



BIRD NEWS
Vol. 29 No. 4 Winter 2018

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Club news and announcements

AGM report

At the AGM of October 5th 2018 Mike and Lyn Mills were elected as members of council. Full minutes are available on request from the secretary.

Subscriptions

The Cumbria Bird Club 2018/2019 subscription was due on 1st October. If you receive a subscription form with this mailing then according to my records we have not yet received your payment. Please let me know if this is not the case. Please pay overdue subscriptions as soon as possible. Thanks.

Gift Aid Claiming

Cumbria Bird Club can reclaim 25% of a members subscription each year if we hold a valid signed Gift Aid declaration. Currently approximately 50% of members have provided the necessary document. This results in additional income of £450 per annum. If you are a taxpayer and haven't signed a declaration please consider doing so. Either use the [form on the Club website](#) or request one from Dave Piercy or myself. Please remember if you no longer pay tax we need to hear from you so we stop claiming. Any queries please contact me by email. David Cooke – Treasurer cooke856@btinternet.com

CBC Long-eared Owl survey 2019

See the Autumn newsletter for full details - still time to sign up. Read the article in this newsletter to whet your appetite. If you would be interested in helping out with this survey, e-mail p.howard691@btinternet.com to find out if there are vacant areas nearby and for further detailed information and recording forms.

CBC meeting programme winter 2018/2019

The annual Cumbria Bird Club bird race will be held on Sunday 6th of January 2019, and finishes at 5.30pm at the Agricultural Hotel, Castlegate Penrith, CA11 7JE. New teams are always welcome, so why not give it a go! It's fun and exciting. See the attached forms and rules or contact Phil Evans direct mob: 07377653342 e-mail: philevans64rbp@gmail.com

Wednesday 9th January 2019: Tullie House 7.15pm Joint with Carlisle NHS 'Reintroductions for a Wilder Cumbria?' - *Kevin Scott Northern Reserves Manager CWT*

Monday 11th March 2019 Friends House, Stramongate, Kendal

The First Fred Gould Memorial Lecture joint with KNHS

'Fred Gould, wildlife photographer' - *Gary and Lindsey Gould*

Wildlife photos taken by Fred Gould during his lifetime.

New to CBC Council – Mike and Lyn Mills



Newly elected, we are happy to serve on Council and hope that we may make a worthwhile contribution. Your Council comprises the best of ornithological knowledge and experience and, while we cannot hope to add much to that base, we hope to be able to support the running of the club in whatever ways we can. We have both had involvement with clubs and charities in the past including Copeland Swimming Club, Low Gillerthwaite Field Centre and Whitehaven Harbour Youth Project where we have always enjoyed a hands on approach to team work and involvement with young people.

Birding wise, Mike started at junior school and progressed through wardening Little Terns, ringing exploits and membership of the Essex Club (EBWPS). Meanwhile Lyn, Whitehaven born, developed her love of birds chasing Ring Ousels on the fells! We have both enjoyed amateurish status on the CBC Bird Race. For years Mike's bogey bird was the Spoonbill while Lyn's was the Bittern. Lyn also lays claim to counting 42 Bald Eagles in a boring day, sea kayaking in British Columbia! Mike can't single out a favourite among birds whilst Lyn just loves the sound of Goldeneye wings.

Both of us have a love of islands and in February 1975 Mike joined Mike Carrier and the late Norman Hammond on a winter birding visit to the outer isles, which dates him. Living in Ennerdale during the 1980's led to encounters with Dotterel follower, John Callion, and Mike's first meeting with club secretary Dave Piercy. We look forward to meeting many more of you during the coming year and working for the good of the club.

Mike and Lyn Mills, Whitehaven. Cumbria.
stablemates5152@gmail.com.

Black-tailed Godwits - the French connection

I am aware of two colour-ringed Black-tailed Godwits that have been seen on the Duddon Estuary this year. It turns out they were both ringed and fitted with satellite tags on 19th December 2017 on the French coast near Rochefort, midway between Nantes and Bordeaux.



Black-tailed Godwit, Millom Pier, Paul Swales

The first was photographed by Paul Swales at Millom Pier on 13th May. I've done a lot of godwit ring-reading and all the birds I'd seen previously had a combination of 'normal' colour rings, so I was surprised to see the tall blue ring on the right tibia of this bird; the colour rings on the left tibia were yellow/white/green, with the metal ring on the left tarsus (YWG/m). The back-mounted satellite tag can just be seen in Paul's excellent photo. If my understanding of my wader guide is correct, this is a male of the Icelandic subspecies (*Limosa limosa islandica*) in breeding plumage.

The second ringed godwit (also in breeding plumage) was seen by myself on the tern island at Hodbarrow, roosting with four other Black-tailed Godwits among 300 Redshanks at 2pm on 16th July. After the tide at Haverigg had gone out, all these birds were seen feeding on the exposed muddy intertidal area near Hodbarrow sea wall at 8.30pm. A tall blue ring with three white spots was on the right tibia, just like the previous bird, but the colour rings on the left tibia were yellow/white/white (YWW/m).

The *islandica* subspecies 'breeds principally in Iceland but with a few pairs in northern Scotland and northwest Norway, and winters largely in Britain, Ireland and western France with smaller numbers in Spain and Portugal' (BTO's Migration Atlas, Wernham et al 2002). Egg laying starts in late May in Iceland (BWP), so presumably YWG/m was on its way to its breeding grounds. Black-tailed Godwits start to arrive back in Cumbria in early July (county bird reports), so the presence of YWW/m on 16th July was not unusual. It could have been a failed breeder, but if it had arrived on its breeding site in late May, it would have had just enough time to raise a family before returning south to its winter destination. If I can obtain any information from the owner of the satellite data about either of these birds, I will let you know.

Doug Radford

Swift survey 2018 - preliminary results

The CBC pilot Swift survey was carried out last summer by around 70 volunteers. Data was also received from the local Swift groups. Thank you to all who took part. We believe that the data collected this year and in future years will prove both interesting as well as valuable to planning authorities.

Aims and scope

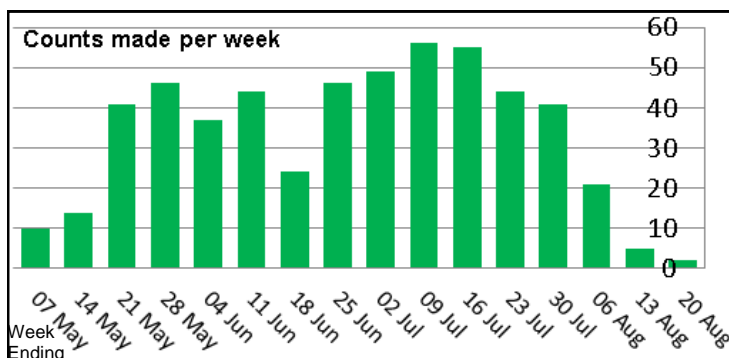
There were two strands to the survey. The main aim was to carry out timed counts in suitable habitats. A subsidiary aim was to detail any nests found. As nests are difficult to find, Swifts dart in and out in the blink of an eye, it was envisaged that few would be discovered. This assessment did not allow for so many eagle-eyed surveyors and in particular the work of local Swift groups who have been amassing data on nests for some years. We therefore now have details of hundreds of nest sites around the county. The data for all these nests will take some time to process and is therefore not considered for this preliminary report.

