



BIRD NEWS
Vol. 32 No. 4 Winter 2021

Club news and announcements

Bird Race and Bird List Challenge 2022

New council members elected at the AGM

Bird Records for 2021

A Superb Swift Summer

Long-toed Stint

Some breeding bird observations

Recent reports

Contents - see back page

Twinned with Cumberland Bird Observers Club

New South Wales, Australia

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

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



Officers of the Society

Council

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

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

Secretary: David Piercy, 64 The Headlands, Keswick, CA12 5EJ; tel. 017687
73201; daveandkathypiercy@btinternet.com

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

Field trips organiser: Mike and Lyn Mills 01946 590616
meetings@cumbriabirdclub.org.uk

Talks organiser: Vacant

Members: Colin Auld
Mike Douglas
Stephen Dunstan
Jake Manson
Lyn Mills
Mike Mills
Adam Moan

Recorders

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

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

Carlisle & Eden: Pete Howard, Woodcock Cottage, New Mills, Bampton, CA8 2QS
p.howard691@btinternet.com tel. 016977 42206

Allerdale & Copeland: Nick Franklin, 19 Eden Street, Carlisle CA3 9LS
nickbirder66@gmail.com tel. 01228 810413

C.B.C. Bird News

Editor: Dave Piercy

B.T.O. Representatives

Cumbria: Colin Gay, 8 Victoria Street, Millom LA18 5AS
colinathodbarrow@btinternet.com tel. 01229 773820

Club news and announcements

Secretary vacancy

Dave Piercy has retired from the position of secretary. The club urgently requires a volunteer to take on this post. If you would be interested in taking on this post please contact Dave as soon as possible.

Further details from Dave Piercy

Please note that Dave will continue to edit the newsletter as this is not part of the secretary's remit

Website consultant vacancy

Any member with expertise in web site design and construction willing to work closely with current web site manager Chris Cant? It is envisaged that the current web site will be rebuilt in Wordpress by mid 2022. It would therefore be good for Chris to work with someone who has used WordPress before and can contribute ideas or actually take over as need be.

Further details from Chris Cant chris@phdcc.com. Please contact before the end of January.

CBC Indoor meeting programme 2022 (subject to changes - check the website)

Wednesday 12th January 2022: Tullie House 7:15pm. Joint with CNHS.
Tony Marsh - 'My local patch: A miscellany of wildlife'



Grey Wagtail, Pow Beck, Tony Marsh

Tuesday 22 February 2022 : Friends House, Stramongate, Kendal 7.30pm
The third Fred Gould Memorial Lecture joint with KNHS
Gary Gould - 'Nature through the lens'. A selection of slides by Fred Gould, showing a variety of flora and fauna.

Subscription rates 2022-23 as agreed at the AGM

Joint/Family £25; Single/Corporate £20. A Reduced rate for those unable to afford the above rates is now only available on application to council.

Please note that this is the first subscription increase since 2003 and since then costs have risen considerably. In particular, the production and postage of "Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria" now costs over £16 and is likely to increase in the future.

Subscription increase – Standing Orders and PayPal payments

If you pay your subscription by standing order please inform your bank as soon as possible of the new rate to be paid as above.

If you joined online your subscription is paid annually via PayPal either directly or via your own credit/debit card. CBC will amend your payment to the new rate. You will automatically be sent an e-mail informing you of the change to your annual subscription. We are hoping to complete all the amendments by April. You will have the option to unsubscribe and resign your membership.

Cumbria Rookery Survey: April 2022

The Cumbria Bird Club has undertaken two previous surveys of rookeries throughout the county in 1996 and 2013. The results of the last survey confirmed a significant decline in both the number of rookeries (-5.3%) and the number of nests (-39%) in Cumbria during the period between the two field-work years. The 2022 survey will aim to update the status of Rooks in the county, identifying changes in their population and distribution.

Locating rookeries and counting nests is relatively straightforward requiring no previous experience of survey work. In addition, relevant information from the 2013 survey will be available to all participants. However, Rooks do frequently change the sites of their colonies and some exploration will be necessary to achieve full coverage. Between 1996 and 2013, 426 rookeries were deserted while 372 new sites had been established. Preliminary dates for the survey are Saturday 9th April to Sunday 24th April and survey instructions and recording forms will be sent out in March. There are still many rookeries in most parts of Cumbria and the success of the project will depend on recruiting sufficient volunteers to cover the whole of the county.

