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Club news and announcements

AGM

All being well the AGM will be held at Penrith United Reformed Church on Friday 1st October 2020 at 7.30pm.

Vacancies on Council: Chair, Vice-chair x 2, Secretary, Treasurer.

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 24th September).

Vacancies on Council: three ordinary members.

We would welcome three 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 contact any current officers or members whose details are on the inside cover.

CBC AGM 2021

Friday Oct 1st (AGM): Penrith United Reformed Church 7.30pm

Mike Carrier - Memories

Jake Manson - Thailand

Adam Moan - Walking with a camera, RSPB Geltsdale

Subject to changes. Please see the web site for up to date information.



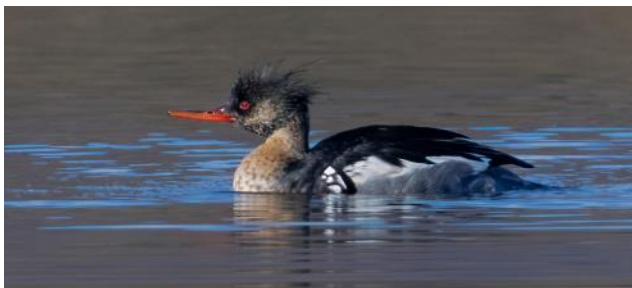
Moorhens, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

“The ambition to see 300 bird species in Cumbria is impossible (Dean 1990)”

In 1989 my late entry to a challenge between Ian Kinley and Fred Gould to see how many bird species could be seen in a calendar year within the confines of the Cumbrian boundary produced a total of 206 species, just two behind Ian. This was immediately followed up in 1990 by another year long challenge with Fred Gould which culminated in a then record 219 species being seen. Although just three ahead of Fred this is an annual total which, as far as I am aware, has remained unbeaten to the present day. However, this proved to just be the beginning, whilst chatting to Tim Dean at Walney Bird Observatory at the end of the year, the far more formidable challenge to see 300 species in Cumbria was discussed and my imagination fired.

Lists are very much a personal thing, with what to count and not to count, in the end it is down to individual observers to define the parameters by which they record their own sightings. However, in order to provide some consistency, this Cumbria List follows the latest taxonomy and scientific nomenclature recommendations of the British Ornithologists Union and the following criteria have been followed. First and foremost, the species has to be on Category A of the British List (species which have been recorded in an apparently wild state at least one since 1st January 1958) or appear in Category C (species which, although introduced, have established a self-sustaining feral breeding population in Britain. In addition, relevant records must also have been ratified by the appropriate body, either county-wise by the Cumbria Records Panel, or if it is a national rarity, the British Birds Rarities Committee. Obvious escapees and dead or sick and injured birds taken into care have not been included.

This story begins around 50 years ago way back in the 1970's, at this time I first became captivated by birds during family weekend camping breaks in the Lake District. While no formal record keeping was undertaken in these early years, my



Red-breasted Merganser, Derwent Water, Tony Marsh

earliest recollections involve parascending **Tree Pipits** and nesting **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Marsh Tit** and **Redstart** in the Rusland Valley while notes from Cavendish Dock, Barrow-in-Furness, which became my first local patch, provide details of **Slavonian Grebe**, **Long-tailed Duck** and **Scaup** amongst large rafts of **Pochard** – how times have changed, along with a pair

of **Garganey** on Mere Tarn. I first began more systematic record keeping at the beginning of the 1980s and these early years saw birding generally restricted to an occasional weekend activity and consequently resulted in a limited species list of mainly common birds. However, the lifetime long learning process of bird identification had begun and the accumulation of my Cumbria List commenced:



Garganey, Campfield, Roger Ridley

1981 – 115 species: the first attempt at a year list saw activities that were mainly limited to local patch birding; however, excursions did include a visit to Standing Tarn, near Dalton-in-Furness which produced a flock of five **Ruddy Duck** on 2nd May – only the second Cumbrian record. Also seen were **Black Guillemot**, but no Puffin, amongst the usual suspects at St Bees Head, five dark-bellied **Brent Geese** at Rampside – the early beginnings of what has now developed into a substantial winter flock involving both races, several **Short-eared Owl** hunting the dunes at North Walney and a ringtail **Hen Harrier** at Newbiggin.

1982 – 129 species: again, it was mainly local patch birding and weekend breaks in Lakeland and only 14 new species were added but these did include a drumming **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** at Hawkshead on 7th February and a singing **Corn Bunting** on 21st June on waste ground at Barrow Docks – both now considered extinct as breeding species in Cumbria.

1983 – 140 species: progress remained slow in these early years with just 11 additions although I was to become heavily involved in survey work which took me into new areas and highlights included a **Red-necked Grebe** at Aldingham during a WeBS count and **Red Grouse** and **Black Redstart** at Gawthwaite on Kirkby Moor during BTO Winter Atlas Survey work. Later in the year, my first attempts at sea watching produced an **Arctic Skua** at Earnse Bay, Walney Island while further Winter Atlas work added **Merlin** and **Black Grouse** at Woodland Fell – unfortunately the latter are now long gone from this area.

1984 – 153 species: the slow but steady compilation of species continued with a number of additional commoner species added. However, there were a few surprises, further BTO Winter Atlas Survey work within the Furness Peninsula saw **Jack Snipe** at Standing Tarn, Dalton-in-Furness and **Tree Sparrow** and **Brambling** at Gleaston. Spring produced a singing **Reed Warbler** at Caven-

dish Dock at a time when the species was only just becoming established in the area. A **Kingfisher** near Ulverston – the highlight of a WeBS count, a small flock of **Hawfinch** in the Rusland Valley followed before the year ended with a **Great Northern Diver** inland at Buccleugh Dock, Barrow-in-Furness.