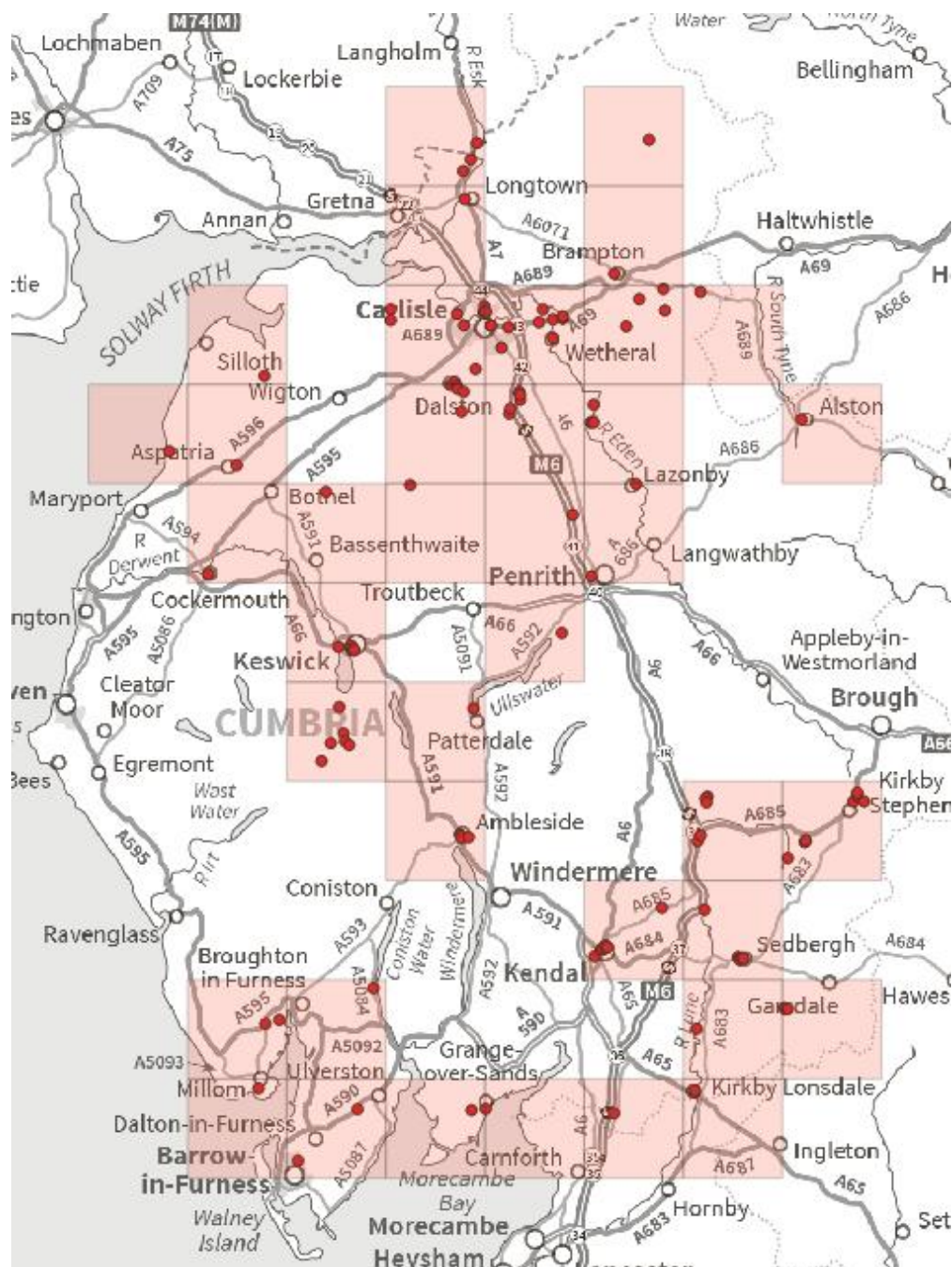
Coverage

The map overleaf shows the 126 locations where a total of 535 counts were made. Good coverage of the county was achieved with surveys spread over thirty-nine 10km squares. A number of points selected around Carlisle, a sprinkling of our major towns and some smaller villages and hamlets provided a good mix of suitable habitats.

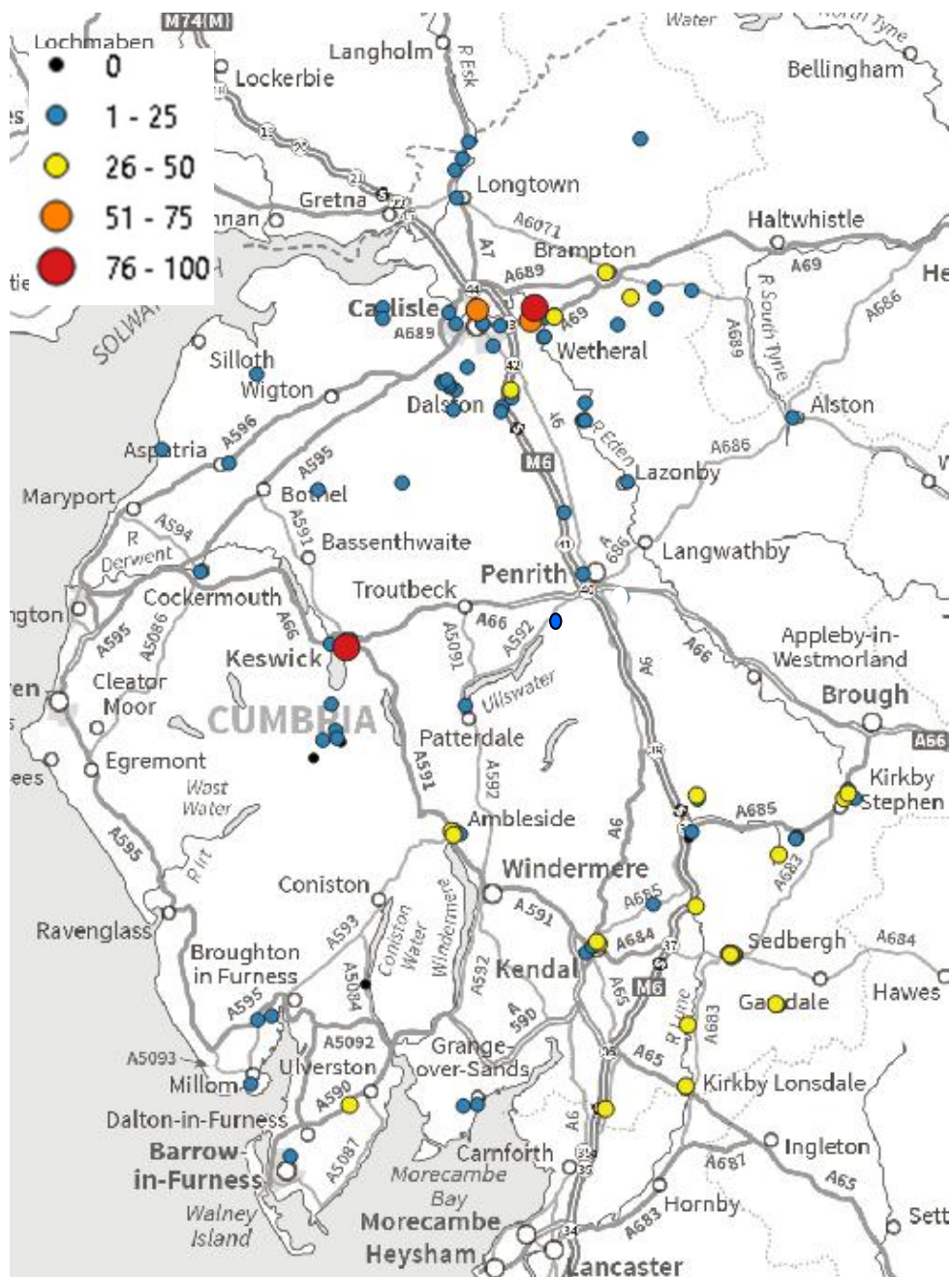
Counts

Counts were carried out between 1st May and 20th August. The recommended survey period was from mid-May to the end of July and this is reflected in the chart below. The peak number of counts made was 56 in the week ending 9th July. Apart from the week ending 18th June the number of counts made during the recommended period were relatively high.

