



BIRD NEWS
Vol. 24 No. 4 Winter 2013

[Club news and announcements](#)

[Wintering Goosander and Red-breasted
Merganser survey update](#)

[RSPB Geltsdale Whinchats – initial findings](#)

[Eastern race Common Gull](#)

[Bird Atlas 2007-11](#)

[Recent reports](#)

[Contents - see back page](#)

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Club news and announcements

Wednesday 8th January : with Carlisle NHS at Tullie House 7.15pm

'A Bird on the Bench' - *John Mather BEM*

An illustrated account of bird biology including nestling development, moult, skeleton structure, racial and sexual dimorphism, plumage aberration and parasites. John was awarded the BEM for long term services to ornithology and conservation. Author of 'Birds of Yorkshire' and an excellent speaker.

Friday 7th February: Penrith UR Church 7.30pm

'The Ring Ouzel' - *Innes Sim*

Innes has worked on Ring Ouzels, in both an amateur and professional capacity since 1998. He continues to attempt to understand the underlying reasons for the long term decline of this iconic upland species to this day.

Monday 24th February: with Kendal NHS Friend's Meeting House Stramongate 7.30pm

'A year at Leighton Moss' - *David Poole (photographer and naturalist)*. David Poole is an award winning photographer who has spent countless hours in the hides at Leighton Moss compiling a fascinating pictorial record of the wildlife of this outstanding RSPB reserve.

Bird race

Unfortunately the annual bird race will not be going ahead this winter due to circumstances beyond the organiser's control. As this is usually one of the best attended events of the year if anyone would like to organise a summer/spring version I will advertise it.

Subscriptions

The Cumbria Bird Club 2013/2014 subscription was due on 1st October. You will receive a subscription form with this mailing if your payment is outstanding. To prevent unnecessary costs, such as postage for reminder letters, please can you ensure that this is paid as soon as possible.

Submitting records

Please submit all your records for 2013 to your regional recorder (contact details on inside cover) as soon as possible. You can submit written records on cards (available from recorders) or electronically on a downloaded spreadsheet available at www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk/reporting/guidelines which also has guidelines on submitting records (guidelines also available in the 2011 Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria).

Editor

Photographs and sketches

We need more photographs to illustrate newsletter articles. Common birds most welcome. Also I would be pleased to publish any art work.



Lapwings in winter, Colin Whittle

Outings and talks organisers

Would anyone interested on taking on the above role please contact the secretary. Volunteers please.

Notes from the AGM

The AGM was well attended and followed by an excellent talk on the Forest of Bowland. Vice-chair Mike Carrier reported on another active year for the club and treasurer David Cooke gave an overview on the year's accounts. A full copy of the minutes and accounts are available from the secretary.

Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria

The publication of 'Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria 2012' has been delayed and probably will not be available until at least February 2014.

CBC Newsletters for sale

Michael Williams (michaelwilliamshh@gmail.com) has a lot of back numbers of this iconic magazine. Anyone interested in acquiring some or all of them can contact him by e-mail.

Wintering Goosander and Red-breasted Merganser survey update

Favourable autumn weather during the November survey period contributed to a high level of observer cover on river lengths, lakes and coasts. Thank you to everyone who took part, whether walking river banks or conducting Wetland Bird Survey counts.

Red-headed Goosanders predominated with only a trickle of mature males returning to Cumbria from their summer moult migration by the early weeks of November. The Outer Solway produced the largest concentration of birds with significant numbers seen on the lower reaches of the Eden, Lune, Kent and Derwent. Goosanders were absent on a few smaller rivers and streams. Nevertheless, there were often compensating highlights such as a gathering of 520 Whooper Swans at a site in north-west Cumbria, 60 Snipe alongside Stainton Beck near Kendal and an unusually late Green Sandpiper in the Lune Valley. Reports of Red-breasted Mergansers included numbers exceeding 30 birds on the Duddon Estuary and South Walney.



Whooper Swans, Walby, Roger Ridley

Any further offers of help with fieldwork during the January and March survey periods will be most welcome, especially for rivers in the southern half of the county from Ravenglass to Kirkby Stephen. Volunteers able to visit a stretch of river within seven days either side of the "recommended" weekend (18-19th January) please contact Malcolm Priestley (tel:015396 20104; e-mail: priestleyfamily@hotmail.com) or one of the local organisers listed in the October CBC Newsletter.

Malcolm Priestly

Help would be appreciated for the Irt, Mite and Bleng rivers.
Arnold Strand, tel: 01946 841364, e-mail: strandwestlake@hotmail.com

If anyone fancies a walk along the Petterill or the Caldew I have five sectors which I am doing myself. Not too much of a problem but I have to do them over 4/5 days which means they are not done on the weekend alone. Didn't have any Goosanders on the Petterill but the consolation was to get within ten yards of an otter with two half grown cubs that were not aware of my presence. Richard Dixon tel: 016974 73544, e-mail: sunzeco@hotmail.co.uk

RSPB Geltsdale Whinchats – initial findings



Whinchat, Tim Melling (not taken at Geltsdale)