1985 – 161 species: although visit to Brother's Water produced **Pied Flycatcher** the year saw birding still mainly limited to occasional weekend local patch activity and WeBS survey work, which produced **Black-tailed Godwit** and **Spotted Redshank** along with a small flock of **Barnacle Goose** – presumably overshooting birds heading for the Solway. However, further attempts at seawatching from Biggar Bank, Walney Island did produce **Red-throated Diver**, **Common Scoter**, **Little Tern** and **Manx Shearwater**.



Desert Wheatear, Walney

1986 – 176 species: a first-winter **Little Gull** was at Windermere Ferry and **Water Rail** at Mere Tarn; however, Cavendish Dock remained my local patch and produced an adult white morph **Snow Goose** amongst a skein of Pink-footed Geese heading north from their wintering grounds on the Lancashire Mosses and an adult **Mediterranean Gull** – an early example of what was to prove to become a regular species in the county. Adventures further afield added **Crossbill** at Roudsea Wood, **Wood Warbler** in the Rusland Valley, **Lesser Whitethroat** at Thwaite Flat, **Nightjar** on the Duddon Mosses and **Turtle Dove** at Mere Tarn. While autumn passage waders included **Ruff**, **Green Sandpiper** and **Curlew Sandpiper**. Seawatching produced **Pomarine Skua** and a regular adult **Glaucous Gull** at Biggar Bank, Walney Island before the highlight of the year involved my first Cumbrian twitch to see a **Desert Wheatear** – Cumbria's one and only - near the Lighthouse at South Walney on 16th November and perhaps more importantly for the future, induction into the local "birding grapevine".

1987 – 195 species: access to the local "grapevine" opened up a new world of possibility and a further 19 species were added, beginning with news of a **Snow Bunting** at Sandscale Haws. However, "self-found" birds also continued to be added to the list with **Bewick's Swan** on the river at Newby Bridge, **Iceland Gull** at Biggar Bank, Walney, displaying **Goshawk** in the Rusland Valley and **Ring Ouzel** at the Coastguard Station on Walney Island before **Puffin** was finally added at St Bees Head. A **Grasshopper Warbler** was

found reeling near Askam-in-Furness and a **Black Tern** at Mere Tarn on 19th April preceded a trip the next day to Haweswater where the breeding **Golden Eagles** were added before news of a **Great Grey Shrike** saw me dashing later the same day to Sandscale Haws. At least seven **Velvet Scoter** were amongst a flock of Common Scoter drifting out with the tide at Foulney Island before Mere Tarn produced a **Wood Sandpiper** on 15th May and news of a male **Red-spotted Bluethroat** again saw me visiting Walney BO on 25th May before a **Night Heron** on the River Kent near Kendal on 1st June brought spring to a close. Autumn began with a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Mere Tarn on 2nd September before further seawatching efforts at Biggar Bank, Walney added **Great Skua** and **Leach's Petrel**. New additions for the year ended with a trip to the Solway on 14th November to see a **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Anthorn with some nearby woodland providing **Willow Tit**.

1988 – 205 species: only 10 species were added during the year beginning with **Red-legged Partridge** at High Haume, Dalton-in-Furness before a **Golden Oriole** was found in Willington Woods, Bardsea on 17th June. The local grapevine then saw me again dashing to Walney Island on 19th July, this time to see Cumbria's first, and to date, only **Greater Sand Plover** that was to take up long-term residence on the shoreline between Hare Hill and Hillock Whins.



Greater Sand Plover, Walney

Another wader, this time a **Little Stint**, was at Newbiggin before news broke of a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** on Ormsgill Reservoir on 8th September with a **Wryneck** seen in fading light next day back at Walney BO and a **Common Crane** at Killington Reservoir on 26th September. These were followed by a **Black-necked Grebe** at Cavendish Dock – still my local patch, before further twitches added a flock of roadside **Waxwing** at Arnside and a **Hoopoe** wintering in the coastal dunes at Mawbray on 10th December.

1989 – 225 species: a total of 206 species were seen during the year, but not including the **Hooded Crow** at Biggar Bank, Walney which was not elevated to full species status until 2002 and thus became my earliest Cumbrian "armchair tick". A summary of the year is given in CBC News (CBC Bird

News Vol1:2) but my highlights began with a drake **Ring-necked Duck** on Coniston Water on 7th January – it was the 100th species found in the day during a Winter Bird Race. This was followed by a **Long-eared Owl** found roosting on Walney Island before further twitches added a drake **American Wigeon** on the Duddon Estuary on 12th March, drake **Ferruginous Duck** on Brother's Water on 24th March and **Little Ringed Plover** at Walney BO. Continued local patch work then provided both **Marsh Harrier** and singing **Quail** at Mere Tarn before it was back to Killington Reservoir for another Cumbrian first, a **Caspian Tern** on 13th June. A **Barred Warbler** at Rampside on 17th September proved elusive before eventually being pinned down and Walney BO then added the county's first **Wilson's Phalarope** on 1st October and a **Firecrest** on 8th October before another trip to the Solway produced a **Spoonbill** at Grune Point next day. Closer to home were a **Grey Phalarope** at Cavendish Dock and **White-fronted Goose** at Walney BO before a **Spotted Sandpiper** - only the second Cumbrian record, began an extended stay at Cavendish Dock on 3rd November. The final new additions involved a **Bittern** at Siddick Pond on 19th November before the year ended with a **Lapland Bunting** at Cavendish Dock on 5th December, **Black-throated Diver** at Ramsden Dock, Barrow-in-Furness on 30th December and a **Smew** at Longtown Ponds next day.