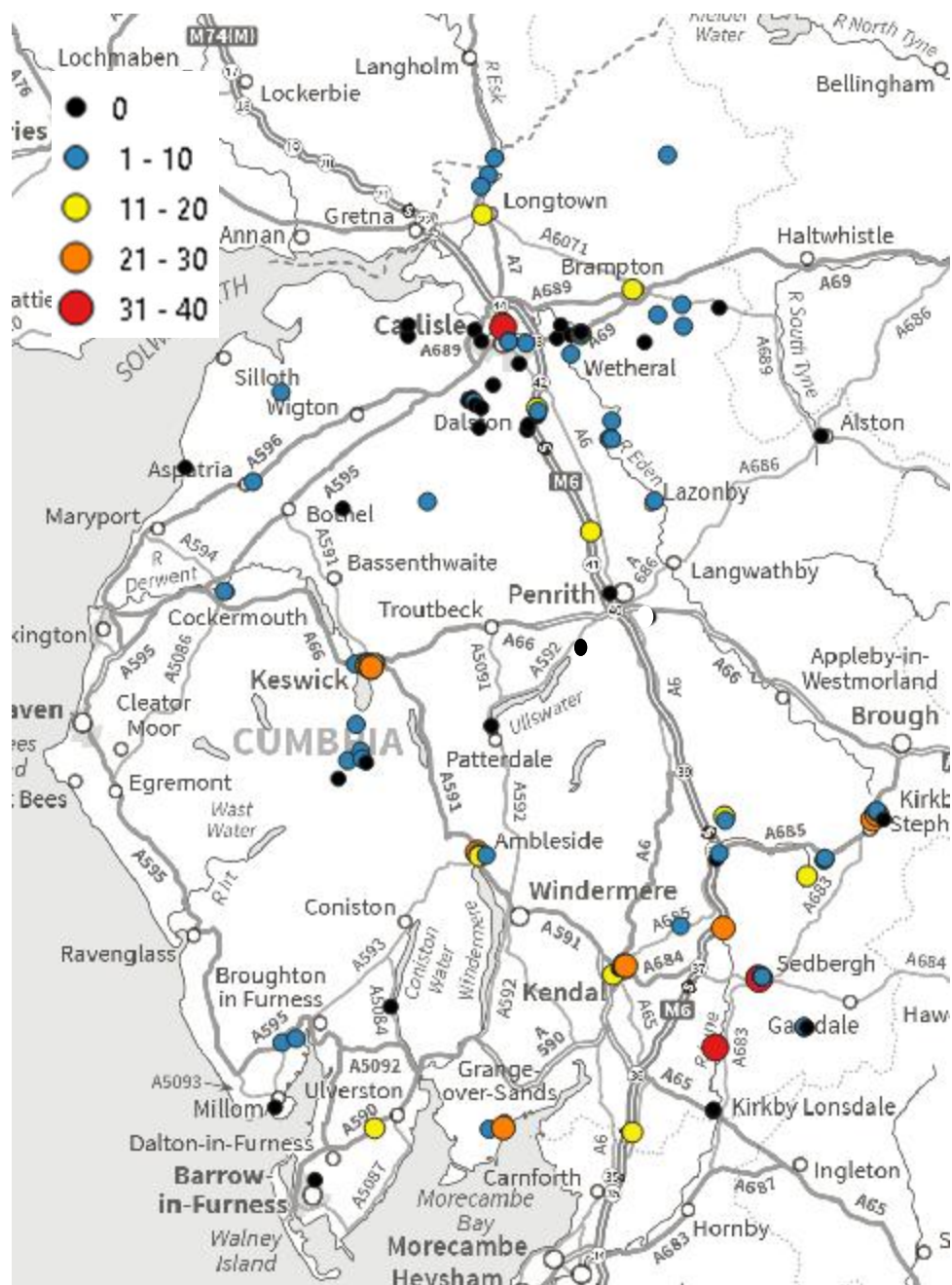




Locations surveyed with 10km squares



Maximum Swifts counted at each location



Swift survey 2018 - preliminary results

Maximum counts at each location

The first map overleaf shows the highest count at each location within a range. By far the highest counts came from just four locations. There were around 100 over Keswick on the evening of 9th July and 100 feeding over a rapeseed field in the Aglionby area on 14th July. Seventy birds were over a rapeseed field on the same morning also in the Aglionby area but suspected not to be a duplication. There were 70 in the evening over a residential address in Carlisle north of the river on 6th July.

The locations in Keswick and Carlisle also logged a proportion of screaming birds on the same dates whereas the Aglionby sites were, not surprisingly given the habitat, solely feeding birds. The second location in Aglionby received a total of seven visits logging from 25 to 70 birds feeding over rapeseed crops with, as would be expected, no screaming birds. Whilst we need to take account of the fact that counts like this may affect overall ratios of screamers, it would be of interest to build up our knowledge of favoured feeding areas such as rapeseed and other habitat such as open fell. Some other Swift surveys have targeted feeding areas to obtain trends.

The Sedbergh/Kirkby Lonsdale area features strongly on the map with high counts up to 50 reflecting the work of the local group in this area. These counts generally included a good number of screamers.

As can be seen from the map the vast majority of locations recorded smaller numbers of up to 25. Looking at the data in more detail, 75 of the 126 locations recorded a maximum of ten or less birds.

Six locations recorded no birds at all. All but one of these nil return locations received just one visit. The exception was a location at Water Yeat at the southern end of Coniston which received eight visits. Despite apparently good habitat no birds were seen though Swallows were reported as breeding and more numerous than the previous year. We would be keen for these locations to be resurveyed in future years.

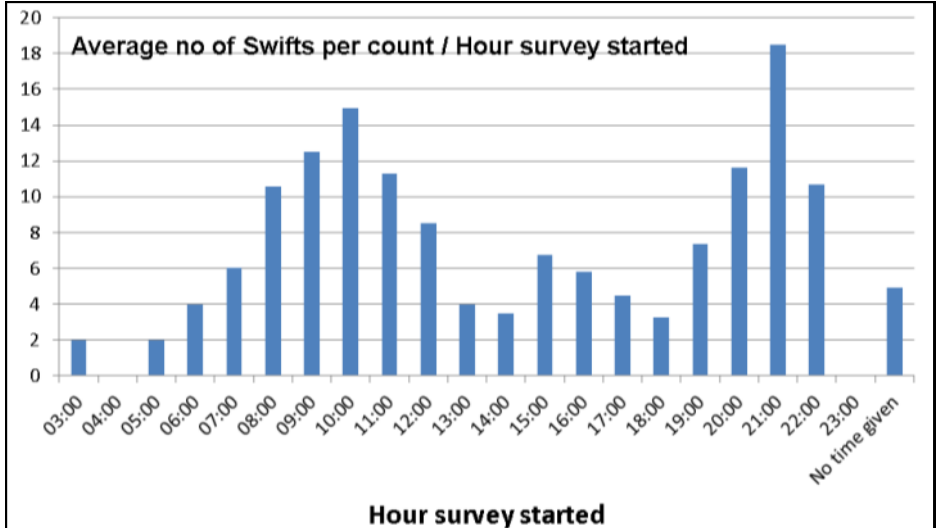
'Screamers'

An important part of the survey was to count the numbers in screaming parties that usually occur around roof-top level. These are believed to indicate the presence of nests nearby. The second map overleaf illustrates the maximum numbers of screamers found at each location. In general there appears to be a correlation between locations with high numbers of Swifts and those with high numbers of screamers. The highest numbers were found in Carlisle and the Sedbergh area.