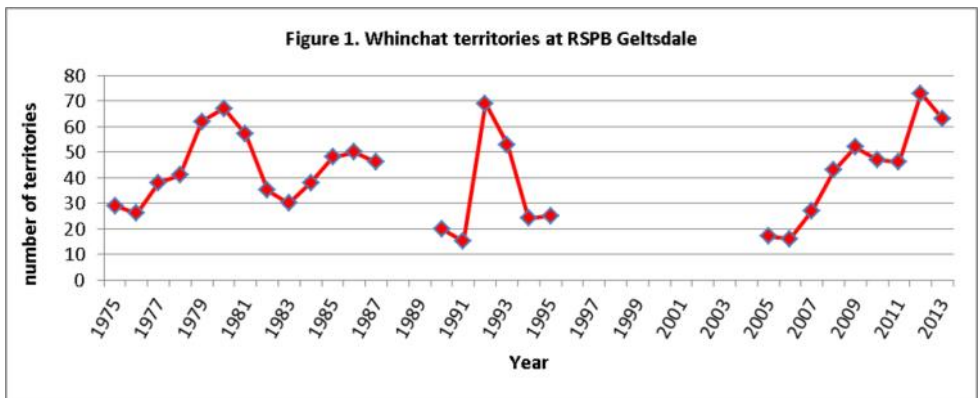
Introduction

Whinchats are stunning birds, well marked and easy to see as they sit out on vegetation. Well that's what I thought when we started looking closely at them. In fact, they spend most of their time feeding on the ground under vegetation and if sitting out in the open, they often don't move for long periods of time and are surprisingly well camouflaged and difficult to see. The species' population and range in Britain and Europe is declining dramatically. In Europe Whinchats are birds of grassland, particularly hay meadows and improved mechanisation of harvesting is causing problems for them. In Britain they are now mainly an upland bird of bracken covered hillsides. Salisbury Plain is the only lowland area in the UK where there is a substantial population of Whinchats. Whinchats winter in sub-Saharan Africa and recent work in Nigeria has found adults to be very site faithful between winters.

The following is a summary of the start of a study at the RSPB Geltsdale nature reserve in the north-east of Cumbria. The plan is to continue this long-term and it should be noted that all the data presented here is preliminary.

This Whinchat research is based around a BTO Retrap Adult Survival (RAS) ringing project to gather information on the number of adults returning each year. Adults and nestlings are colour-ringed and then are re-sighted in subsequent years. This project started at Geltsdale in 2011 in conjunction with John Callion ringing Whinchats in the north-east Lake District. There are only two other Whinchat RAS projects in Britain and the species is a priority for the BTO RAS scheme.

Whinchats have been and are relatively abundant at Geltsdale, but the survey effort has fluctuated dramatically. The data used in Figure 1 are based on the reserve totals published in the reserve annual reports.



As can be seen from Figure 1, no counts were made in the nine years between 1996 and 2004 and numbers of territories have fluctuated between 15 and 70 over the last 37 years. These counts will include unpaired males which hold territories, usually on the edge of the main breeding areas. The peak numbers have been in 1992 and 2012. The latter was down to the increased effort in locating Whinchat territories and the effect of colour-ringing Whinchats, revealing territories between previously known territories. A rough comparison of the number of territories in different areas of the reserve between 1992 and 2012 shows there have been some dramatic changes in different areas of the reserve. Most of the changes in numbers between areas can be attributed to the change in grazing in the intervening 20 years, but as usual in natural populations there are some exceptions.

In this 20 year period grazing has been reduced and has changed from predominantly sheep to mixed cattle and sheep. In one area, Bruthwaite, grazing has ceased altogether and Whinchat numbers have increased dramatically in this area.

Retrap adult survival and colour-ringing

In 2011, Amanda Proud and Martin Ketcher were residential volunteers at Geltsdale with ringing permits and they carried out the majority of the nest finding. No adults were caught in 2011, but 24 pulli were ringed from six nests; each bird was given a unique colour-combination of a BTO ring and three colours (two rings on each leg).

In 2012, with new audio equipment and a huge input of time, Amanda and Martin successfully caught adults by tape-luring and observations of pairs in territories located five birds ringed as nestlings the previous year (see Table 1). Seventy-five Whinchat territories were found in 2012 and 36 nests were located, but due to a very wet summer nest success was very low, at least 57% of nests failed. Of the nests that failed, almost all of them failed at the early chick stage during the prolonged rain in late June.

The low nest productivity in 2012 was almost certainly the reason for the reduction in the number of territories found in 2013, only 63, down from 75. However 47 nests were found in 2013, of which 23% failed (but at least 3 of these re-laid within a few metres of the original nest). From the 38 successful nests almost 200 nestlings were colour-ringed.

A summary of the number of birds ringed and re-sighted is in Table 1.

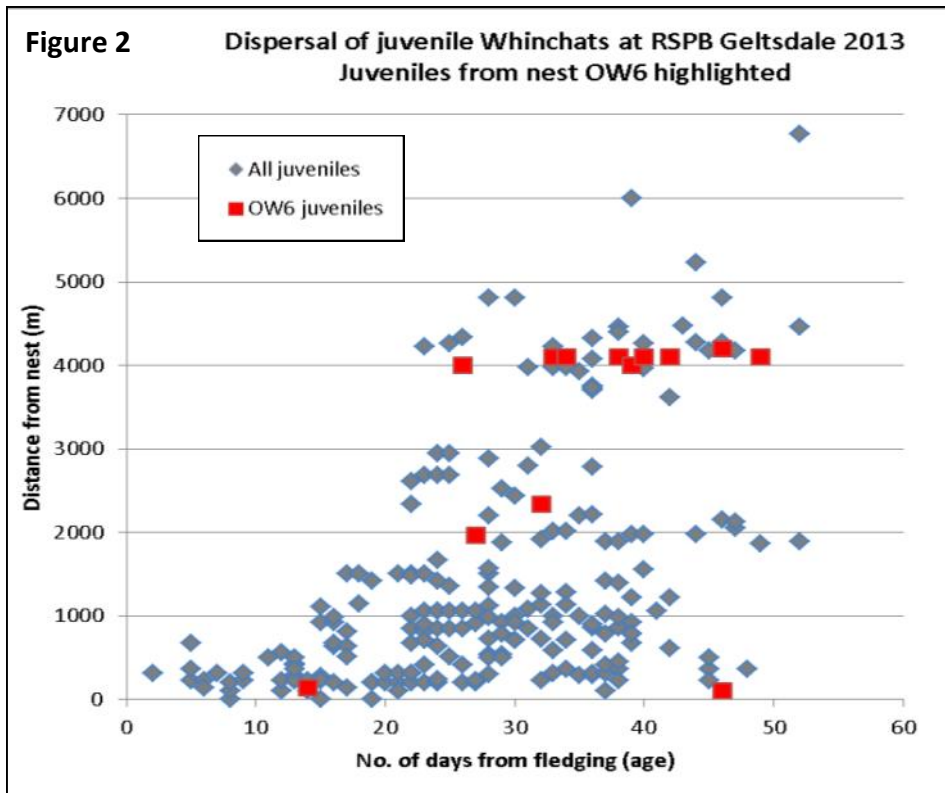
Table 1.