1990 – 239 species: the first additions of the year involved trips to see a pair of **Red-crested Pochard** at Tindale Tarn on 14th January and two summer-plumaged **Water Pipits** at Bassenthwaite Lake on 31st March before Mere Tarn produced my first **Osprey** – how times have changed for this species in the last 30 years. Further trips were needed to find **Dotterel** on the Cumbrian section of The Pennines and see a cracking male **Red-backed Shrike** at Humphrey Head on 9th June during a break from Cumbrian Atlas fieldwork. Westerly gales saw six **Storm Petrels** close inshore at Walney BO before a dash to Borwick Rails on 19th July produced a **Little Egret** – who at the time could have predicted the rapid change in status of this species within the county. An **Icterine Warbler** was at South Walney on 18th August, a **Hobby** nearby at Rampside on 23rd September and a **Richard's Pipit** at Scales Park, Gleaston on 22nd October before a trip to Siddick Pond to see Bittern located four **Bearded Tits**. Cavendish Dock then produced the first **Wood-lark** in Cumbria for over 30 years on 4th November – local patch working still had its merits, before a **Little Auk** was on the pools at South Walney on 16th November. The final bird of the year was a **Red Kite** in the Lorton Valley on 29th December – long before the attempted reintroductions into the county and surrounding areas. A total of 219 species were seen during the year again not including a Hooded Crow and a remarkable further new 14 species added, with a full account of the year given in CBC News (CBC Bird News Vol2:2).

Colin Raven

Part 2 of "The 300" will appear in the next issue of the newsletter

A selection of arrival dates 2021

Species	Location	Date
Osprey	Hesket Newmarket	21st March
Sandwich Tern	Hodbarrow	20th March
Little Tern	Hodbarrow	9th April
Cuckoo	Ullswater	17th April
Swift	Kendal	25th April
Sand Martin	Talkin Tarn	6th March
Swallow	Lazonby	27th March
House Martin	Various	30th March
Tree Pipit	Wasdale	20th April
Redstart	Talkin Tarn	3rd April
Wheatear	Bannishead	22nd March
Ring Ouzel	Northern Fells	30th March
Grasshopper Warbler	Thornhill Moss	20th April
Sedge Warbler	Walney	14th April
Reed Warbler	Walney	20th April
Lesser Whitethroat	Walney	16th April
Whitethroat	Walney	20th April
Garden Warbler	Longtown	16th April
Wood Warbler	Glenridding	22nd April
Chiffchaff	Carlisle Cricket club	7th March
Willow Warbler	Campfield & Watchtree	31st March
Spotted Flycatcher	Walney	2nd May
Pied Flycatcher	Loweswater	3rd April

Dave Piercy

Colour-ringed birds of the Ravenglass estuaries 2020/21

Lockdown spent at Ravenglass last winter offered the opportunity to observe the local wintering and spring bird population in some depth. This revealed a remarkable eight colour-ringed birds on the estuaries of the rivers Irt, Mite and Esk and the main bay where they meet in front of the village. Details of their origins are detailed below along with a Black-tailed Godwit seen in the early autumn of 2020.

Shelduck

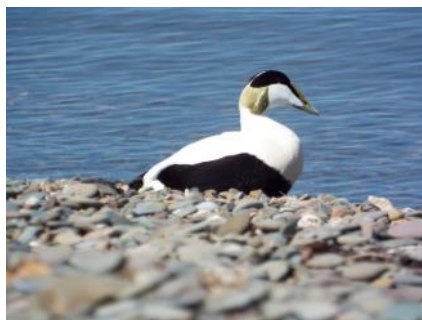
One seen in February and March 2021 was ringed as an adult at Martin Mere in Lancashire in November 2019 and had been there in December 2020.

Eider

A male ringed as an adult on Foulney Island in Morecambe Bay in July 2019 was in the estuary in late March 2021.

Oystercatcher

A bird present in early March 2021 was ringed as an adult female on a nest in southern Iceland in June 2017 and has been seen breeding in subsequent summers in the same area of Iceland.



Eider, Walney, John Temple

Ringed Plover

A bird regularly seen in the main bay in January and February 2021 was ringed as a chick on the German coast in June 2018. Another bird seen in the same flock was ringed on passage as a juvenile at Llanfairfechan, North Wales in September 2016.

Dunlin

A bird ringed as at juvenile on passage at Filey on the Yorkshire coast in September 2020 was seen in the bay in January 2021

Knot

A bird, part of a flock of 16, was present for a week in February 2021, having been ringed in its first winter at Ynyslas, Wales in December 2020.

Black-tailed Godwit

A bird ringed as an adult in northern France in February 2011 was part of a flock of 16 on the Esk Estuary on 10th July 2020. It has been seen at various locations mainly in south eastern England and France since ringing and also in Iceland where it is likely to breed.

Sandwich Tern

A bird in the bay in late April 2021 had been ringed as a chick at Hodbarrow in 2017 and has subsequently been seen off the Namibian coast in in early April 2018 and at Knott End, Lancashire in mid-August 2020.



Sandwich Tern, Workington, Tommy Holden

Twite

A flock of about 15 which frequented the Irt and Esk estuaries in the 2020/21 winter contained a colour-ringed bird which unfortunately could not be traced, but may have been ringed on the Duddon Estuary in a previous winter. It is likely to be from the Hebridean breeding population.

Dave Shackleton

Whimbrel at Seascale



Whimbrel, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

There was a small flock of Whimbrel (about 17-20) on some cut grass about three fields from the shore here at Seascale on 4th/5th May. I've never seen that amount together before, and was struck by how fast their wingbeats were compared to Curlew. - in fact in flight they were somewhat reminiscent of Golden Plover in that they kept turning together (all the time giving their characteristic calls). They kept lifting, circling and dropping down for quite a while. The following day they were on the same field now cleared of grass - they ran ahead of me like a large open covey of partridges before they lifted and flew to the shore.

Poor here for many migrants this year. Hardly any Swallows, No House Martins at all. Cock Bullfinch in the garden last week - first one for about ten years!