Swift survey 2018 - preliminary results

There were 40 out of the 120 locations that held Swifts where no screamers were noted. When we analyse the nest data it will be interesting to see if as expected a lack of screamers implies a lack of nests.

Time of day

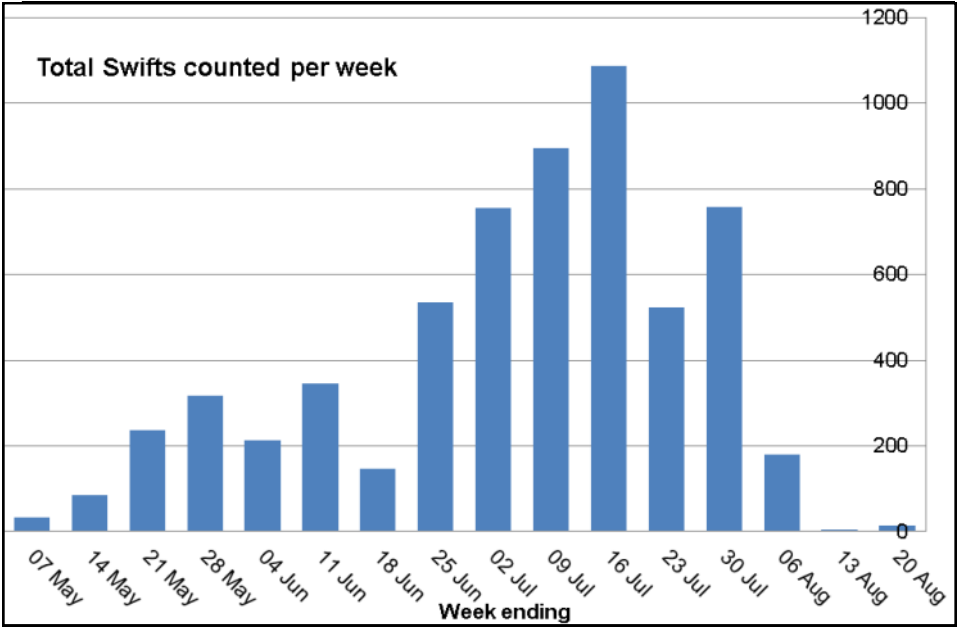


The chart above shows the relationship between the number of Swifts and the time the survey was started. As expected there are peaks both in the morning and evening. Perhaps 10 o'clock in the morning is surprisingly late for peak activity? We may consider using these results to hone down the recommended times to start surveying next year. We can also investigate the optimum amount of time needed for a survey.

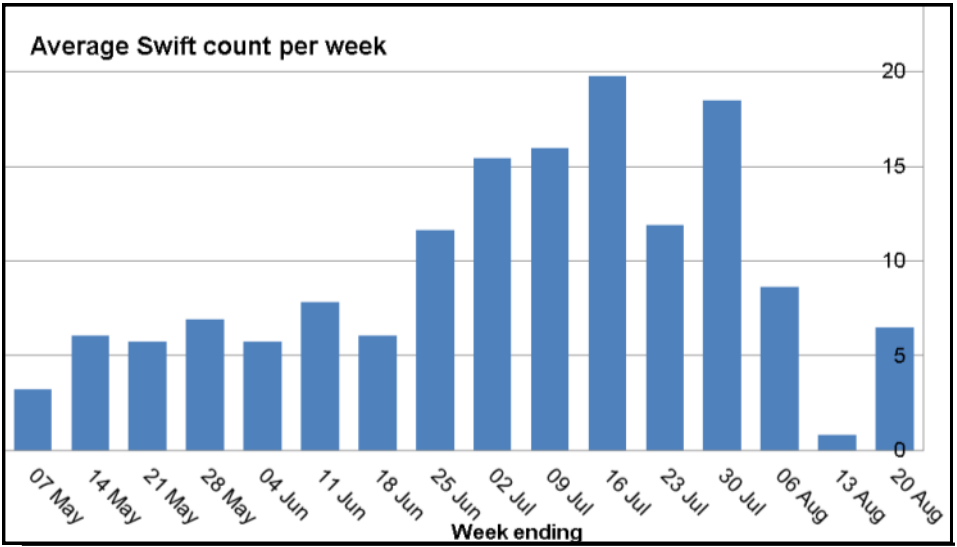
2018 Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria Submitting records for all species

Please submit all your records for 2018 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 2016 Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria).

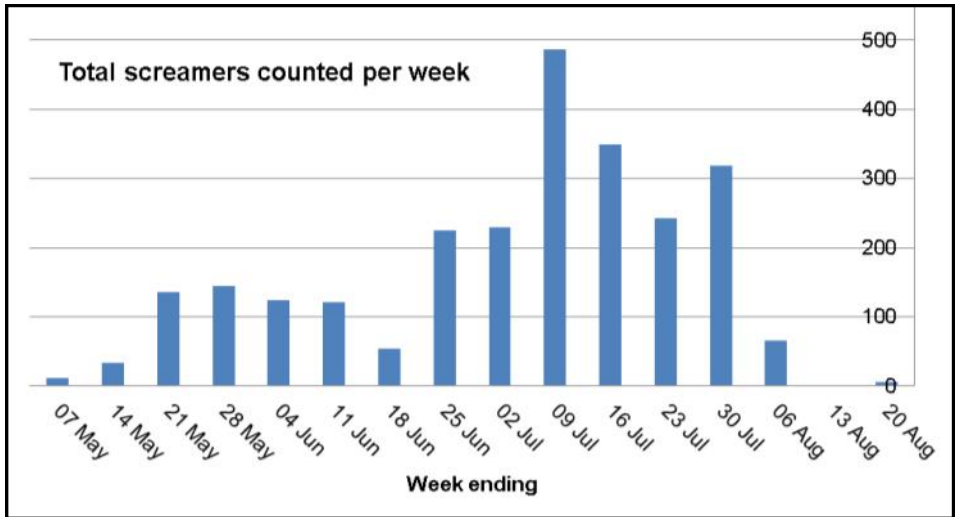
Swift survey 2018 - preliminary results



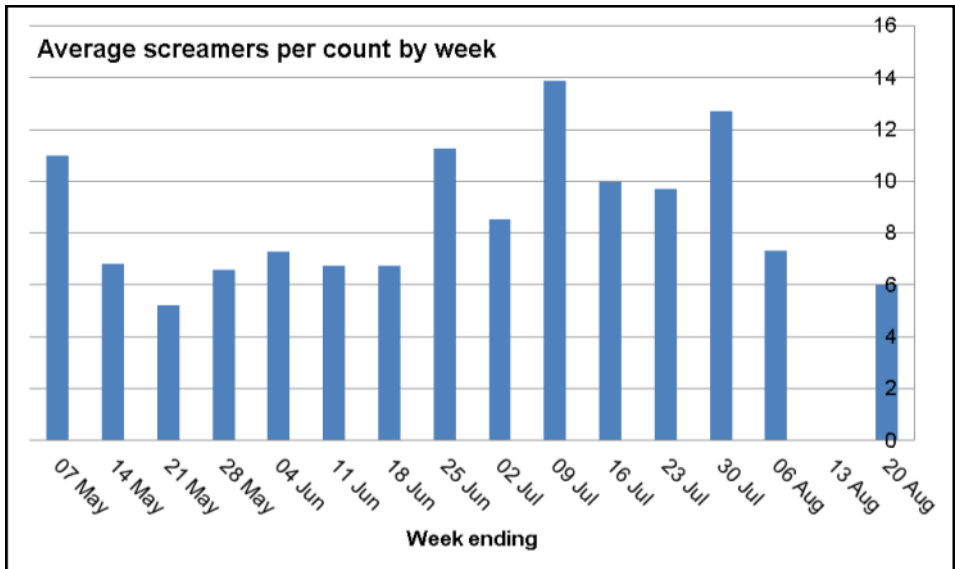
The graph above shows that the number of Swifts counted in each week. The peak count was of 1087 birds in the week ending 16th July. The graph below takes the number of counts into consideration and shows the peak of an average of nearly 20 birds in the same week.