	2011	2012		2013	
	Ringed	Ringed/ seen	% of previous year	Ringed/ seen	% of previous year
Pulli colour-ringed (max. no. fledging)	22	66		196	
Adult new colour-ringed		14		25	
Adults re-sighted, ringed as pulli in previous year		5	22.7	8	12.1
Adults re-sighted, ringed/seen as adults in previous year				4	21.1

Other studies of Whinchat have suggested a return rate of about 10% for first year birds. Although we are only looking at a small sample size so far, the return rate to Geltsdale seems to be higher. Next year will be very interesting, with 196 nestlings colour-ringed in 2013, we will have a much larger sample size of first-year birds.

As yet, no birds have been reported away from Geltsdale, but of the returning nestlings, the males have returned on average 1.1km from their natal site (range 0.2-1.5km) and females 3.0km (1.5-6km). Of the four adults returning in 2013, the three males were within 200m of the previous year's territory and the female was 400m away.

Same year re-sightings



Adults: Most re-sightings of adults are very close to the original ringing site or first observation for returning birds. By early July most birds are in moult and

some do not leave the area of their territory until early September when they have finished moulting. Family parties do band together and throughout July pairs and family parties can be mixed together. By late July some adults have moved out of their territory. We do not have enough data yet to quantify this.

Juveniles: In 2012 only 16 of the 99 pulli colour-ringed were seen after fledging. Only a maximum of 66 of the 99 fledged (due to the weather) and presumably there was a high post-fledging mortality. However in 2013 there was a far greater fledging success and 115 young were seen from 196 ringed (fledged young were seen from 33 of the 38 nests). There were over 300 sightings of these 115 birds, see Figure 2. Most juveniles had moved away from the reserve by mid-August, but the last was seen on the 2nd September 2013.

Figure 2 shows the distance juveniles have moved from the nest as they grow older. In general most birds stay close to the nest for their first ten days and then the most adventurous move away exponentially. All sightings were made on the reserve, all nests were within 4.5km of the boundary of the reserve, hence the apparent cut off in the scatter diagram at that distance. The two birds that moved 6.0km and 6.7km crossed almost the entire reserve from north-east to south-west.

The juveniles highlighted in Figure 2, were from the nest OW6 (the code for nest number 6 in Old Water) and illustrate what happened to a brood. The points relate to four birds; one seen near the nest at day 14; one that moved north 4km and stayed in the same area for at least four weeks; one that was 2km south at four weeks and moved further south a few days later (and then almost certainly off the reserve); one that was still in the vicinity of the nest when it was almost seven weeks old (and in the company of the male parent). The above is only one example, there is a great deal more to be gained from this data.

Nest vegetation/habitat data

In addition to all the ringing data, BTO nest record card information was gathered for most nests. Further detailed habitat information was recorded for all nests; from these information was collected for 91 features per nest. In addition, identical information was gathered from 61 random points to give background habitat information with which to compare the nest data. The random points were generated for areas of the reserve under 400m asl. In addition in 2013 vegetation structure data was gathered for the area around each nest (this is yet to be analysed). The information below is a summary of the 2012 nest habitat data.

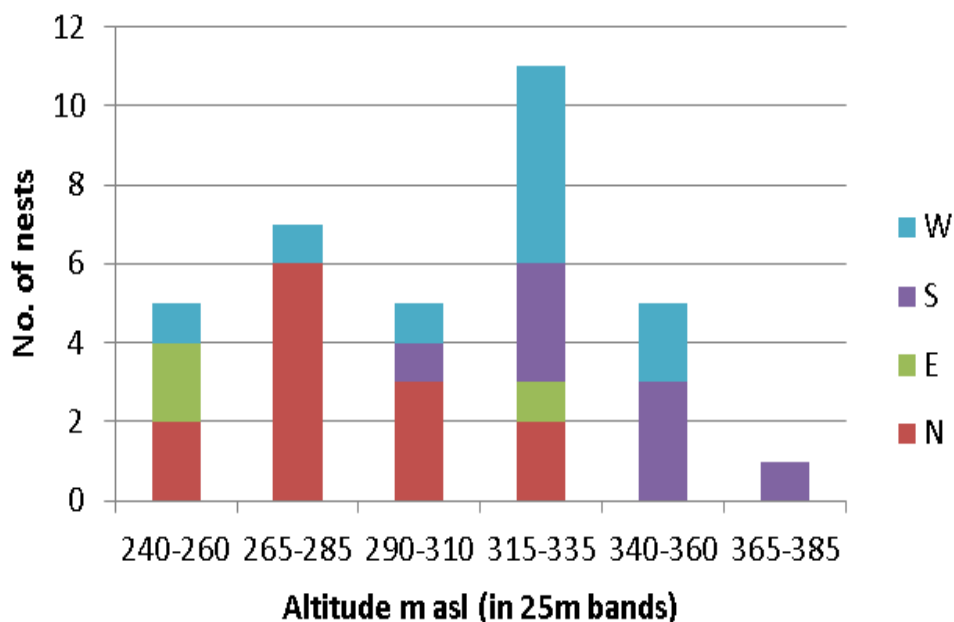
Altitude and aspect

The altitude of the nest was calculated to the nearest 5m asl. The mean altitude of all nests was 303m asl with a range of 250m to 380m. The altitudinal range of the reserve is 180m to 621m.