John Thompson

Lowgill Swifts

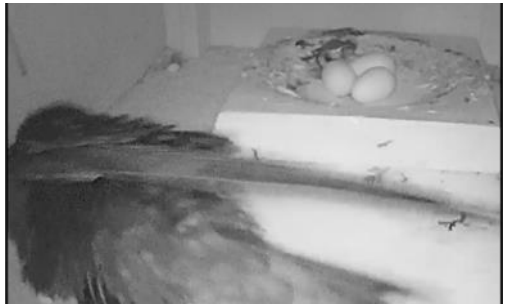
We were very concerned that the appalling weather in May, wet cold and windy, would affect the Swift population, for arrivals and survival. For most of that month it would be difficult for Swifts to find enough insects to feed on. In the event, we were very relieved that our pairs at Lowgill arrived more or less as usual – the first pair arriving on 5th and 9th May – and all eventually returned and are faring well. When it is very wet the Swifts tend to stay in their nest sites and can manage with little food. After 20 years watching Swifts we never cease to be amazed by the fact that a pair of Swifts do not migrate together, do not spend the winter in Africa together, yet return in May to the exact same nest site year after year. It is always exciting seeing them reunited once again after nine months and at the same time a relief. A relief as up to 20% on average don't make it.

Thankfully in June the weather suddenly changed to become hot and sunny. Our earliest eggs, laid at the end of May, hatched on 13th -15th June, with both parents feeding the chicks. They will fledge after about 40 days, i.e. not before 23rd July. So the Swifts we see hurtling around until the end of July are only the adults, and these are a mixture of breeders and the younger non-breeding birds, between two and four years of age, who migrate each year but are not old enough to breed. While two eggs may be the norm, this year we have five pairs with three eggs. Swifts have only one brood and this low rate of reproduction shows how vulnerable they are, but also indicates how relatively long lived they are.

Because Swifts cannot perch we never see them still, only ever airborne. Nor do we see them on the nest as they are hidden in eaves and crevices of buildings – but as we have cameras in many of our nest sites we can record their behaviour in detail. Swifts make a rudimentary nest with debris caught while on the wing, but the extent of building is very variable, as the pictures show. We put in a nest platform to help stop the eggs rolling away as they often don't build the nest until all the eggs have been laid. Throughout the incubation period they bring in a variety of nest materials, such as bits of dried grass, heather fragments and they especially like white feathers.



Picture 1.



Picture 2.



Picture 3.

Picture 1 shows three chicks at five days old in a nest site in the eaves of our cottage, in one of the 'best' nests we've seen. By the end of the season it will be flattened.

Picture 2 shows three eggs in a nest with virtually no nest material, even though this is the second year they have bred.

Picture 3 shows a natural nest in eaves with the slates removed. It is between rafters on the rubble-filled space between the outer and inner wall.

During June we have had tremendous 'banging' activity, where parties of Swifts fly up to eaves, fascias, rafters and even pipes. The name derives from the noise they often make as they touch the woodwork. These are non-breeders prospecting for future nest sites, attracted by screams from the occupied sites, often following the breeders to their holes. They frequently cling on to the stonework for a few moments.

Sadly one of our Swifts was predated by a Sparrowhawk last month. We heard a bang as the birds collided, fell to the ground, then the Sparrowhawk flew off with the Swift. A Sparrowhawk couldn't catch a Swift in flight, so probably it watches a nest site and catches the Swift as it emerges. According to our colleagues in the national Swift network, predation by Sparrowhawks is becoming more common. Starlings too are a menace for Swifts, often harassing them at nest boxes and natural nest sites in crevices.

One of our Schwegler nest bricks has now been occupied by three different species. In 2018 it was taken over by a Nuthatch, which characteristically narrowed the oblong Swift entrance hole with mud and bred for one season. Swifts were then unable to get in, but this year Sparrows have taken over. They appear somewhat disconcerted by the Swifts during some of the most active banging episodes! Sparrows love Swift bricks and boxes, in preference to the terraces and boxes widely advertised. So pass the word around – don't bother with Sparrow boxes, just put up Swift boxes. In fact, because we want to reserve our nest sites for Swifts, we put bungs into our swift entrance holes and pull them out at the end of April.

We urge you to send any Swift information to Dave Piercy for the continuing CBC swift survey. Do contact us for any help or advice about Swifts.

Tanya & Edmund Hoare ta.hoare@btinternet.com

Skua passage Solway 2021 April and May

Passage this year was again restricted with long periods of winds from the east round to the north - associated with depressions to the south - conditions not conducive to birds entering the Irish Sea so there were few days producing birds in any numbers at all.



Pomarine Skua, Bowness, Roger Ridley 2015

There seemed to be fewer observers around this year although several people watched regardless of conditions but on most days saw little of anything except some impressive diver and Kittiwake numbers, so not entirely wasted. The first skuas were reported on 8th of April – one Arctic and four Bonxies, perhaps normal for this stage of the month. The next suitable day seemed to be 3rd May with a front passing through with heavy rain before and over high tide; shortly after that a clearance started to show in the west moving east fast and when that arrived skuas started to come through with totals of four Arctics, ten Pomarine and two Bonxies in a period of about an hour.

Generally the most regular birds were Arctics with three on 8th May, seven the next day and two on 10th. On 9th five skuas were picked up very high and distant swirling in little circles to the east and were probably Long-tails. On 22nd May an observer at Workington saw, in strong west/north westerly winds a dozen Arctics, five Pominers and a Long-tail moving north. The next day six Arctics, ten Pomarine and a Long-tail passed Bowness with the final records being two Arctics a day later.

The “good old days” of a steady stream of Skuas over a two hour period, in suitable conditions seem a far off dream now !! But it is becoming clear that unless the weather patterns we have experienced in the last five or six years in April and May, change, days with significant numbers of birds will remain few and far between. Not only will there be fewer skua records but if observers pick their days to go based on the likely hood of seeing skuas then other species (divers, etc) may well be underrecorded as a result.