Swift survey 2018 - preliminary results



The graph above shows the number of screaming Swifts counted in each week. The peak count was of 486 birds in the week ending 9th July. The graph below is the average number of screamers seen per count in a week. Note that zero counts were not included. As above the peak was in the week ending 9th July when there was an average of 14 screamers per count.



Swift survey 2018 - preliminary results

Swift activity - timings

From these details of observations plotted against dates interesting conclusions can be posited for three periods.

Around 28th May:

Only the breeders are here, and first eggs are likely to have been laid, so probably one bird will be incubating on the nest. This is also probably just at the start of the arrival of the non-breeding birds. Hence counts and average numbers are likely to be less than later in season.

Around 25th June:

There is likely to be a mixture of breeders and non-breeders at this stage. Thus as expected there were high counts/averages found for both screamers and total Swifts.

Around 16th July:

These are the peak Swift counts. The birds now are breeders, both of which could be foraging, and non-breeders. There won't be any fledglings yet. We probably can't really conclude whether lower counts and averages of screamers now truly reflects less screaming by this stage, without further study.

The above fits in well with our current understanding of the arrival, laying, and hatching timings.

Swift survey 2019

This year's survey was initially set up as a scoping survey to detect the presence of Swifts around the county. The aim was to cover as many settlements as possible whilst realising that to ascertain a definitive number of breeding Swifts in the county was an impossible task.

There was a great deal of enthusiasm for this survey and we would love to continue next year. We will use the data already accumulated to refine the methodology for the next season. We would also like to develop a repeatable methodology in order to monitor this beleaguered species frequently. Ideally the survey will continue to be simple and enjoyable!

Further news of the 2019 survey will appear in the next newsletter. If you did not take part in the 2018 survey but would be interested next year please contact [Dave Piercy](#) (details inside cover).

Data considerations

We do have to be wary that the results may reflect choices made by surveyors and the guidelines they were given. Weekly totals should also be viewed with caution as individual counts are bound to overlap at times. The results are also based on a relatively small amount of data. There other variables that may have to be taken in consideration such as weather.

Thoughts from the top of our heads

Here are some ideas on the future plans to be discussed

- Repeat surveys during just these 3 weeks: May 28th/ June 25th/July 16th
- Repeat surveys in two time periods: before 11am/after 8.30pm
- A survey for total Swifts (breeders and non-breeders) should be done at or around 16th July.
- At sites where both morning and evening surveys were done it would be possible to establish what time was best (a recent study in Cambridge suggested it was the morning)
- Standardise count times say 10 minutes or more. Allow for contiguous counts eg if a surveyor spends half an hour at a site they do 3 x 10 minute counts. This would help repeatability.
- Survey from points only - not during a walk
- If we are interested in trying to monitor trends, then surveys should be done at same locations each year, repeating this survey.
- If we are interested in Swift conservation, then we don't want to deter people from continuing to find more locations that have Swifts, nor from seeking out colonies. So that people can act to try to save those colonies that may be threatened with demolition or renovations.
- Effects of weather to take into consideration ? There could be late/early years.
- Nest site data: this is a time consuming activity and hopefully something that can be encouraged.
- Although this was not the rationale of this survey, if we want to increase Swift accommodation, then we should issue some guidance for people about putting up boxes/internal nest bricks/ playing attraction calls.

The Swift survey sub committee will be meeting sometime in January to discuss possible changes. All feedback on these ideas welcome and if you have thoughts of your own please let us know.

Dave Piercy

The Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*) in Cumbria

(An uncommon resident, passage migrant and winter visitor; breeds in very small numbers.)

The Long-eared Owl has a circumpolar distribution, with the nominate race being found across the boreal and temperate zones of the Palearctic region. In Britain it is both an uncommon (but widespread) resident breeder and a regular and semi-irruptive winter visitor. The current British breeding population is estimated to be in the range of 1,800 to 6,000 pairs (Musgrove et al.,).



Long-eared Owl, Jockey
Shield 2011, Nick Franklin

The Long-eared Owl is particularly difficult to monitor and survey. It is highly nocturnal, surprisingly secretive, and often located in very remote locations (which is certainly the case in Cumbria). It must surely be one of the most under-recorded of all British species.

It usually nests in trees or mature bushes, where it uses old stick nests built by corvids, Buzzards, Sparrowhawks etc., and sometimes squirrel dreys. It will also sometimes nest on the ground or even occasionally in crag holes (see below). It readily accepts open-fronted Kestrel boxes or purpose-made wicker baskets. It requires nearby open habitat, such as moorland, rough grassland or heathland, in which to hunt.

Its main prey consists of rodents, shrews and birds. Typically field voles account for 40-45% of the diet (cf. 60-65% for Short-eared Owls) and birds for about 10-15% (i.e. about twice as many as for Short-eared) (Glue et al., 1974). As a consequence, the numbers of both breeding and wintering Long-eared Owls in Britain fluctuate in response to vole cycles (though perhaps not quite as markedly as is the case with its near cousin). Between mid January and April the adults usually call and display after dark, with the male making slow-motion flights punctuated by wing-clapping – behaviour that is not often witnessed. Breeding birds are most readily detected by listening for the distinctive ‘creaky gate’ begging calls of the chicks, which might be heard anytime between late May and early August. Our breeding population is regarded as relatively sedentary, though not particularly site-faithful, with a median natal dispersal distance of 42km (based on 12 recoveries) (Wernham et al 2002).

In winter, the owls may form communal daytime roosts. Roosting birds can sometimes number well into double figures (Balmer et al., 2013), though there have been no historical records of such large assemblies in Cumbria (see below). Roosts are often in thick hedges, shelter belts or hawthorn scrub, and invariably adjacent to open hunting terrain.

The resident population is joined in the winter by a variable number of immigrants, dependent upon breeding success and food supply on their breeding grounds. Ringing recoveries indicate that these birds largely come from Fennoscandia, the Baltic and Eastern Europe, but with some also breeding in Iceland and the Faroes (Wernham et al., 2002; BTO website). It is not known whether immigrant and resident owls form mixed or separate roosts. It is believed that immigrants reach all areas of Britain, but are more concentrated in the east of the country (where the larger roosts generally form). Roosts are often at traditional locations, which does suggest some degree of winter site-fidelity. In the absence of any relevant ringing recoveries, it is unclear whether any of our winter visitors ever remain to breed here (Wernham et al., 2002).

The Victorian naturalist, H.A. MacPherson tells us a limited amount about the status of this species in Cumbria during the last quarter of the 19th Century. He says that 'opinions have always differed as to the relative abundance of the Long-eared owl' in the county. He informs us that one local Naturalist 'regarded the species as plentiful near Barrow in 1876'. In general, MacPherson believes that this owl 'occurs sporadically in our larger plantations up to the very borders of Scotland, as well in...fell districts, as in the large woods of the lower grounds'. Rather surprisingly, he adds that it 'suffers more from pole traps than any other species of owl' (MacPherson, 1892).