If you are interested in taking part in the survey please contact Malcolm Priestley, identifying an area that you would like to cover (eg a 10 kilometre square)

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

Swift Survey

Swifts - Thanks to those who have contributed to the Swifts survey over the past few years, we may come back to it again in the future but for now could you submit any remaining records for this year

Outdoor Meetings

Now that we are no longer restricted for meeting in the outdoors, and most of us have adapted to new ways when in company with others, the Club are offering a selection of outdoor meets for small groups around the county.

There are locations around Cumbria which you may not have visited and not had the opportunity to explore. We have selected a few sites for visits with guides who know the patch, its birds and natural history thereby making a sociable opportunity for small groups.

Group size will be limited to 8-10 people pre booked through our meetings organisers Mike and Lyn Mills. Under 16s, who we would encourage to attend, will need to be accompanied by an adult and all who attend must take personal responsibility – clothing, footwear, food and drink requirements etc. Our guides for visits will provide the information and guidance.

Outdoor meetings for early 2022

Sat. 5th February. Foulney Island, Barrow in Furness with Mike Douglas. Winter waders, wildfowl and more.

Sat. 16th April. Watchtree Nature Reserve, Wiggonby, Carlisle with Frank Mawby. Varied habitats and early spring migrants.

Sat. 28th May. Geltsdale with Chris Hind and Adam Moan. Whinchats will be back on the RSPB upland reserve.

Sat. 14th May. Crosscanonby Reserve and shore with John Callion.

For more information and **booking** email meetings@cumbriabirdclub.org.uk or phone Mike and Lyn on 01946 590616.

Bird Race and Bird List Challenge 2022

Once again we feel that it would not be appropriate to run the Bird Race in early January 2022. Unfortunately we are going to have to wait to run this event again.

Last year we trialled the New Year Bird List Challenge, a challenge which was taken up by hardy souls in wide ranging parts of the county. The event provided the opportunity to get out under the restrictions which were in place at the time. By avoiding vehicle transport and only using self powered means this offered a sustainable challenge to see how many species that you crossed paths with while out and about. Why not have a go this year, get the family out or meet up with a friend and plan a route where you might find a good selection of species. If you did the challenge last year then you have the additional challenge of matching or improving on last year's tally. Full details below.

Cumbria Bird Club - New Year Bird List Challenge 2022.

1st - 4th January 2022.

- On one day between 1st-4th January 2022 draw up your list of species seen.
- Your list may comprise of your garden birds and those seen during a single outing while travelling under your 'own steam'.
- You may use vehicle transport to get to and from a start point but no use of vehicle transport while compiling your list.
- Walk, cycle, row or paddle your own canoe but if your bike is electric then limit yourself to 20 miles travel... and no counting en route to a start by car!
- Take part as an individual or with others but all should stay together and preferably all see each species.
- There is no maximum or minimum time limit set, let your enthusiasm, energy and the weather dictate.
- This is a challenge and open to all. Look after yourselves, stay safe and enjoy the diversity of Cumbrian birdlife.

Please send in your list for the day to Mike and Lyn Mills (meetings@cumbriabirdclub.org.uk) You could also include an account of your day, the story is often as good as the bird list.

Mike and Lyn Mills

New council members elected at the AGM

Stephen Dunstan is originally from Barrow, and though he now lives in Blackpool, the Furness area remains important to him and he is a regular visitor to see his parents, go birding and watch Barrow AFC. He does the WeBS Count on Orms-gill Reservoir, which is across the road from where he was brought up on Laburnum Crescent. When in South Cumbria he also enjoys birding the Leven Estuary, Furness Coast Road and Rampside / Roa Island.

Stephen was on the Birds In Cumbria writing team in the early 1990s, and rejoined the team on Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria last year. In the meantime he has been an ever present on the Lancashire Bird Report team so is nearing 30 years of continuous involvement in local bird report production.



By his own admission Stephen has found less birds in the north west than he should have. A purple patch on his travels in 2017 saw him find the first Rosy Starling for the Cape Verdes and then the first Black-browed Albatross for Belgium. He is a regular visitor to Out Skerries in Shetland where his best finds have included Pechora Pipit, Pied Wheatear, Arctic Warbler, Citrine Wagtail, Olive-backed Pipit, Rustic Bunting, Northern Treecreeper, four Greenish Warblers, two Blyth's Reed Warblers and one of the Wally the Walruses of recent years. This autumn he was lucky enough to find a White's Thrush and is still beaming about it.