Bob Jones June 2021

Whasset Flood

Although I've lived around a mile from Whasset, near Milnthorpe for nearly four years, I only discovered this interesting little spot last year. It's an unprepossessing place; two fields separated by a stone wall with a deep depression in the middle. It's now so badly flooded, it seldom, if ever, dries out and resembles a small lake, with the stone wall going through the middle. Once I'd found the site I discovered a Green Sandpiper there from 4th September to 16th September, so I made a note to pay more attention to it this year.



Green Sandpiper, Walby, Roger Ridley

It paid off; this year a Green Sandpiper was seen on the 3rd March, 2nd April and 10th April. A pair of Common Sandpiper also made a brief appearance earlier on. Up to three Oystercatchers have also been around this year. It's also popular with Lapwing. There's several pair spending Spring and Summer in the nearby fields so it's a useful feeding area for them.



Lapwing, Mosser, Barry Jackson

There's always plenty of wildfowl on there. Despite being very close to the farmhouse, they appear settled with little evidence of disturbance. Fortunately, it's not on a public footpath, so they don't get bothered by the general public. Mainly it's Mallard, about twenty, including a pair which bred this year. Also a pair of Gadwall have been here all year, then a pair of Tufted Duck turned up in April too. From January to April it was popular with Shoveller; not a common bird in this area usually.

They were seen on the following dates:

16th January 4 Shoveller (2 male, 2 female)

26th February 8 Shoveller (7 male 1 female)

3rd March 15 Shoveller (11 male 4 female)

2nd April 11 Shoveller (9 male 2 female)

Mute Swan, Coot and Shelduck are often seen here too. When the Swallows, Sand Martins and House Martins arrived back this year, they often gathered in large numbers feeding over the water. An impressive flock 200 of Sand Martin was seen in April.

Mark Graham



*Sand Martin, Portinscale,
Tony Marsh*

Observations from Aspatria

Swifts gradually arrived here in the second week in May, saw/heard my first for the year very appropriately over The Swifts in Carlisle on 2nd May.

Our Swifts had to wait for the Starlings to fledge to get in the boxes as they were very protective of the eaves, I rescued downed Swifts off the floor on three occasions. Starlings fledged at least three young about 23rd May. Haven't seen a single House Martin this year here.

Our garden has been full of noisy Starlings, demolishing all the feed I put out by lunchtime, the family raised in our eaves plus a couple of others. Great Tits have fledged from one of the nest boxes on 2nd June, Blue Tits have young in another, Blackbirds fledged at least two young from a nest in the ivy and there are three pairs of Sparrows in the eaves too. We have a pair of Barn Owls in the box again but the camera isn't working so no idea how they're doing.

Woodpeckers are coming to the feeders regularly as are Tree Sparrow and Goldfinches – the first we've seen in the garden for a few years.



*Great Spotted Woodpecker,
Haweswater, Tony Marsh*



Bullfinch, Keswick, Tony Marsh

Out of the garden I've seen a pair of Bullfinch regularly in the same spot on my morning run and not a Cumbrian highlight but definitely a bird highlight was some fabulous views of Red Kites in the Chilterns, no binoculars required!

Hazel Wainwright 6th June



Tree Sparrow, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

Pied Flycatchers in South Cumbria

A 2021 update from my Pied Flycatcher nest boxes from South Cumbria.

The first birds back were around 18th April with several males singing and displaying on boxes. A total of seven boxes were available.

Research seems to suggest that they prefer new boxes and this was borne out with a newly formed pair when the female began nest building in a replacement box first. Another began building a few days later and a single, unmated male began singing and displaying at a third box as well as visiting the already busy occupied boxes but being chased off. His persistence paid off when a third female arrived and they settled down. Interestingly, one of the males was ringed on the left leg.



By the end of May they were all feeding young and continued until the first brood left the nest on the 11th June. The two remaining occupied broods continued to be fed continuously up to the 13th. Two boxes remained unoccupied although a late male did sing at one empty box in mid-May without attracting a female. Two others had Blue Tits and Great Tits.

Dave Hardaker



BBS from Blackpool to Burkin

We live in times where superlatives are overused, but I still think it's fair to say that for 20 years I have done the most bizarre Breeding Bird Survey square in Britain. The western transect in particular is high on spectacle - Blackpool South Pier, a son et lumiere installation by Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen, a go kart circuit, a heritage tram depot, an adventure golf course, a casino, the Big One roller coaster, Ripley's believe it or not, giant organ powered by the tide and so on. It's unpromising territory*, but I've seen exactly 50 bird species on the survey over the years. In 2013 there was a flock of 18 Whoopers on the sea before heading north west, and this year exactly the same number were seen in the same circumstances before Sarah Dalrymple watched them flying over Foulney.



Starlings on BBS, Blackpool

As I am spending more time in Furness visiting my parents I thought I would see if there was anything I could start this year on a BBS close to the A590. Colin Gay was very helpful and mentioned a square near Lindal – SD2675. This was absolutely ideal for me as it was a short walk down a green lane from a layby off the main road in the village. Ironically the green lane concerned is actually called Green Lane, and if you are from the south of the county and have a long memory you may recall that the decision was taken some years ago to fill in the junction below the railway line where this road met the A590 on road safety grounds.

It's a great tetrad to survey and I am really pleased to have inherited it. The fact that Green Lane has become a road to nowhere means that traffic is extremely low for most of the northern transect. The southern transect past Halier-How-Farm is if anything even more quiet, in two surveys I haven't seen a single vehicle. On the second visit this weekend just gone I was startled when a cyclist shouted good morning to me, that's how quiet it is. The logistics of getting back to the car are from the Carlsberg school of tetrads, with a footpath through fields and from there back to the railway bridge and pedestrian only cut through.



Green Lane

It didn't escape my notice that just outside the tetrad but by the footpath there was a sizeable tarn, it was large enough on the OS map for me to be surprised that it wasn't named. When I came to do my first survey I was pleasantly surprised by how much life there was on it. I dropped Dave Shackleton a note and offered to cover it for WeBS.