Writing during the Second World War, Blezard informs us that the Long-eared Owl is 'sparsely distributed' across Cumbria, 'except in the northern district, where it remains fairly common'. He also mentions a recent notable decline on the Solway Plain (Blezard, 1943). Derek Ratcliffe (2002) also says that 'numbers collapsed around 1940' in the Solway area, and 'have never recovered'. This may be partly explained by the felling of woodland and agricultural intensification in the area during the war. Interestingly, Blezard mentions four instances of ground-nesting in the period – three in the North Lakes and one in Cumberland. In the first half of the 20th Century in the Furness area, the Long-eared Owl bred 'in wooded areas from Barrow northwards to Grange and the Rusland valley, and in several plantations near Windermere and the river Winster (Oakes, 1952). Oakes tells us that in Lancashire there is a 'widespread habit of ground-nesting' in heather and, particularly, amongst bracken. He believes that negative competition with the increasingly common Tawny Owl and the recent destruction of woodlands may account for apparent declines. Writing about Northumberland, Bolam (1932) also held that the Long-eared Owl was increasingly being 'elbowed out of its ancient haunts' by the spread of 'the brown owl'. By the early 1960s, Stokoe informs us that the bird has 'much decreased' in Cumbria, and is now 'generally sparse'. He believes that its main habitat is 'scrub and remote

The Long-eared Owl (Asio otus) in Cumbria

woods on mosses, moors and fell slopes', where it breeds 'up to 1,200 feet' (366m) (Stokoe, 1962).

Reports of Long-eared Owls supplied to the county recorders since the 1970s are generally scanty, with very little annual breeding evidence submitted (Birds in Cumbria, 1973 onwards). Areas where breeding has been reported are the west coast and coastal foothills, the North Pennine fringes, the Solway plain, the South-eastern corner of the county and the Eden valley. There have been more records for the winter period, particularly from the southern end of the county. Most of these have been of single birds, but in the past 20 years roosts of two or three birds have been located on Walney Island (1997, 1998/9, 2008), at Findlandrigg Wood (2005) and near Castle Carrock (2004). A bird ringed at Walney in December 1976 was found dead the following August in the Mariy region of western Russia, some 3,279km away (BTO website).

A dedicated county breeding survey conducted in January to March 2007 found 'up to 15 territories' in Cumbria. The majority were located in woods bordering open upland. 'Only limited areas were surveyed', and it was believed that birds in many remote and difficult-to-survey sites 'will have been missed'. Breeding evidence came from the Pennines, the Eden valley, the Lune valley, the Cumbrian Dales, south Lakeland, central Lakeland and the Solway plain (Piercy, 2007). These results were in line with the findings of the Cumbria Breeding Atlas for 1997-2001 which came up with a county population estimate of 10-15 pairs (Stott et al., 2002).

Survey work for the recent national Bird Atlas (Balmer et al., 2013) found breeding evidence in 13 different 10km squares in the county, which is a net increase of five 10km squares since the Cumbria Atlas of 1997-2001. Breeding was confirmed in the Border Uplands, Solway plain, North Pennines, Eden valley, east Lakeland, the Cumbrian Dales and the Lune valley. There were losses in the west Lakeland foothills, but notable gains in the north-east of the county (Border Uplands, Solway Plain, North Pennines).

It is known that the number of Long-eared Owls attempting to breed in any one year is highly variable, and is closely linked with food availability, particularly the number of field voles present (Glue, 1977). In 1985, for example, breeding evidence was recorded 'in at least seven sites' in the north-east of the county (Birds in Cumbria 1985). In 2014 a well-attested vole plague in the North Pennines coincided with a record eight occupied Long-eared Owl territories on or within a few kilometres of the Geltsdale RSPB Reserve. These included a rare, successful crag-nesting pair. (Howard, 2014).

In the winter, the 2007-2011 Bird Atlas shows birds present in 16 of the 10km squares in Cumbria, which represents a 45% increase since the 1981-84 national Winter Atlas (Lack, 1986). Of the eight gains, most were located in the extreme south of the county. These results are in line with the nation-wide situation, where Long-eared Owls were recorded in 50% more 10km squares than in 1981-84. It has, however, been suggested that this apparent increase may well be biased by increasing coverage and observer effort. In addition, it is speculated that the two very cold winters of 2009-10 and 2010-11 could have triggered larger influxes than usual and/or made owls more easily detectable (Balmer et al.,).

What, then, of future prospects for this owl in Cumbria? Although negative competition with the larger Tawny Owl has often been posited as a limiting factor, both the 2007 Cumbrian and the 2005 County Durham Bird Club surveys found that Long-eared Owl territories were very often located in close proximity to Tawny Owl territories. It is also worth noting that the number of breeding Tawny Owls in Britain has in fact declined by 6% since the 1968-72 Atlas (Balmer et al., 2013). On the positive side, it seems that more suitable breeding and foraging habitat for Long-eared Owls should become available in the county as large, even-aged conifer blocks are increasingly being re-structured to include more open areas and varied planting schemes (as is the case in many parts of the Border Forests). The sympathetic restoration of former industrially-cut peatlands (such as Wedholme Flow and Bolton Fell on the Solway Plain) may well also provide new opportunities for this species. And in suitable habitat that contains few old stick nests, the provision of nest boxes or baskets could prove to be most beneficial. In view of the aforementioned difficulties in monitoring this owl, regular dedicated county-wide surveys (as per 2007) would prove highly valuable in trying to assess both breeding and wintering populations in the future.

Peter Howard

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Recent reports

The period covered is September to November 2018 .Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review by the Club Records Panel or British Birds Rarities Committee .

Swans to Ducks

The first **Whooper Swan** reported was a single bird on Rockliffe Marsh on 12th September but it wasn't until 3rd October birds started to arrive in numbers – 32 at Englishtown and six at Siddick Ponds; two days later 14 went east over Carlisle and six were on the coast at Allonby. By 18th 12 were at RSPB Campfield. On the morning of 21st October 36 flew south over Carlisle Airport before rain started and 18 and 74 respectively were at Wedholme NNR and Moricambe Bay the same day. On 23rd the herd in the north-west had built to 143 at Rabeycote, 145 on 30th and by 10th November it had reached 219 at Kirkbride and 228 there (including 41 juveniles) on 18th. The flock frequenting the Walby area had 56 birds at end of October, 76 by 10th November and 104 by 20th – probably a record number for this site. Birds were also present in the Longtown area with 22 there at end of November. In the south of the county six were on the Leven on 6th October.



Pink-footed Geese, Grune Point, Tony Marsh

The first **Pink-footed Geese** were reported from Bowness Railings with 30 moving south on 12th September – thereafter birds started to arrive in numbers with small flocks at Watchtree NR and Waterside on 12th and on 15th about 1,000 were between Burgh by Sands and Anthorn with smaller numbers at Kirkbride and South Walney. On 16th birds were heard overhead in heavy rain at Skelwith Bridge. On 22nd small groups totalling 850 birds passed south all day at Kirkbride and further inland several skeins moved south-west at Haweswater, 105 were on Thirlmere and birds could be heard passing over the peak of Helvellyn in heavy cloud. The next day 1600 went south-west over Boustead Hill in early evening

and two small flocks totalling 110 birds passed south over St Johns in the Vale at 19:50 with others heard a little later. Several skeins moved south on the west coast on 25th, from Binsey on 29th, 300 passed north-east an occurrence seen from this site in previous years. There were still some decent numbers in the county in October with 5400 on 21st on WWT Goose Count. On 13th November around 4000 were feeding on fields at Abbey House Farm. By 18th November only 500 were on Moricambe bay suggesting birds had moved away south. At Walney 90 passed through on 15th September, 1000 on 23rd, 2290 on 28th and 1760 on 10th October.

Greylag Geese were reported "commuting daily" from Binsey at the end of September. 750 were at Warwick Bridge on 26th October. Four **White-fronted Geese** were at RSPB Campfield on 23rd. A **Todd's Canada Goose** joined the Barnacle flock at Anthorn on 25th November and was still present at the end of the month. The first **Barnacle Goose** were 37 north over Penrith on 28th September with 3000 on Whirrigg Marsh on 7th October; by the end of the month there were 6000 on Burgh Marsh. 4000 were at Cardurnock at the end of November. Three hybrid Barnacle/Snow(? Ross's) had been present on north side of Solway with first returning birds and one of these was seen regularly on the Cumbrian side as were up to five leucistic birds. A **Dark-bellied Brent Goose** was with Barnacles on Easton Marsh on 4th November and a **Black Brant** was at Walney on 10th and 16th November and on Roa Island on 18th. The Walney flock of **Brents** held 114 on 23rd October and 172 Pale-bellied by 25th November.