Mike Douglas

I've been a member of CBC for many years and now look forward to taking up a position on CBC council. I've enjoyed birding in the county since my pre-teens, when a short walk out to Siddick Ponds at Workington would often be rewarded with views of raptors, Bittern, wildfowl and spectacular Starling murmurations.

Many years on I now do a similar thing for a living as a professional ecologist, after previously working for the National Trust, RSPB and Wildlife Trusts on Nature Reserves and conservation projects around the UK. Now living in the south of the county, I enjoy birding around the Leven Estuary and carrying out monthly WeBS counts at Foulney Island.'



Bird Records for 2021

It is extremely helpful if bird records are submitted as early as possible after the end of the year. They certainly need to be sent to one of the Regional Recorders by the **end of January 2022** if they are to be included in Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria 2021 (the Bird Report).

With the rise of social media there has been a drift away from submitting records directly to the Cumbria Bird Club. The most useful records are the ones we receive directly from observers, particularly if they include some interesting detail.

A wonderful team of writers has been formed to produce the Bird Report. But they can only write interesting accounts if observers have submitted interesting and detailed records.

Rare Breeding Birds

Records of these are very valuable for our submission to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel each year. These should be noted 'Confidential' although we do look out for such records and mark them as such in any case. Confirmed successful breeding is not necessarily required – any breeding attempt or the presence of rare breeding birds in suitable habitat is worth recording.

There is more on the Rare Breeding Birds Panel at <https://www.rbbp.org.uk/>

Chris Hind County Recorder

A Superb Swift Summer

In this summer's wonderful warm weather we had the best ever Swift displays that we can remember, with large numbers of screaming parties and frequent banging, often throughout the day. Even in afternoons. For once the north-west had better weather this summer than the south, especially in June and July. For example, on 10th July we recorded an incredible morning, one of many, where the sky was filled with Swifts, easily 40+, although it is so difficult to estimate numbers as they hurtle around. With screaming parties repeatedly flying up to our gable and banging, my notes say that it felt like something from the Hitchcock film 'The Birds'. Typical of sightings throughout most of July was a beautiful evening on the 15th when we thought there were even greater numbers swooping in acrobatic displays until gone 10pm.

Constantly seeing such large numbers of Swifts is probably a reflection of the fact that they didn't need to go far afield to forage in the fine weather. When it's cold and wet we see them less because they have to fly further to collect insects.

By the 11th August we still had maybe 40 or more Swifts swirling around together in the evening, a time when most chicks would have fledged and departure for migration imminent. They were not feeding, but screaming and

A Superb Swift Summer

coalescing into tight formation groups, before wheeling hither and thither once again. We believe that this must be a socialising activity. Without being able to perch, like Swallows and Martins on a wire, Swifts mainly come together when on the wing, so these aerial gatherings could be their main way of communicating.

For several evenings around that time, at 9.05pm as it was getting quite dark, many pairs of Swifts peeled off and darted quickly into their nest holes, all within a few seconds of each other. It was extraordinary to watch, at the same time each night. Fledged chicks and any non-breeders that were still here (who tend to migrate earlier) would disappear rising high into the sky to spend the night at anything over 1,000 metres.

At Lowgill we had a good year for breeding, with the five pairs that laid three eggs fledging all the chicks. However in one nest only one of the two eggs hatched and in another nest a new pair unfortunately managed to knock both eggs out of the nest (see pictures). Altogether, of these 14 breeding pairs in nests with cameras, 30 chicks were produced. In total we have 30 pairs of Swifts, so if we extrapolate the camera results to them all, it could mean that we have raised over 60 chicks this year. We have to remember however that the attrition rate for yearlings is thought to be around 25%, and the UK population continues to fall dramatically – the latest estimates being a decline of 62% over the last 24 years.



Two eggs laid by a new pair, with no nest material brought into the nest mould. These eggs were later knocked out, which looked accidental.



The same nest later on: after the eggs were knocked out the pair brought in lots of nest material and continued to roost until early August, despite having no chicks.

Tanya & Edmund Hoare

Long-toed Stint

Long-toed Stint, Boathouse scrape, Rockliffe Marsh 23-24/11/21

On Tuesday, 23/11/21, I had been watching geese from Rockliffe Marsh boathouse but there were few about and no sign of the Todd's Canada Goose that had been present the week before. I decided to give up and head off for a walk, but thought that before I did that I would briefly check what birds were on the wader scrape adjacent to the boathouse.