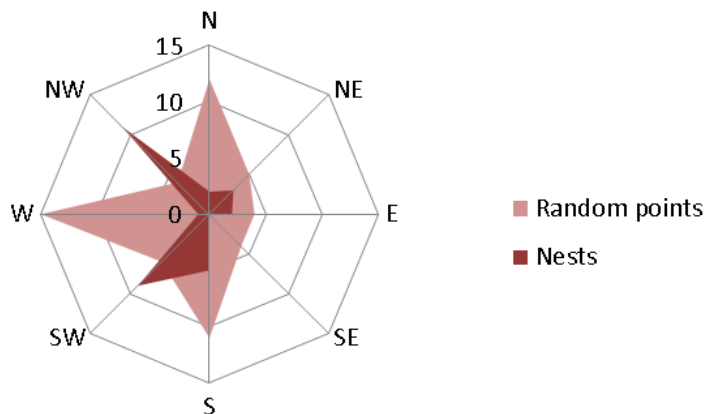
As stated in Callandine (2012) the altitude of the nest is linked to aspect. In Figure 3 it can be seen all north facing nests are below or at the 315-335m band and all the south facing nests are above or at the 290-310m band.

Aspect for this histogram was calculated to in 90° sections.

Figure 3. RSPB Geltsdale Whinchat 2012
Altitude and aspect of nests



**Figure 4. RSPB Geltsdale Whinchat 2012
Nest site aspect - actual and random points**



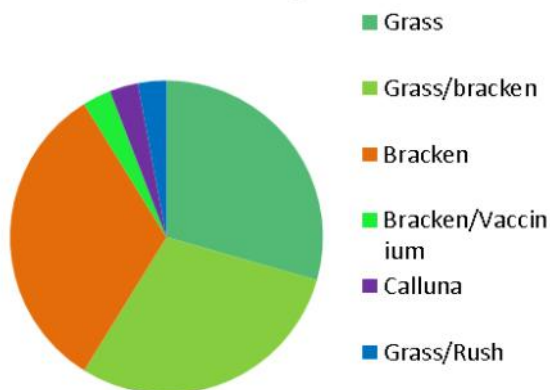
However, when looking at aspect on the reserve, it should be born in mind that as the reserve is in the north-west corner of the North Pennines most of the reserve is facing north or west. This is illustrated in Figure 4 where nest aspect is plotted against the random points (with aspect calculated in 45° sections).

Nest site vegetation and surrounding habitat

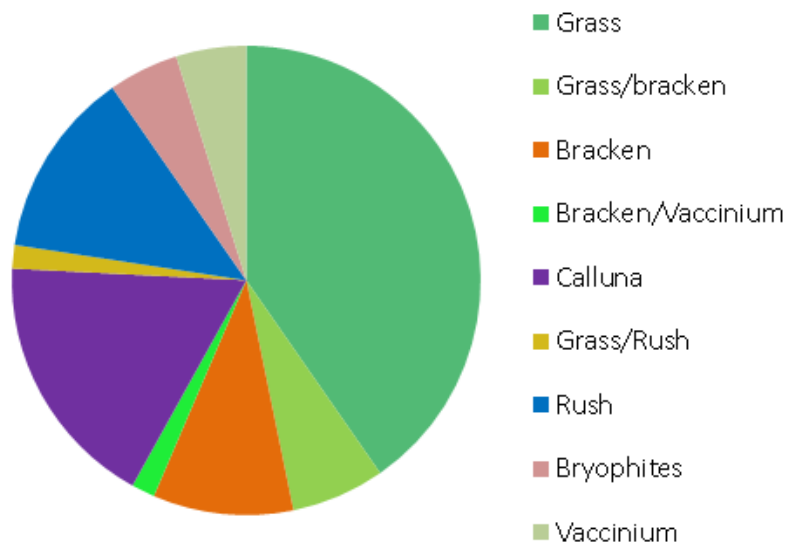
The vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the nests was recorded as was the vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the random points.

The preference for bracken habitat for the nest site was 65% compared to this vegetation type accounting for only 18% of the random points as can be seen in Figures 5 and 6.

**Figure 5. RSPB Geltsdale Whinchat 2012 -
Nest site vegetation**



**Figure 6. RSPB Geltsdale Whinchat 2012 -
Nest site vegetation from Random points**



This is illustrated further when looking at the vegetation around the nests in the 5m, 50m and 200m bands, bracken around the nest sites is always at a higher percentage than the random points.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Amanda Proud and Martin Ketcher, the RSPB residential volunteers, who carried out most of the work, caught all the adult Whinchats, found the majority of the nests and recorded most of the nest and random point habitat data.

Thanks also to Katie Lloyd, Peter Howard, Tony Rodgerson and Jo Griffiths, RSPB contract staff and to the rest of the reserve team who gathered much information in their spare time. John Callion helped with nest finding and advice, Simon Wightman helped with advice on gathering nest habitat data.

