater on 29th April but not seen subsequently. A **Willow Warbler** on the summit of Cross Fell was a pleasant surprise. The **Twite** flock at Walney still included 50 birds at the beginning of March but this gradually reduced to 16 by 11th April and further after that. Very small numbers of **Hawfinch** were reported throughout at Sizergh with a pair coming to a bird table in the Coniston area in May.

,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



Kingfisher, River Ellen, Tommy Holden

First arrivals

Species	Location	Date
Osprey	Bassenthwaite	April 1st
Common Sandpiper	River Esk	April 8th
Sandwich Tern	Hodbarrow	March 18th
Arctic Tern	Walney	April 13th
Little Tern	Walney	April 21st
Cuckoo	Bannishead & Rosthwaite	April 19th
Swift	Morton	April 27th
Sand Martin	Longtown	March 19th
Swallow	Siddick	March 23rd
House Martin	Longtown	April 1st
Tree Pipit	Foulshaw	April 19th
Yellow Wagtail	Rockcliffe	April 19th
Redstart	Thacka	April 12th
Whinchat	Torver Low Common	April 21st
Wheatear	Walney	March 4th
Ring Ouzel	Walney	March 30th
Grasshopper Warbler	Walney	April 14th
Sedge Warbler	Campfield & Foulshaw & Workington	April 19th
Reed Warbler	Walney	April 21st
Lesser Whitethroat	Allonby	April 23rd
Whitethroat	Frizington & Foulshaw	April 19th
Garden Warbler	Glasson Moss	April 19th
Blackcap	Walney	March 22nd
Wood Warbler	Miltonrigg Wood	April 24th
Chiffchaff	Longtown	February 28th
Willow Warbler	Glasson Moss	April 5th
Spotted Flycatcher	Sedbergh	April 26th
Pied Flycatcher	Ashness & Forrest Hill	April 17th

Contents

Club news and announcements	31
Ring Ouzel and Kestrel contretemps <i>Elaine Burnell</i>	35
Black-headed Gulls following feeding Coot <i>Chris Hind</i>	36
Rock Pipit nesting at Maryport Harbour 2019 <i>John Callion</i>	40
An unusual Wood Warbler song <i>Jake Manson</i>	42
Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on Rockcliffe Marsh <i>Mike Carrier</i>	44
Campfield Marsh makeover <i>Dave Blackledge</i>	46
Recent reports <i>Bob Jones & Dave Piercy</i>	48

Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is September 1st 2019.

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

© Cumbria Bird Club, July 2019
'Cumbria Bird Club' is a Registered Charity, number 1001459

Cumbria Bird Club Website

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

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