I had a quick look but apart from a Ruff and a few Dunlin only c300 Wigeon were of any note, however just as I was leaving I noticed a small wader feeding on the mud edge of one of the small islands. I had a look at it through my binoculars and thought, while it looked a bit small, it was probably just another Dunlin, and very nearly made the biggest mistake of my birding career and simply left it at that. Fortunately it rang just enough alarm bells that I decided to set up the telescope on it. As soon as I did this I immediately noticed the bird had yellow legs, this caused me a bit of a shock because yellow legs on a small wader like this means a rarity.

I watched the bird feeding for a minute or two, noticing it had an upright picking feeding action and a breast band, in fact it looked rather like a very small Pectoral Sandpiper, this was indeed odd. The bird then flew to join a small party of Dunlin and I realised that it was noticeably smaller than them.

I grabbed my camera and between taking notes and taking hopeless distant photos I spent a good half an hour watching the bird. By this time I had concluded that the short primary projection, size, and shape, of the bird ruled out Temminck's Stint and that this must be either a Least Sandpiper or a Long-toed Stint. The latter seemed extremely unlikely as there have only been three British records, while the former is at least an annual vagrant. The problem I had though was I just couldn't see this bird as a Least Sandpiper, it had a very upright stance, a long upper leg, and didn't creep about like the Least Sandpiper I had seen way back in 2006 in Cornwall. Fortunately I had recently been to see the Long-toed Stint at Swillington Ings in October and so I was familiar with the general jizz of the species and had read up on how to tell it apart from Least Sandpiper. The big challenge I faced was that the birds were now c150m away and there was a very flighty flock of Lapwing on the pool causing a bit of disturbance, the last thing I wanted was for the birds to flush and head out onto the saltmarsh.

I managed to half the distance using hawthorn bushes as cover and from this distance could make out plumage detail on the bird quite well, I was fortunate the light was almost behind me. I started to run through the features I could remember to help split the species, one of which was that Long-toed Stint have a dark forehead unlike Least Sandpiper where the supercilium meets from either side above the bill, the other was a distinct dark cheek patch, this bird showed both features, as well as a long tarsus, or upper part of the leg making it look much longer legged than a Least Sandpiper would and affecting its stance.



Dark cheek patch and pale legs

I knew though there was one key feature, that the toes and feet of Long-toed Stint stick out distinctly behind its tail in flight, where as Least Sandpipers do not. I waited, watched the bird and waited until after what seemed ages, but was in reality probably only about 15 minutes, the birds flushed and flew and the feet stuck out very obviously behind the tail. I was absolutely elated, if totally shocked, fortunately after settling briefly the birds flew again and this time I was able to get some photos of the birds in flight, one of which showed the feet projecting perfectly. On viewing these photos later I realised another showed the underwing of the bird well and that it was a perfect match for Long-toed Stint with a broad dark leading edge to the wing and considerably less white on it than a Least Sandpiper shows.



*Supercilium not meeting above bill
and dark lores*

I was now pretty sure of my identification so headed home wondering what to do. I decided to email some photos to Rare Bird Alert to confirm my identification but asked them to keep any mention of it off the bird news services as this was a strictly private site. They confirmed that the bird was a Long-toed Stint within minutes, but also refused to keep the bird quiet even while access could be discussed, as this would be suppression, and released information of a Long-toed Stint in Cumbria., but they were unable to give a precise site as I had been careful not to reveal it.

Long-toed Stint

I concluded discussing it with Chris Hind, as the County Recorder, was the best idea and he then contacted Dr Bart Donato of Natural England who oversees some of the bird management on Rockliffe Marsh and in fact designed the building of the scrape the bird was on in the first place. Bart agreed to contact the estate and discuss access, this was not going to be easy as parking is very limited, the birds flush very easily from the scrape if more than a couple of people are present and there was a serious outbreak of avian flu on the marsh. However the following day the estate agreed in principal that we could release the information if we could manage wardening a twitch on the site and it was agreed that this would start on Friday 26th.

Unfortunately, in the meantime, speculation had been going on both on Facebook and Whatsapps as to the birds precise location, with some people making correct guesses as to the site. Information on the precise site came out on the bird news services late on Wednesday night and regrettably this led to a certain amount of trespassing early on the morning of the 25th. This, being undertaken by people unfamiliar with the site, led to all the birds being flushed early on Thursday morning out onto the saltmarsh and while the majority of the birds returned the Long-toed Stint was not among them.

As we had access already agreed we checked the scrape again on Friday morning, with myself and others ready to manage a twitch if the bird was present. Sadly it was not and instead we spent the day counting dead Geese on the marsh as part of the avian flu outbreak, a much less enjoyable way to spend the day.