Stephen Westerberg

Eastern race Common Gull *Larus canus heinei*



Note the pale iris, dark mantle and bulky structure. Walby January 2013

One of the exciting things about the increasing knowledge within the birding fraternity of different subspecies is that it gives us more to look for. Whether it be picking out continental race *sinensis* Cormorants or northern *borealis* Eiders, it gives us a reason to look more closely and more critically at some of those species which might not otherwise have had a second glance. Being able to determine that some of these individuals are from different populations and from different geographical regions can add hugely to the satisfaction of watching them.

Common Gull is a species which perhaps a decade ago attracted little interest. Analysis of the races of this species, however, began some time ago. In 1951 Dementriev and Gladkov commented on the central Russian subspecies *Larus canus heinei* describing it as being “the largest form of Grey (=Common) Gull ... Overall tone being darker than in western subspecies “.

In 1984 K. Osborn described an individual observed in a group of Common Gulls on Fair Isle. He noted that “I noticed that the upperparts of one of the adults were much darker than the others “. The larger and heavier structure was also mentioned.

Peter Grant (1986) describes the clinal nature of plumage and structural differences between the Palearctic races of Common Gull. He states that *Larus canus heinei* winters as far west as the Black Sea and is probably annual in the Baltic, eastern Mediterranean and Britain.

Klaus Malling Olsen (2003) describes the three races of this species. The NW American form is by now given the status of being a full species – Mew Gull. The far eastern Russian race *Larus canus kamtschatschensis* is given a name – Kamchatka Gull, although still falls short of being a full species. He discusses *L. c. Heinei* and describes the clinal nature of the way in which one race effectively blends into another. So individuals from the contact zone will have a mix of characteristics of plumage and structure while those at the ends of the range will be purely one race or the other. Birds breeding in Estonia commonly show a mix of characters.



Note the solid black band on P5 just above the tertial crescent.

Walby January 2013

In recent years the criteria for identifying *L.c.heinei* have become more clear, although it is still regarded as a work in progress. The consensus of current opinion regards the following features as being indicative of *L.c.heinei* :

- Darker mantle colour - less bluish and more thundercloud grey.
- Pale iris
- Solid black band on P5 - visible on the closed and on the open wing.
- On the open wing - Black on P8 extends right to the primary coverts.
 - Extensive black on P7
 - Long black bayonet on P6

So all in all more black and reduced white on the wing tip.

While watching gulls at Walby in January 2013 I noticed an adult Common Gull with a significantly darker mantle. This bird also had a pale iris and a thick black band on P5 which was visible just behind the tertial crescent.

I was not able to get images of the open wing as all the gulls took off together in a confusing melee. While it is not possible to assign this bird unequivocally to the subspecies *heinei*, it was certainly an interesting bird and was very likely to have at least some eastern genes.

References

Grant, P.J. 1986. Gulls a guide to identification (2nd edition). Poyser
Olsen, K.M. 2003. Gulls of Europe, Asia and North America. Helm
Osborn, K. 1984 British Birds 78:454

Websites

Chris Gibbins – gulls & birds

<http://chrisgibbins-gullsbirds.blogspot.co.uk> Post 5 March 2012

Birding Frontiers / Birds and Wildlife – always discovering !

<http://birdingfrontiers.com> Post 28 February 2012 Texel

Chris Hind

Guidance for Contributors

My aim is to produce an “inclusive” magazine that has something for everybody. All contributions, from a two-line anecdote (a “Champagne Moment”) to a full newsletter article, will be considered. Priority is always given to items of Cumbrian relevance. All photos, artwork etc are most welcome.

Please listen out for snippets when you are out and about. If someone tells you something that interests you about birds then encourage them to share their wisdom and insights with the rest of us.

I am always happy to advise or assist in preparing a submission. How to submit your offering is indicated on the back cover.

Editor

Bird Atlas 2007-11

The Britain and Ireland Bird Atlas was launched at a reception at the Royal Society in London on 21st November. I attended on behalf of all the 980 or so observers who submitted records for Cumbria into what is being hailed as the most important bird publication in decades. A number of people (including the Editor of Birdwatch magazine) expressed to me their appreciation of the effort that was put in to covering all the 1816 tetrads in the county with 4 hours of timed tetrad counts in both summer and winter. This was particularly appreciated given our relatively small birding community and the geographic constraints. So thanks again to everyone who participated.

The use that was made of online data capture was a particular feature of this atlas - more than ten times the data of any previous atlas. For Britain and Ireland as a whole over 40,000 volunteers participated, generating over 16 million individual observations of 214 million birds of 502 different species!



Bittern, Siddick Pond, Steve Dutton. The Atlas notes - from just 11 booming males in 1997 to 104 in 2011. At least 600 birds present in winter 2009/10.

The book indicates that, overall, some 38% of species in Britain showed a 40 year net expansion of breeding range, 24% showed net stability and 37% net contractions. In winter 76% expanded their range between 1981-84 and 2007-11, 16% were stable and 8% contracted in range. Species with the greatest breeding range expansion in Britain over a 40 year period included Cetti's Warbler, Mediterranean Gull, Ring-necked Parakeet, Red Kite (reintroduction), Avocet, Goshawk, Egyptian Goose, Mandarin Duck, Ruddy Duck, Osprey, Firecrest, Marsh Harrier, Greylag Goose, Honey-buzzard, Black-necked Grebe, Whooper Swan, Dartford Warbler, Gadwall, Hobby and Crossbill. To these can be added range expansions over the last 20 years of Little Egret, Icterine Warbler, Bittern, Common Rosefinch, White-tailed Eagle (reintroduction), Marsh Warbler and Woodlark.