We have since learned that it is called Burkin Tarn and had been covered a little bit for WeBS in the past – one off counts in January 1984 and 1991 and through the 2012/13 and 2014/15 winters. It's always interesting to compare current results with previous ones to see changes in trends. In this regard whilst its early days for me I don't think the 12 Pochard in January 1984 will be repeated.



Burkin Tarn

The contrasts in the Breeding Bird Survey data are much clearer. It was covered from 1994 to 2011 but hasn't been surveyed for a decade. The half dozen Turtle Doves seen in both 1998 and 1999 will never be repeated. Green Woodpecker observations halted half way through the last period and it's difficult to see this being reversed. Other predictable declines include Grey Partridge and nesting waders – Curlew, Lapwing and Oystercatcher. On the positive side Tree Sparrows appear to be on a better footing than they were in earlier years, and Collared Doves are doing ok when my perception is that they are declining elsewhere.

It's always nice to cover somewhere new to you. I have driven through Lindal to Dalton and Barrow hundreds of times over the years. I had school friends in Lindal. I have done lots of birding at Standing Tarn and Parker's Pond over the years. Yet still I didn't know a whole area on my former doorstep. I had only heard of High Carley because there used to be a hospital there, for a century between 1884 and 1984 when it was no longer required due to the building of Furness General. Given travel may be limited for some time it is good to discover new areas locally whilst contributing to knowledge of our bird population changes.

*I am being somewhat disingenuous here. Between the two transect routes in SD3033 is an area of bushes along the single track railway line which have attracted Pallas's Warbler, Barred Warbler and a couple Red-breasted Flycatcher over the years as well as increasingly regular Yellow-browed Warblers. The Roller which had been at Bassenthwaite in September 1982 was seen at the park in the adjacent 1km square inland. Many of you will know that any isolated greenery near the coast can get good birds if you are willing to put many hours in.

Stephen Dunstan

Recent reports

The period covered is from March to May 2021 inclusive. Some records are unauthenticated and may require review. Reports, especially from Walney, where the observatory was closed, were somewhat reduced by covid restrictions. The other limiting factor were blocking northerly winds affecting migrants and restricting the number of suitable days for sea bird passage in Solway with subsequent reduction in observer effort.

Wildfowl

4000 **Barnacle Geese** were on Rockliffe Marsh in early March, accompanied by a **Todd's Canada Goose** on several occasions. Numbers at Rockliffe started to build in April with 30,000 present by the end of the month; numbers started to drop as more westerly winds provided conditions for migration and very few remained by third week of May.



Whooper Swans, Barrow & Caussey Pike, Tony Marsh

In the third week of March 8000 **Pinkfeet** were using Wedholme Flow but on 30th and 31st a clear north-ward passage was widely observed with reports from Wasdale (1000), Eskdale (150), Penrith (210), Waterhead Windermere (680) and Binsey (2,500). In April there were 4,000 in the Border Marsh area, and 11000 in the Inner Solway; birds were still moving north on 20th with over 2000 passing Bootle and 731 through Walney on 30th. On 10th May a small flock passed over Ambleside in early morning with a similar sized flock arriving at Bowness on Solway later in the morning before moving away to the north west.

On 31st March unusual movements of **Canada Geese** were seen at Whitehaven (40 moving south) and Wetheral where 150 went NNE something not seen before in 40 years. Fourteen **Whooper Swans** were at the north end of Windermere in early March and in the north of the county regular flocks were at Whitrigglees (70), Walby (42) but none there after 18th, Park Broom (69) and Longtown (59) although there may be some duplication with flocks moving around. Passage picked up in earnest on 19th with birds being heard overnight at Allonby and 168 past Blackpool, Lancashire. the same day and 70 west over Ulverston. A day later 234 passed north over Ambleside (with a largest flock of 194), 50 at Millom, and 44 over Bassenthwaite and on 21st a flock was picked up by Nocmig over Millom. Other numbers of note were 28 at Killington Lake on 30th. Into April 57 passed over Hodbarrow

on 1st, 30 over Ambleside on 2nd with ten more on 4th bringing the total recorded over Ambleside to 360. Late birds included 24 over Catbells on 12th and four adults on the River Eden at Old Sandsfield on 14th.



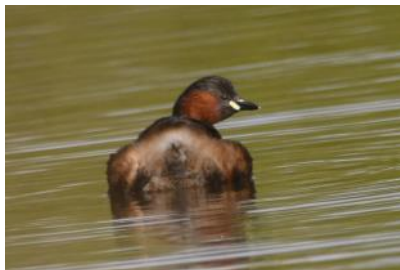
Mandarin Ducks, Talkin Tarn, Adam Moan

Records of **Mandarin Duck** came from Talkin Tarn and Derwent Water. Two pairs of **Garganey** were at Brigsteer on 30th March followed by further pairs at Hodbarrow and Campfield RSPB Reserves in the first half of April and a male at Longtown on 31st May.

Five **Gadwall** were on Hammonds Pond, Carlisle on 7th March and a pair at Hodbarrow RSPB on 2nd April and another at Siddick Ponds on 18th May. Numbers peaked at 15 in the Foulshaw area. On 11th May a drake **American Wigeon** was the only bird present on a Beckermat fishing tarn, its origin has to be questionable. One hundred **Wigeon** were at Bolton (Appleby) on 7th March and 150 at Castle Carrock Reservoir on 2nd April; also at Bolton were 27 **Teal** of which there were 83 on Wedholme Flow on 18th April. A **Green Winged Teal** was at Ulpha Meadows on 7th April.

Twenty nine **Eider** flew north past Bootle on 30th April. **Common Scoter** numbers of note away from Walney were 283 north past Bootle on 20th April but by far the most significant were 4,500 (flocks of 3500 & 1000) that drifted into the Inner Solway at Bowness on 27th May – surely unprecedented numbers there? There were 1200 off Walney on 12th May. **Velvet Scoter** were reported only from Walney with four birds on two dates.