Protruding toes

A summary of all this is the bird was present on the 23rd and 24th but there were no confirmed sightings after that and sadly it was only seen by three people. If accepted by BBRC this will be the 4th British record, though there is a distinct possibility this is the Swillington Ings bird from early October relocating and therefore would be a refinding of the 3rd British record, either way it is a first for Cumbria, something that I have always wanted to find.

Nick Franklin

Some breeding bird observations from the 2021 season

Willow Tits – only three pairs were located this year and only one nest site found. This was the nest of the colour ringed pair Red over Blue (male) and Mauve over Blue (female). This pair are on the North side of Glasson Moss along Aikshaw Lonnen past Glendale Caravan site. I made some searches for the nest. When I eventually found it the Great Spotted Woodpecker, nesting close by, had taken it. The hallmark sign is an entry hole at nest level.



Willow Tit, Bowness, Roger Ridley

Given the date 5th June, I would expect the chicks to be close to fledging and I hope some jumped and survived. The male was calling nearby, which gave me some hope. I put up a feeder up in late August and had a trail cam on it but only one colour ringed bird visited it. One colour is very difficult to determine on the video it looks mauve but could easily be a faded red. The bird does not have the white head markings that make the female so distinctive. The video quality is poor and I cannot be sure if an un-ringed bird was also coming in. I was late putting the feeders and cam up and any juvenile that may have escaped may have dispersed. As of early December, at least one adult is still present. This was the third year this pair have nested. They have fledged young from one successful nest and some young from the nest predated in 2020.

The second pair are on Glasson Moss in the fringe woodland on the SW corner on the area known as Whittrigg Common. I colour ringed a male, Pink over Blue, in early March 2020. I located the nest site after it had been predated. I often had the male on the trail cam at the feeder during the winter but did not see another bird until late March this year, presumably a female. Despite several searches this spring by myself and other volunteers a nest site was not found although I am reasonably certain the pair did breed. No Juveniles have been seen although I have seen the colour ringed male on my trail cam a couple of time in November.

Some breeding bird observations from the 2021 season

The third pair are at the Bowness Gravel Pits CWT reserve and again colour ringed male White over Yellow was present and territorial.

I checked out the nest boxes a couple of times in May, but they were not used.



Willow Tit, Bowness, Adam Moan

However, in May I and other observers located the male on what we believed was a territory. I made a significant effort to locate the nest in early June but there was no sign of the pair. However, this autumn Liz Still reported the colour ringed bird and at least two un-ringed birds regularly at her garden feeders. In November we colour ringed two juveniles and recaptured the colour ringed male.

A singing male was reported in spring by Kevin Scott (CWT Reserve Manager) in the fringe woodland of Drumburgh Moss. Subsequent searches by volunteers and myself failed to locate him.

Observations and feeding are ongoing, although Grey Squirrels are proving a nuisance at the Glasson Moss feeders. Sightings of the colour ringed birds are very much appreciated.

Barn Owls – I checked 21 boxes and only five produced 12 young. A pair were present in three boxes and single birds in two. The owner of one box had a camera on the box and that pair had not attempted to breed up to the end of July.

Several of the regularly used boxes were empty this year. The reason seems to have been a lack of voles and mice in most locations especially around my local area, some boxes further west seemed to fare a little better. The very cold, dry April may have contributed to the poor year.



Barn Owl, Keswick, Tony Marsh

Some breeding bird observations from the 2021 season

Great Tits in my boxes at Watchtree, Finglandrigg Wood NNR and near home suffered heavy predation, probably Stoats or Weasels. From a total of 29 nest sites, mostly nest boxes, only seven definitely fledged young and three more probably did. This predation may also be related to the lack of voles. At Watchtree, in all seven of the woodcrete nest boxes in Pond Wood, broods of Great Tit were taken at egg stage and the evidence suggested some of the sitting females were also taken. A Stoat was seen on site several times by a number of observers. Fortunately, all four broods survived in Pow Wood and a fifth in The Sticks. In Finglandrigg Wood seven broods of Great Tit and two broods of Nuthatch were taken from nest boxes and at least one hole nest and the outcome of another three boxes was unknown. The boxes are widespread, which suggests that at least two different Stoats/Weasels were working the site.

Blue Tits fared better and of 18 boxes checked 11 fledged and three were outcome unknown. One box in Pow Wood at Watchtree had 17 eggs and produced 15 young of which 14 fledged.