Species with the greatest breeding range contractions in Britain over a 40 year period included Red-backed Shrike, Cirl Bunting, Hawfinch, Wryneck, Capercaillie, Corncrake, Corn Bunting, Willow Tit, Turtle Dove, Woodcock, Short-eared Owl, Whinchat, Ring Ouzel, Common Scoter, Nightjar, Redshank,

Nightingale, Stone-curlew, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Tree Sparrow.

To these can be added range contractions over the last 20 years of Grey Partridge, Twite, Curlew, Dunlin, Red Grouse, Little Tern, Yellowhammer, Black-headed Gull, Pochard, Lapwing, Golden Plover and Red-breasted Merganser.

Although the massive range contraction of farmland birds that was apparent between the 1968-72 and 1988-91 breeding atlases has slowed over the last 20 years, there is no evidence that the ranges of any of these species are recovering. In Britain the range of Corn Bunting, Grey Partridge, Tree Sparrow, Turtle Dove and Yellow Wagtail have continued to reduce by at least 25% since the 1988-91 Breeding Atlas.



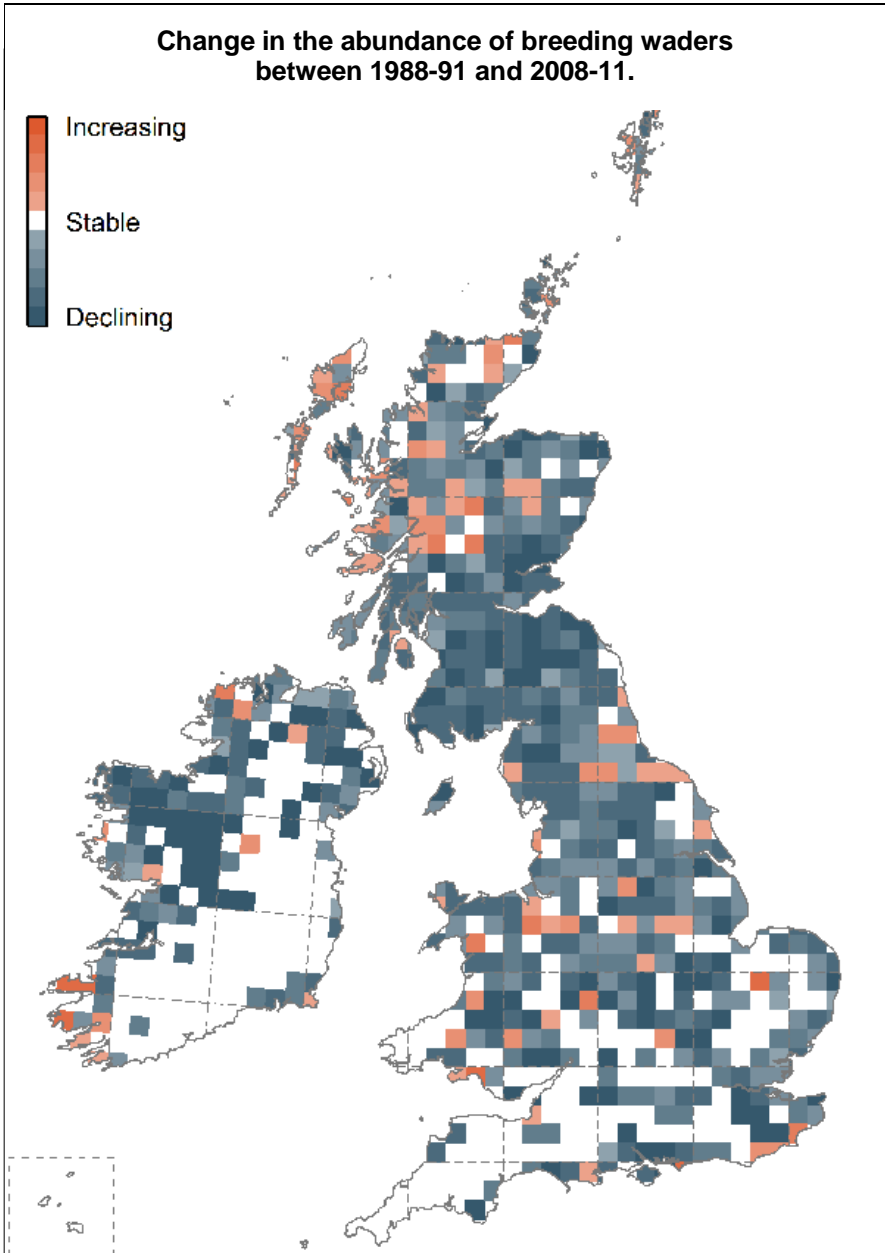
Lapwing, Anthorn, Roger Ridley. The Atlas shows breeding Lapwing lost from 884 10km squares compared to 40 years ago



Curlew, Bowness-on-Solway, Roger Ridley. Breeding Curlew lost from 1150 10km squares compared to 40 years ago.

Work does not stop here. Under formal agreements with the BTO, some 45 local atlas projects (including ours for Cumbria) were carried out alongside the national Atlas, utilising the central recording and validation system. These will provide a detailed pattern of local bird distribution and numbers to complement the Britain and Ireland Atlas. In addition, the data generated by the national Atlas will be further analysed to help elucidate the many factors driving the changing ranges of the species that are documented in this outstanding book.

Clive Hartley



Any thoughts on the changes this shows in Cumbria?