*Todd's Canada Goose, Cardurnock,
Nick Franklin*



Scaup, Siddick Ponds, Darren Bell

In mid-October 100 **Shelduck** were at Foulney and 200 were on the Leven Estuary. A maximum of 50 **Gadwall** were present at Watchtree NR in early October. **Pintail** counts on the Duddon Estuary included 3240 on 6th October and 3315 on 16th November. There were 228 between Burgh by Sands to Anthorn on 15th Sept and 80 at Anthorn in mid-October. 1200 **Teal** were counted on Wedholme Flow on 14th October and 400 were at Siddick on 26th November - a high count for this site. A **Green-winged Teal** was at RSPB Campfield on 11th October. A drake **American Wigeon** was at Walney on 30th October. The only **Garganey** reported was at Beetham on 8th September. Three **Pochard** were on Siddick Ponds on 3rd September and two were at Hodbarrow the next day. Three **Greater Scaup** frequented Siddick Pond in November. A female **Velvet Scoter** was off Par-ton on 16th November. First report of **Goldeneye** (11) were on the River Eden west of Grinsdale on 28th October with 64 on the same stretch on 23rd November. 24 were on the River Eden further west at Old Sandsfield on 31st October. At Siddick Pond 16 were present on 26th November .

Partridges to herons

At least 15 **Grey Partridge** were in the Low/High Hesket area. Three were at Holme Dub on 29th September and a single at Glasson Moss on 17th November. An immature Red-legged Partridge on 2nd November was a first for a garden in Abbeytown. A **Golden Pheasant** was photographed at RSPB Campfield on 23rd October. Regular counts of **Red-throated Diver** in the Solway produced 399 birds from Harrington to Maryport on 28th September, 537 passing Maryport on 29th October and 220 on 24th November. There were 15 off Silecroft on 2nd October. A **Black-throated Diver** passed Workington on 23rd November. **Great Northern Divers** were reported by kayakers in Ravenglass Esk on 22nd November and another single was at Workington a day later.



Little Egret, Port Carlisle, Tony Marsh

Bittern were reported only from Siddick – in late October and early November. A single **Western Cattle Egret** was at Orton, Tebay on 19th September. A **Little Egret** at Allonby was only the 4th in 15 years but now the third since 2017

an indication of changing status. The largest number of birds were in the south of the county whilst on the Solway there seemed to be a maximum of 50 birds using the day-light roost on Port Carlisle island in September with approx 50 seen crossing to the north side of the estuary to roost at Eastriggs on 27th October. The roosts in south Cumbria held 469 birds (in five roosts) on 27th September, 451 in October and 330 in November. Away from the coast single birds were at Grinsdale on 28th October and at Longtown on 28th November. Single **Great White Egret** were at High Foulshaw on 10th September and 10th October, the Arnside area up to end of October, at Sedburgh on 2nd November and on Milnethorpe Marsh on 25th September and 1st October. Three **Spoonbills** were in the Arnside area in early October.

Notable numbers of **Little Grebe** were 11 at Hodbarrow Lagoon on 14th October and ten on the River Eden west of Grinsdale on 28th October increasing to 17 a month later. A **Slavonian Grebe** was off Walney on 26th November.

Raptors to Waders

The last **Osprey** reported was from Anthorn on 15th September. **Red Kite** were reported from Shap (29th September) and Lowther (7th October) with a juvenile at Brampton also on the latter date. There was one over Tebay and two over Blawith in November. "Flyover" **Marsh Harriers** were recorded from Carlisle City Centre on 21st September (1st calendar year) and from Carlisle Airport on 30th October, moving south-east in the early morning. Otherwise records were from southern mosses and Walney which had birds on 1st September and 18th October. A ringtail **Hen Harrier** flew south at Walton being heavily mobbed by corvids on 23rd September; otherwise all reports were from the Solway Mosses and those in the south of the county with up to two males and a ringtail in October and November. A **Hobby** was chasing hirundines on 5th September at Holme and two were over Foulshaw on 10th. Single **Merlin** were widely reported from Carlisle Airport and Jockey Shield in the north-east of county, Saltcoates and RSPB Campfield on the Solway, Workington on west coast where it was hunting along the beach and Foulney, Foulshaw, Walney and Haverigg in the south.

Whilst **Water Rail** were regularly reported from Foulshaw throughout and Siddick Pond during the second half of November, other reports came from Thacka Beck, Glasson Moss, Bitts Park Carlisle, RSPB Campfield, Tarns Dub and at Longtown. In the south of the county 1000 **Oystercatchers** were recorded during a WeBs count at Foulney on 25th October.

Significant numbers of **Golden Plover** away from Anthorn masts which held its regular flock were 80 on Helton Fell on 1st October, 500 at Langwathby on 6th, 260 at Foulney on 14th and 500 off Boustead Hill on 15th and also 130 at Braystones on 23rd. Away from the coasts high numbers of **Lapwing** were 700 near Langwathby on 6th October, 1000



Bar-tailed Godwits, Port Carlisle, Tommy Holden

on Burgh Marsh point and the same at Holme Dub on 15th, 600 at Walby on 21st and what may have been the same flock (that regularly spends time west of Brampton) 286 at Carlisle Airport on 25th October with 650 the same day just west of Brampton (may be some duplication ?) and in November an estimated 3000 between Penrith and Appleby next to the A66 and on 13th at least 800 next to the M6 near Plumpton, another regular site.

The regular flock of **Purple Sandpipers** frequented Workington Harbour with 25 there on 6th November; less expected were five at Whitehaven harbour on 10th. 305 **Turnstones** were at Walney on 8th September and then 120 at Foulney on 14th October. Apart from seven **Ruff** at Carlisle Airport on 28th October and ten at Abbeytown on 6th November both with a Lapwing flock, other records came just from the Solway from 15th September through to end of November - notable were 12 at Anthorn on 27th September and a peak of 19 between Cardurnock and Anthorn on 13th October. There were also 12 birds at RSPB Campfield on 25th November; these records may represent the same birds moving around.

A **Curlew Sandpiper** was at Bowness on 4th September and then four at the end of the month at Anthorn and just a single there on 1st October. Apart from a single bird on the River Kent on 1st October all records of **Little Stint** were of a bird at Port Carlisle. **Green Sandpipers** were recorded at Milnthorpe Marsh where there was one on 1st October, Ravenglass Esk with two on 28th September and one on 16th November but mainly from the River Eden and the Esk at Longtown (two on 23rd October). Three were in the Rockliffe area in early September but the highest number were 11 between Carlisle and Park Broom which presumably included passage birds. In October a single bird was on a roadside pool on Burgh Marsh, a regular site till the end of the period; two were on the Longtown Esk on 23rd and on 28th two were between Grinsdale and Rockliffe with three on the same stretch of river a month later. Also on November 3rd two were in the Linstock area. A single was on the Duddon Estuary on 18th November.