Another species that may have been predated by the Stoat at Watchtree was **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, Liz Still and I estimated at least four pairs attempted to breed but only one nest was heard with vocal chicks. Stoats are good climbers and may have take some of the nests.



Blue Tit, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

I only located one pair of **Spotted Flycatcher** this year on the north side of Glasson Moss, it made two nest attempts both of which were predated.



*Spotted Flycatcher, Portinscale,
Tony Marsh*

Most of the warblers at Watchtree seemed to fare quite well although our ringing suggested **Willow Warblers** had an average year.

Chiffchaffs continue to do well despite heavy nest predation they just keep going. It is also clear they are no longer a woodland bird and just as likely to be found along suitable hedgerows and lonnens.

Some breeding bird observations from the 2021 season

Our waterbirds at Watchtree seem to have fared quite badly again and the principal predator once again was probably an Otter. I had a trail cam on a duck nest box in the wetlands and on two evenings it was seen to enter the tube and put out the sitting **Mallard**, interestingly it did not take the eggs but the Mallard eventually deserted the eggs (these nest tubes are good nest sites for Mallard and they generally hatch successfully. We noted at least six broods of ducklings, but many just disappeared to some active predator we assume. The tubes are about 300mm diameter by 1m long wire netting with hay lining rolled into the netting and hay lined for the nest. They are normally fixed on a free-standing post in water and about a 1.2 m above the water. However, the one the Otter entered was suspended over a fixed fence.

Our **Little Grebes** and the **Moorhens** did eventually fledge some young, but the **Coots** left after at least two attempts.

Thornhill Meadows sustained a good population of **Sedge Warblers** and at least four pair of **Grasshopper Warbler** and possibly two pair of **Snipe** but here and at Watchtree **Reed Buntings** seemed down a few pairs. Watchtree continues to sustain a stable population of 22 to 25 territorial **Skylarks** (Liz Still pers comm). It is always difficult to ascertain how many nesting pairs though and assessing successful fledging is also difficult.

No **Oystercatchers** bred for the second year. We thought three pair of **Curlew** were on or around Watchtree, but we did not locate any nests nor were any chicks seen, although for a short time one adult did seem to exhibit behaviour indicative of young presence.

Swallow numbers were well down, I only had ten or 11 pairs at the farm near Bowness on Solway that I have been visiting since 2004. I missed 2020 because of Covid but was informed that numbers were much lower. This is the lowest number for some years, especially compared to 2019 when there were 20 occupied nests. We only had one pair at Watchtree when we usually have three. It seems weather systems held them up in both 2020 and 2021. This year the early arrivals came to an unusually cold and dry April. Very difficult to say when and where the large losses occurred. However, the weather in April and a wet, cool May explains why most were late starting to lay.

We had ten active **House Martin** nests under our house eaves, of which seven had second broods. Slightly lower than the previous two years. I ringed 26 fledged juveniles and seven adults of which three were returning birds ringed in 2020 two as adults and one a juvenile. This species is now on the red list so even more reason to put up with the mess on the windows and conservatory roof.



Long-tailed Tit, Soddy Gap, Tony Marsh

I did not find so many **Long-tailed Tit** nests this year as I am slowing down a bit, however, from the flocks we are seeing at Watchtree they continue to thrive in suitable habitat, they nest almost exclusively in gorse in my experience. It is a concern to me that the few pairs there are in our area might be displaced by the long lengths of old hedgerows being laid in the rather stark 'Cumbrian coppice'.

For some reason, that I have not fathomed out, of eight **Tree Sparrow** nests monitored at Watchtree, only four fledged young and even then two boxes only fledged two chicks in each. Of the other four two were taken at the egg stage, the chicks all died in another and one deserted. There were no second broods, although some did re-line boxes but did not use them. However, from the numbers of juveniles ringed later in the season, the species generally seems to have done well. This begs the question is it a habitat issue at the Reserve, like most seed eaters they feed their young with invertebrates and I wonder if that was the problem. It illustrates how sensitive breeding birds are to habitat structure and subtle changes that we humans are not tuned into.

The Watchtree woodland and scrub habitat is changing constantly now as the new plantation become young woodland and the changes are very much as Eric Simms describes in his Woodland Birds book in the New Naturalist series. We are thinning the pines and trying to create woodland edge for the scrub loving warblers and managing the areas of scrub to keep it at the scrub stage especially the gorse and bramble, which is essential warblers nest habitat. In our Wetlands the birches and willows that line the pool edges need regular coppicing to maintain the habitat at the scrub stage for the warblers.