Recent reports

The period covered is September to November 2013. Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review by the Club Records Panel or British Birds Rarities Committee. Species order and nomenclature follow that used in *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria*.

Wildfowl



Barnacle Geese, Bowness-on-Solway, Steve Dutton

while subsequent counts included 2200 at Wedholme Flow. Single **Greenland White-fronted Geese** were seen at Rockcliffe on 1st November and near Kirkbride on 5th. The first **Barnacle Geese** reported from the Solway were later than normal on 4th October, with numbers then increasing to include 10000 on Rockcliffe Marsh. In the less favoured parts of the county, October brought 200 at Sand Gate Marsh near Flookburgh, 84 at Walney, 77 on the Kent Estuary and 15 north past Nethertown.

A **pale-bellied Brent Goose** passed Workington on 17th September and the first 11 pale-bellied birds reappeared at Walney on 19th. Thereafter, numbers in the Foulney/Walney area increased to 150 pale-bellied and 86 pale-bellied birds. Elsewhere, 40 birds



Black Brant, Roa Island, Lou Cross

flew north past Nethertown on 16th September and two dark-bellied birds were at Grune on 8th October. An adult **Black Brant** associating with dark-bellied Brents at Roa Island and nearby Walney from 26th November was surely the 'first-



Red-breasted Goose with ring, Anthorn, Darren Robson

winter or hybrid' seen in the area earlier in the year and constitutes the first county record. A **Red-breasted Goose** consorting with **Barnacle Geese** in the Cardurnock/Anthorn area from 5th to 17th November bore a yellow ring and was considered an escape while a **Todd's Canada Goose** was also found amongst **Barnacle Geese** on Rockcliffe Marsh on 10th November.

A drake **Green-winged Teal** returned to Hodbarrow for another winter on 5th to 15th November with it or another appearing on the Esk Estuary south of Ravenglass on 14th. **Scaup** included seven at Walney and, much further inland, two drakes at Tindale Tarn in October followed by a female there in November. A **Long-tailed Duck** appeared on the River Eden near Linstock on 26th September, lingering to 3rd October with perhaps the same bird further downstream at Old Sandsfield on 2nd November that was followed by a single at Walney next day. Walney produced the only **Velvet Scoter** in the period, a single on 5th to 7th November. Inland **Common Scoters** comprised two males and a female at Killington Reservoir while coastal maxima included 1005 at Walney in September and 200 at Silecroft in October. Other wildfowl counts in the period included 1750 **Teal** at Wedholme Flow, 1400 **Wigeon** at Walney and 4505 **Eider** counted around the Foulney/Outer Leven Estuary area.

Grouse to grebes

Good numbers of **Black Grouse** were to be found at Geltsdale, 17 being the largest single count in one place though 10+ were also seen at other sites. **Red-throated Diver** totals at coastal locations included 14 at Walney in September and 15 there in November. A good showing of **Black-throated Divers** in November involved two different individuals, an adult and a juvenile, off Nethertown and singles at Walney and offshore at Hodbarrow. A



Little Egret, Bowness Viaduct, Roger Ridley

Great Northern Diver off Nethertown on 29th October was followed by another (or the same) there on 24th to 28th November and two at Walney from 5th to 7th November.

A **Sooty Shearwater** was recorded off Nethertown on 17th September. A modest showing of **Leach's Petrels** produced three off Walney and a single past Maryport on 17th September. **Shag** sightings comprised up to 14 at Walney during the period

and singles at Arnside in September, on the Esk Estuary south of Ravenglass in October (both unusual locations) and Cavendish Dock in November.

An early **Bittern** returned to Siddick Pond on 5th September, with sporadic sightings thereafter. **Little Egret** numbers peaked at a record 52 at Walney, 46 on the Kent Estuary, nine at Rampside, five on the Inner Solway, four in the Lyth Valley, three at Bardsea, three on the Duddon Estuary and three on the Esk Estuary south of Ravenglass.

A **Great White Egret** appeared on Rockcliffe Marsh on 2nd October, remaining until at least 2nd November, with presumably the same bird relocating temporarily to Campfield Marsh on 17th October and Bowness-on-Solway on 28th November. A **Black Stork** circled over Portinscale on 23rd September.

Meanwhile, an influx of **Glossy Ibises** produced an unprecedented flock of up to 13 that graced the Kent Estuary at High Foulshaw from 28th September, with at least seven lingering around the Kent Estuary to 5th



Glossy Ibis, High Foulshaw, Nick Franklin

October and four to 17th October while a single flew east over Drumburgh Moss on 29th September. Of decidedly more dubious origin were the seven **Sacred Ibis** that continued to linger at Haverigg during September.

A **Slavonian Grebe** on the lagoon at Hodbarrow from 12th October was presumably last winter's bird returning and was joined by a second individual from 18th October, though, disappointingly, both vanished all too quickly. Another was off Nethertown on 11th November. More unusually, a **Red-necked Grebe** was also present at Hodbarrow on 19th October.

Raptors to waders



45 Purple Sandpipers at the Workington breakwater, Steve Dutton

Red Kites were seen at a few scattered sites away from the Grizedale release site. A female **Marsh Harrier** lingered on the Inner Solway into October while a single also passed through Walney in September. A few **Hen Harriers** settled into wintering haunts. **Ospreys** continued to pass through during September with two at Killington Reservoir and singles on the Irt Estuary and at Tindale Tarn and Walney. A **Hobby** was seen at St Bees Head on 28th September.