Notable numbers of **Goldeneye** were 30 at Talkin Tarn on 27th March and 48 on Bassenthwaite on 9th April. A flock of 14 **Red-breasted Mergansers** drifted past Bowness on Solway on 10th May. A **Red-crested Pochard** frequented Bassenthwaite at the end of March,



Little Grebe, Wigton, Tommy Holding

Partridge to Cormorants

The only **Grey Partridge** reported were a pair at Dubmill Point in mid April. One hundred and fifty **Red-throated Divers** were in the Inner Solway on 8th April with the usual movements in and out past Bowness with a maximum single flock of 104 birds. A single **Black-throated Diver** was present at Hodbarrow RSPB at the end of March. Two **Great Northern Divers** were off Waterhead, Windermere on first March and there was still one in the area at the end of the month; a single bird was at Hodbarrow for the second half of March; birds were seen on several days in May off Bowness on Solway with three present on 11th. Away from the west coast six **Manx Shearwaters** were in the Inner Solway on 23rd May, Small numbers of **Fulmar** came past Bowness on several days in May.

Slavonian Grebe were reported only from Hodbarrow RSPB (moulting into summer plumage), Silecroft and on Windermere at the end of the month (summer plumage). A **Spoonbill** spent a few days at RSPB Campfield from 23rd May. Away from regular sites, of interest were three **Little Egrets** at Sunbiggin Tarn on 9th April and two in a roadside ditch at Blitterlees and two in a beck at Allonby on 19th March. Single **Great White Egrets** were mainly on southern mosses. **Gannets** made their regular appearances at high tide at Bowness and not necessarily in strong winds – at least 36 on 8th April and 20 on 23rd May. the presence of one at Tindale Tarn on 4th April was of note. A **Common Crane** flew over Walney on 20th April.



Spoonbill, Campfield, Roger Ridley

Raptors to Waders

For obvious reasons raptors are under reported but **Ospreys** (presumably mainly passage birds) were reported widely in the last quarter of March from Tindale in the north east to Ulverston in the south west. In April birds were also reported from the Eden catchment and at Bowness on Solway birds crossed to the north east on two dates in April and May.

Unusual was a single migrant **Honey Buzzard** moving north east from Grune point at the end of May. Reports of **Marsh Harrier** came only from the south of the county. Reports received of **Red Kite** were widely scattered throughout the period, from Grune in the north west to Kendal in the south.



Osprey, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

There was report of a **Black Kite** moving north over Loughrigg Fell on 30th April. An immature **White-tailed Eagle** from one of the release schemes was seen on two dates in April with another possible sighting in May. A **Hobby** was in the south on 17th and 19th May.

A **Water Rail** was by the River Eden in Carlisle in mid March and one was picked up on NOCMIG at Millom overnight on 9th May. A **Stone Curlew** spent at least one day on Walney. On 2nd April 11 passage **Golden Plover** were in a stubble field at Holme and a flock of around 170 flew over Amble-side on 10th May.



Little Ringed Plover, Roger Ridley

Reports of **Little Ringed Plover** came from around the county. The only reports of **Dotterel** were from the Eastern and Central fells. Although the first was reported on 27th March at Bowness on Solway, the first **Whimbrel** at Walney wasn't until 10th April with numbers building there to 217 by the end of the month, dropping off after that. In the north west of the county notable numbers were 70 at Beckfoot on 24th April, 84 at Lowca on 5th May; inland, 40 frequented fields near Watchtree NR on the same day with still 32 there on 9th. Thirty eight were still at Walney on 12th. Calling birds flew over Amble-side around 22.00hrs on the 10th and 12th May. Forty four passage **Curlew** were at Walby Flash on 23rd March – a good number at this site which unfortunately dried up thereafter.

The only reports of **Black-tailed Godwits** were a peak count of 49 at Hodbarrow on 21st April, two on Wedholme Flow on 21st March, one around Foulshaw on 11th May and inland, nine at Bolton (Appleby) on 26th. Two **Ruff** were on Wedholme Flow at the end of May. Of interest was a single **Sanderling** at Hardendale Quarry, Shap on 27th April. **Dunlin** were reported from the High Pennines in early May as well just 120 at Bowness Railings on 22nd. A single **Little Stint** was on Wedholme for a couple of days in late May.

Recent reports

Woodcock were in Finglandrigg NR during March and one at Garrigill early in the month; what were presumed to be breeding birds were at Geltsdale and Milton Rigg in April. Three **Jack Snipe** were flushed at Waterhead, Windermere on 1st March and then one was photographed in the reedbeds at Siddick Ponds on 11th April. Twenty **Common Snipe** were also at Waterhead where the marsh was very wet on 1st March and a week later 16 were at Thornhill Meadows.

Two **Common Sandpipers** on the Ravenglass Esk may have been new migrants although this area does hold wintering birds – thereafter single birds were reported. A late reported **Green Sandpiper** was by the River Eden in central Carlisle on 12th February, one at Walby on 13th March and then on both Muncaster and Longtown Esks at the end of the month – both regular sites whereas one on the coast at Blue Dial was more unusual. On 3rd March and 2nd and 10th April a **Green Sandpiper** was in flood water at Whasset. The only **Wood Sandpiper** reported was at Wedholme Flow on 24th May. In April single **Greenshank** were at Bowness on 9th, Eskmeals on 13th and Dubmill on 15th.



*Snipe, Geltsdale,
Adam Moan*

Gulls to auks

Kittiwake passage continued (although there was probably less sea watching done in prevailing weather patterns) throughout the period and at Bowness the total reported was in excess of 2100 with significant numbers being 330 on 29th March, 530 on 8th April and 700 on 23rd May including a single flock of 450. Inland a single bird was at Tindale Tarn on 8th April. Seven hundred **Black-headed Gulls** were at Talkin Tarn on 5th April. On 18th May the Black-headed Gull colony was occupied on Wastwater with around 15 nests. Single **Little Gulls** were off Bowness on three dates from 30th March to 22nd May and another was on the River Esk at Longtown on 11th. A **Sabine's Gull** frequented the River Esk at Longtown for four days from 21st April.