Frank Mawby

Recent reports

The period covered is September to November 2021. Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review by the club records panel or the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Wildfowl

Two hundred and eighty **Brent Geese** were on Foulney on 7th November. Mortality from Avian Flu among **Barnacle Geese** became very evident in late November with dead birds widely reported around the Solway. The first **Pink-feet** were reported in mid September at Kirkbride and then 1000 at Greenodd; a widespread movement started on 23rd with birds reported almost county wide including birds moving up Borrowdale, "hundreds" over Coniston and large numbers dropping into North Lancashire. In early October 3300 passed through Walney on 7th. Some 3000 were at Fingland and reducing there in November to 2000. Six hundred were in the Longtown area and 800 on the Leven Estuary. A **Todd's Canada Goose** was with Barnacles on Rockliffe Marsh during the period with a second bird present on one occasion.

Three **Whooper Swans** on the River Kent in early September had summered but three at Talkin Tarn and ten on the River Esk at Longtown may well have been early migrants. More birds arrived in mid October with as many as 61 over Penrith in two herds on 16th, 21 over Carlisle on 21st and small numbers on the west coast. The largest herd was 200 at Angerton on 30th October. Sixteen in Lyth Valley on 5th November included four juveniles. At Walney 35 passed through on 15th October. Hodbarrow held 33 **Mutes** on 14th October also in the Lyth Valley there were 36 on 1st November and 29 a few days later. Three hundred **Shelduck** were on the Leven Estuary on 25th September increased to 2,500 by 5th October and to 5,000 on 8th. In the north 250 were off Port Carlisle on 28th September.

A drake **Mandarin Duck** frequented Hammonds Pond, Carlisle in November. A pair were regular visitors to a garden feeding station near Keswick.

Regular counts of **Gadwall** peaked at twenty four in the Foulshaw area on 25th October and three were at Hammonds Pond, Carlisle on 12th. **Pintail** saw 145 on Calvo Marsh on the Solway on 10th October, and on the Leven Estuary 820 were at Greenodd on 18th Sep-



Mandarins at a garden feeding station near Keswick, Maurice Pankhurst

tember and 1,000 on 6th November whilst on Duddon Estuary 680 were present on 30th.

Five **Garganey** including a single male were at Rockliffe on 8th September and up to two were in the Foulshaw area throughout September and until 20th October.



Long-tailed Duck, Soddy Gap, Roger Ridley



Goldeneye, Carr Beds, Adam Moan

There were 380 **Teal** at Haverigg on 14th October. Numbers built up in November with 1,100 at RSPB Campfield on 3rd and 300 on the Leven Estuary at high tide on 6th. Of note were six **Po-chard** (five males) on Hardendale Quarry lake on 10th November.

A male **Common Scoter** was a first for Hardendale Quarry. Numbers peaked at 1249 at Silecroft on 11th September. Single **Velvet Scoter** passed Silecroft on two dates in September and November. Four thousand **Eider** were on the Leven Estuary on 8th October.

Two **Long-tailed Ducks** frequented Soddy Gap in early November. **Golden-eye** started to appear in mid October with three at Talkin Tarn and in November 16 were at RSPB Hodbarrow.

In early November 54 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at the same site on 5th and then 43 at Foulney a couple of days later. On 5th November 26 **Little Grebes** were present at RSPB Hodbarrow and on 15th four were on Hammonds Pond Carlisle



Little Grebe, Russel Austin

Grouse to Rails

Nine **Grey Partridge** were at Lowca on 6th October (three times the norm here), eight were near Baggrow on 27th October and 12 at the Haig Pit site at Whitehaven on 9th November. Ten **Stock Doves** were near Wetheral on 21st September. Ten **Collared Doves** were at Wigton on 14th November.

An impressive 736 **Red-throated Divers** passed Maryport on a rising tide over four hours or so on 11th October whilst a peak of 43 passed Silecroft on 24th September. A **Great Northern Diver** was off Silecroft on 30th September and 26th November. A very unusual **Leach's Petrel** settled briefly on Tindale Tarn before flying off west on the afternoon of 5th November. Two **Manx Shearwaters** were the last of the year off Silecroft on 1st October. A maximum 281 **Gannets** were at Silecroft on 17th September. A **Shag** was at Silecroft on 1st September.