An adult **American Golden Plover** was reported on three occasions at Anthorn between 20th and 27th September though it eluded all but the finder (s). **Little Stints** were scarce, being limited to singles at Port Carlisle and on the Irt Estuary though a late adult then turned up on the Kent Estuary at Arnside on 30th November. A juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** was found at Ulpha Meadows on 1st October. The Workington **Purple Sandpiper** flock held at least 45 birds. **Curlew Sandpipers** passed through in mediocre numbers with ten at Walney but no more than three at any other site. **Ruff** too



Spotted Redshank, Port Carlisle, Darren Robson

were in short supply with five in the Lyth Valley being the most at any one site until six appeared at Blackdyke near Silloth in November though one in a field on the edge of a fell at Geltsdale on 2nd September was the first reserve record for years. Ever under-recorded, **Jack Snipe** consisted of three at Kents Bank, two at Red Hall Farm near Abbeytown and singles at Fingland Rigg Wood, Walney and Foulney Island. **Black-tailed Godwit** numbers included 45 at Kents Bank, 17 at Anthorn and 11 at Walney. **Green Sandpipers** were widely reported in modest numbers.

Spotted Redshanks consisted of singles at Borwick Rails and on the Irt Estuary. Walney, as

usual, provided the highest **Greenshank** totals with 20 in September, 22 in October and 15 in November; wintering birds elsewhere were limited to two at Roosecote Sands and one on the Esk Estuary south of Ravenglass.

Skuas to auks

Pomarine Skuas appeared in September with five at Bowness-on-Solway on 15th followed by two off Nethertown and a single at Workington over the next few days. An exceptional eight **Great Skuas** were reported at Bowness-on-Solway on 15th September while **Arctic Skuas** were, not



Curlew Sandpiper, Bowness Railings, Darren Robson

unexpectedly, more widespread with a total of five logged at Walney in September and single figures also noted at several other coastal watchpoints, the last being one off Nethertown on 22nd October.

Juvenile **Sabine's Gulls** were off Nethertown on 17th and 18th September. No particularly noteworthy numbers of **Kittiwakes** were reported while **Little Gulls** were notable by their absence. **Mediterranean Gull** sightings in September consisted of four adults at Rampside, two adults, including the returning 'Stumpy', at Workington, two, an adult and a second-winter, at Anthorn, a second-summer at Grune, one or two juvenile/first-winter birds at Arnside and single adults at Port Carlisle, Borwick Rails and Walney. October produced four, three adults (including 'Stumpy') and a second-winter, at Workington, first-winters at Eskmeals and in Kendal, a second-winter at Walney and single adults at Anthorn, Arnside Marsh and Heversham Moss. November records were limited to two adults at Workington and a single at Walney. An adult **Yellow-legged Gull** on the Esk Estuary south of Ravenglass on 30th September was considered the same individual as that seen there in 2012 but was followed by a different adult at the same site on 2nd October.

The juvenile **Black Tern** lingered on the Kent Estuary to 1st September and another was seen off Walney on 17th September. A lateish **Arctic Tern** at Tindale Tarn on 10th October was followed by a late **Common Tern** at Foulney Island on 24th October. **Razorbill** numbers peaked in October with 435 at Walney and 200 at Sileroft. A **Puffin** was logged at Walney on 23rd October.

Doves to Buntings

A **Turtle Dove** at Walney on 4th October was just the second on the island this century. A **Great Grey Shrike** hunted around the eagle viewpoint in Riggindale, Haweswater on 15th October and another was found in the far northeast of the county at Waterhead Common on 4th November. **Hooded Crows** were seen at Eskmeals, Whitehaven and Cockermouth.



Hooded Crow, Whitehaven, Steve Dutton



Yellow-browed Warbler, Cockermouth, Steve Dutton

Ring Ouzels appeared at Walney on 13th and 25th October. A first-winter **Red-breasted Flycatcher** trapped and ringed at Walney Bird Observatory on 20th September was the first in the county since 1988. A **Black Redstart** was on the disused airfield at Hallburn near Longtown on 14th October.

Walney logged good numbers of **Meadow Pipits** (max. 4000), **Skylarks** (max. 540), **Swallows** (max. 505) and **Pied/White Wagtails** (max. 155) in September.



Red-breasted Flycatcher, Walney, walneybo.blogspot.co.uk



Brambling, High Stand, Darren Robson

A scattering of October **Bramblings** included 40 at High Stand Plantation near Armathwaite. **Twite** flocks included 50 at Walney and 20 near Siddick. A **Mealy Redpoll** was at Walney on 24th October. Up to eight **Hawfinches** frequented the Sizergh Castle car park.

Single **Snow Buntings** were on Binsey and Crag Fell near Keswick in October followed in November by four on Black Combe Crag, two on High Street, two at Grune Point and one on Great Calva.

A **Yellowhammer** was the rarest passerine at Walney in November – a testament to the decline of this species in the area in recent years.



Blue Tit, Carlisle, Roger Ridley

As ever, I'm indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list individually. Feel free to send records by e-mail to ian.kinley@btinternet.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 [**http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk/**](http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk) for details of how to do so.

Contents

Club news and announcements	87
Wintering Goosander and Red-breasted Merganser survey update Malcolm Priestly.....	89
RSPB Geltsdale Whinchats – initial findings Stephen Westerberg ...	90
Eastern race Common Gull Chris Hind.....	98
Bird Atlas 2007-11 Clive Hartley.....	101
Recent reports Ian Kinley.....	104

Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is March 1st 2014

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

- on disk (your disk will be returned if requested); or
- as e-mail attachments to daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk

If you do not have a computer: please send in as clear a format as possible to Dave Piercy, Derwentwater Independent Hostel, Borrowdale, Keswick CA12 5UR; tel 017687 77246

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www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk

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