Little Gull, Longtown, Roger Ridley

Three **Sandwich Terns** were back at Hodbarrow RSPB by 18th March increasing to 47 on 26th March and to 170 five days later; 710 were counted off Walney on 28th May.

Skua passage on Solway was again very much reduced by weather patterns with probably only ten days producing birds with estimated totals of eight Great, 25 Arctics, 20 Pomarine and two certain Long-tails (plus a group of five very high and distant birds which were probably of this species). A sea watch at Workington on 22nd May produced 11 Arctic, five Pomarine and a Long-tail. An Arctic was seen heading east over Foulshaw on 8th April and a single was off Silecroft on 5th May. **Black Guillemot** were reported as is normal from Fleswick Bay, St Bees and a single bird was at Bootle on 20th April. **Puffin** were seen on many dates at Walney sea-watches with a maximum of 17 on 19th May.

Pigeons to Buntings

Cuckoo were first reported from Ullswater on 17th April and RSPB Geltsdale on 30th and thereafter widely from the mosses and fells. **Short-eared Owls** were reported from the Shap area and the Pennines. **Common Swift** seemed to arrive by 25th April but thereafter were sporadic in view of poor weather with large numbers staying in Southern France till weather in more northerly parts of Europe improved and it wasn't till end of May that numbers built up to more normal numbers.



Cuckoo, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Sand Martins were at Talkin Tarn on 6th March with birds at Windermere on 24th March and Siddick Ponds the next day; thereafter cold weather restricted feeding opportunities giving rise to some large groups – 300 at Waterhead on 30th March, 1300 at Talkin Tarn on 5th April (and still 500 two days later) and 800 at Bassenthwaite on 9th.



*Tawny Owl, Geltsdale,
Roger Ridley*

Swallows were first reported on 27th March but weather produced sporadic progress thereafter but it was interesting that there were only “a few” with all the Sand Martins at Talkin Tarn on 5th April. Coastal passage continued right through to the end of May including 100 past Beckfoot in the early morning of 24th April, 300 north at Wolsty in two hours, 180/200 per hour past Workington also over two hours on the same morning and 30 and 50 passed Allonby on 24th and 28th May. **House Martin** were first reported on 30th March but numbers thereafter were sporadic.

Recent reports

Cetti's Warbler were reported in south of the county on two dates in March. From the regular sites **Wood Warbler** were reported from 22nd April, **Chiffchaff** arrived from 8th March onwards but weren't numerous till the end of the month by which time **Willow Warblers** were starting to appear. **Sedge Warblers** arrived on Walney on 14th April whilst **Reed Warblers** arrived there on 20th April. "Numerous" Sedge Warblers were at Siddick and three were at Watchtree NR on 3rd May. The first **Garden Warbler** at Longtown was on 16th April but it wasn't until two weeks later that birds appeared to be more widely spread. The possible **Siberian Lesser Whitethroat** was present at Linstock from January and stayed until 3rd March.



*Sedge Warbler,
Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

Ring Ouzel started to appear from 30th March and were widely reported mainly from the northern half of the county, an exception was a group of seven birds, presumably migrants, in the south east of the county in mid April. Eight were at Kirkland on 28th April. **Fieldfare** were still around in March mainly in the north of the county including 50 at Wetheral, 100 near Wigton, 100 near Helton, and 50 at High Hesket. In April 120 were on Wedholme Flow, 23 went east at Jockey Shield on 14th and finally three were near Wetheral on 29th. The largest number of **Redwing** reported were 200 at Talkin Tarn on 4th April.



*Grasshopper Warbler,
Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

Pied Flycatchers arrived in early April and were reported from regular breeding areas thereafter. A female **Black Redstart** was seen at Raughton Head on 27th March and another on Walney on 23rd April whilst **Common Redstart** were first reported, from Talkin Tarn, on 3rd April. Away from regular breeding areas **Whinchat** were seen at RSPB Campfield on two dates in mid April and early May as well as at Helton at end of April. **Wheatear** arrived from 22nd March with large groups being reported on 30th from Ravenglass (12) and 134 at Walney where birds were present throughout April with 45 at the end of the month followed by another surge with 54 on 7th May.



*Spotted Flycatcher,
Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

Forty **Tree Sparrows** were at Thornhill Meadows on 7th March as well as 20 at Waterside the same day. The first fledglings at Sandale were present on 22nd May. Male "Channel" **Yellow Wagtails** were reported from three widely spread sites in late April and early May. More "standard" flavissima occurred at Walney on three dates. Reports of **White Wagtail** came mainly from the north west coast with highest numbers at Workington (eight at the end of March and 11 on 24th April). Over 200 **Meadow Pipits** in fields at Lorton for a few days from 8th April.

A **Brambling** was at Foulshaw on 27th March and 16th April and there was a single bird at Talkin Tarn in early April. A pair of **Hawfinch** was in the central lakes on 17th May. Two hundred **Goldfinch** moved north at Beckfoot up to 10.00am on the morning of 24th April; similar numbers of Meadow Pipits were passing during the same period.



*Lesser Redpoll, Portinscale,
Tony Marsh*



Bullfinch, Oughterside, Tommy Holding

Crossbill were present around Finglandrigg NR during March with a maximum of eight on 31st and a pair were also seen at Watchtree NR on 17th. In April eight were again seen at Finglandrigg and a small party was at Glenridding. Twenty were near Ainstable on 2nd April and birds were seen twice at High Stand not far away early in the month with a flock at Carlisle GC Aglionby at the same time.

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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Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is September 1st 2021

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