Common Sandpipers were at the regular wintering site on the Ravenglass Esk – one on 25th September, four on 28th and three on 16th November. The only other reports were of a bird at Hodbarrow on 18th October, one at Port Carlisle on 22nd and one on the River Kent in Kendal on 20th November. Single **Spotted Redshank** were recorded up to mid-October from Port Carlisle in the north to South Walney. Notable numbers of **Redshank** were at Foulney – 350 and Hodbarrow Lagoon - 600 both on 14th October but at Walney there were 1215 on 8th September and 1200 on 24th. The largest **Greenshank** numbers came from Rockliffe and Walney; at the former there were ten on 2nd September, 14 a couple of days later and still five on 20th. Walney held six on 15th September and a maximum of 27 on 24th with numbers reducing thereafter. The Esk/Mite complex held 23 birds on 25th September. Inland two birds flew south over Carlisle Airport on 14th October .

There were some significant numbers of **Black-tailed Godwit** in the north of the county with 300 at Rockliffe on 9th September, 167 at Glasson Point on 11th September and 400 there on 20th September and 50 at Bowness Rail-

ing on two dates in the last week of the month but 240 there on 1st October. There were around 600 at Foulshaw on 17th October. **Curlew** flocks of note were 680 at Foulney on a WeBs count on 14th October and on 28th 122 were on the Eden west of Grinsdale reduced to 89 a month later. .Reports of **Common Snipe** were 14 at Carlisle Airport on 21st October with nine a month later. The highest numbers were 24 on Fellbarrow on 10th October, 21 west of Grinsdale on 28th October and at least 27 on Wedholme Flow on 11th November. Two **Jack Snipe** were next to the River Eden west of Grinsdale on 24th October and 28th November – a bird was at Carlisle Airport on 23rd November. **Woodcock** records from around Torver, (none near a wood!): October 30th two at Bannishead Quarry. November 6th, 16th, 20th (two), 23rd (two) on High and Low Commons. One was by Talkin Tarn on 1st November.

Skuas to Auks

Single **Bonxies** were at Walney 9th September, 9th October and 30th November and at Bowness on Solway on 13th September. The only **Arctic Skua** was at Walney on 9th September and 19th October. The Workington area continued to hold the most **Mediterranean Gulls** with notable numbers being 40 on 1st October, 50 at Siddick pond on 11th (a site record), 45 on 19th and still 17 by 23rd. Silloth also produced records with a maximum of at least 15 on 29th September. Away from the coast three were at Abbeytown on 17th October and a single bird was at Carlisle Airport on 6th November. 300 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were off Bowness Railings on 20th September. Few terns were reported apart from 21 **Sandwich Terns** on the west coast at the end of September. Small numbers of **Guillemot** were noted with two at Rockliffe on 9th September, 30 at Bowness on Solway on 21st and a single bird on the River Eden at Scotby Holmes which was apparently taken by a Buzzard . At Walney **Razorbills** were on the move in October with 1450 on 7th and 630 on 20th. **Leach's Petrels** were reported only from Walney on three dates from mid-September to 2nd October. Single **Shags** were off Silecroft on 4th September and Whitehaven on 16th November.

Pigeons to Buntings

In early October 40 **Collared Doves** were at Newbiggin (Penrith) and a day later 20 were at a farm at Sandsfield taking advantage of cattle being fed in open sided sheds.

Short-eared Owls were reported only from Foulney (14th October), two at RSPB Campfield (5th November), Beckfoot (21st November) and Walton on 26th and at Walney on 27th October and 22nd November. **Barn Owls** were reported from the Warwick Bridge area and also from Rosley. **Kingfishers** were regularly reported at Siddick, at Burgh Marsh, Longtown, the Leven Estuary and finally two on the River Eden west of Carlisle.

A **Great Spotted Woodpecker** on the beach at Allonby on 31st October was unexpected to say the least. Perhaps even more unexpected was a **Wryneck** in a plantation at Jockey Shield on 10th October. 60 **Skylarks** went north-west at Carlisle on 14th October and in an hour on 30th 48 went west at Wetheral in three flocks. At Walney notable numbers were 800 on 15th September and 575 on 6th October. An estimated 1200 **Swallows** an hour were heading south past Silecroft on 4th September. Passage was noted through Walney in mid September – 470 on 15th and in October 137 on 6th. They were also reported widely up to mid-October but one videoed at Newby, Eden Valley on 26th November was exceptional. **Meadow Pipits** passed through Walney in large numbers in September – 600 on 11th, 1000 on 15th, 900 on 17th and 3000 on 28th. **Rock Pipits** were reported from Braystones, Workington and Maryport throughout. Six **Grey Wagtails** were on the River Esk at Longtown on 23rd October. 345 **Pied Wagtails** passed through Walney on 6th October.

Waxwings appeared at the end of November in small numbers at regular sites – Penrith, Wetheral and Dalston with 30 birds at the last site being the biggest flock but also in Carlisle and Ambleside - 12 there on 24th. A **Black Redstart** visited a garden in Thursby on 17th October. A late **Northern Wheatear** was recorded at Maryport Harbour on



Waxwings, Keswick, Tony Marsh

25th October and Binsey the next day. The only **Stonechat** report received away from the coast were two birds at Walton Moss on 25th September. All other records were coastal with a pair at Maryport harbour on 25th October and ten pairs between Maryport and Allonby on 31st.

Redwing were reported only in small numbers in October with a maximum of 300 at Linstock on 3rd November. **Fieldfares** arrived with Redwings but in greater numbers with birds at Bowness on Solway on 7th October. Thereafter numbers of note were 500 in Swindale on 18th, 250 in the Bewcastle area on 22nd and 800 at Jockey Shield on 24th. The largest number by far, 4000, were in the Armathwaite area at the end of the month. Twelve **Ring Ouzel**, presumably Scandinavian migrants, were on juniper at Greenside in mid-October. From September 24th to 28th at least eight were in Bannishead Quarries, then two 29th to 2nd October. On October 15th one was at Scarr Head, Torver. A singleton was amongst a Fieldfare flock at Mungrisedale on 18th October and one was with Blackbirds at Walney on 2nd November.



Brambling, Hallbankgate, Adam Moan

A **Barred Warbler** was reported from Sandscale Haws on 21st November. As part of a UK wide movement **Yellow-browed Warblers** were at Waterside on 13th October, Foulshaw on 17th, Carlisle on 26th and finally at Kendal on 5th November. In early September **Black-caps** were reported from Waterside (three on 2nd) and Brampton (two on 5th) and in November a pair were in Whitehaven and on 7th a male was a first for winter in a Scarr Head garden. A male **Bearded Tit** frequented a reed-bed at Walney in the second half of October. A **Nuthatch** at Whitehaven on 29th September was only the second the observer had seen there in many years.

Spotted Flycatchers passed through Brampton on 5th September and Waterside on 16th. Away from regular areas four **Raven** passed east over Stanwix on 21st September. A **Hooded**(Carrion/Hooded Hybrid?) was at Bowness on Solway with 30 Carrion Crows feeding on the shore on 7th October with other more regular reports from the Whitehaven area. **Jackdaw** passage at Walney included 3000 on 18th October and 800 on 26th.

At Haverigg on 15th October three flocks of **Tree Sparrow** moved south. There seems to have been an influx with reports from gardens in Stanwix holding up to at least 14. **Brambling** started to appear in mid-October but only in small numbers with perhaps 40 at Talkin Tarn being the maximum. Twenty **Greenfinch** were at Allonby on 5th October. Apart from the regular site at Sizergh Castle the only other **Hawfinch** reported was from Bitts Park, Carlisle on a "VisMig" watch. Six **Twite** were at Tarn Bay on 18th October. Overflying **Crossbills** were at Bowness on Solway on 19th October, four by the River Esk at Longtown on 24th and another single at Keswick the same day. A party of 30 **Snow Buntings** passed over RSPB Campfield on 5th November and two birds were photographed on Helvellyn on 18th. There had been two over Burton in Kendal on 27th October.



Tree Sparrow, Stanwix, Roger Ridley



Crossbill, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

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

Bob Jones & Dave Piercy

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The deadline for copy for the next issue is March 1st 2019

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