Spoonbill, Doug Radford

Apart from three flying over Millom on 5th September other records of **Spoonbill** referred to single birds in the south of the county. A **Bittern** was noted from late September to mid October in the south of the county. **Great White Egret** were seen at Foulshaw in September and Siddick Ponds, Silecroft and Arnside in October and inland a single was near Kirkoswald on 20th November possibly a returning bird from previous winter? The highest counts of **Little Egret** came as usual from the south of the county with 156 at Alinthwaite on 10th October and 176 at Conishead a day later and on 20th 60 were at Rampside. The maximum count at Walney was of 95 birds on 12th October reducing to 49 by 8th November. A single **Glossy Ibis** frequented Hodbarrow on 21st and 22nd October.

Osprey continued to be present at RSPB Campfield with four in early September frequenting the fence post on the marsh but they reduced to two by 12th and a day later a bird passed through Walney. The only **Honey Buzzard** reported was one over Sedgewick in mid September. A juvenile **Goshawk** was in the south of the county on 12th September. Away from the south of the county a **Marsh Harrier** was on Grune point on 23rd October. **Red Kite** reports came from Wetheral at end of September, at Penruddock on 18th October and Shap on 11th November. Twenty one **Common Buzzard** were spread over two fields at Sedgewick on 7th November. Two **Hen Harriers** hunted round Walney for a few days in mid October.

Waders

Eight hundred **Oystercatchers** were on the Leven Estuary on 25th September, 1250 on the Duddon on 12th October with 2000 reported on the Duddon on 6th November and 6950 at Walney a day later. Fifty **Lapwing** on the ground at Warwick Bridge on 9th September were not regular there. Circa 900 were in the Eden channel at Burgh Point on 16th November.



Ringed Plover, Bowness, Roger Ridley

Two **Little Ringed Plovers** were at Halforth on 13th September.

The regular **Golden Plover** flock at Anthorn/Cardurnock had c3,500 birds on 4th November. A count of 1,050 **Bar-tailed Godwits** was made on 8th October and in September 96 **Black-tailed Godwits** were on south Solway at Calvo Marsh increasing to 223 by 10th October; there had also been 130 at Anthorn on 19th September. In November 275 were on Black Dyke Flash on 2nd, 80 were on the Leven Estuary on 6th and c300 were on Heversham Moss on 19th.

Ninety three **Turnstone** were at Skinburness on 19th September and on 8th October 218 were counted in Flimby/St Helens area: at Walney 420 were present on 13th November. Five **Ruff** were on the River Kent at High Foulshaw on 5th September, three frequented Anthorn on 6th to 16th and an exceptional eight were feeding in stubble among Canada Geese at Longtown; in November three males were at Rockcliffe on 25th.



Purple Sandpiper, Parton, Tony Marsh



Sanderling, Flimby, Tony Marsh

Two **Little Stints** were at Anthorn from 6th September through to 14th at least and a single bird was at Port Carlisle from 18th for at least a week. By far the most unexpected bird was a **Long-toed Stint** reported from extreme eastern area of the Solway estuary. Single **Curlew Sandpiper** were reported in September from Anthorn on 7th with three there later in the month; at Port Carlisle a single was present on 8th increasing to three on 21st with a single still on 26th. In the south one was at Arnside on 13th.

The highest number of **Dunlin** reported on Solway were 2,000 at Port Carlisle in September. Two hundred Sanderling passed Silecroft on 15th September. The only **Pectoral Sandpiper** reported was on a field flood on Haversham Moss on 13th October. A **Phalarope** – species not determined – was photographed distantly at Port Carlisle on 8th September.

A **Woodcock** was flushed from garden allotments at Maryport on 22nd November; also in November **Jack Snipe** were reported from Finglandrigg, Cliburn Moss (four), Irt Estuary and Geltsdale. Single **Common Sandpipers** were recorded from Flimby on 8th October and the River Kent on 26th November. In September a **Green Sandpiper** was at Halforth on 3rd, Old Sandsfield on 8th and on a regular site on Burgh Marsh on 8th September thereafter in November singles were in the Lyth Valley and at regular sites at RSPB Campfield and the River Esk at Longtown and two were at Red Hills, Rockliffe on 9th, another regular site.

Two **Greenshank** were on the Leven Estuary on 25th September and a single at Bowness Railings on 5th October whilst at Walney they built up to 36 birds by 6th September, reducing thereafter with ten present in October. A single was at Haverigg on 29th November. A **Spotted Redshank** continued to be present at Port Carlisle till mid September with a single at Anthorn on 15th October.



Turnstone, Flimby, Tony Marsh

Gulls to Pigeons

Five hundred **Black-headed Gulls** were on the Leven Estuary high tide roost on 6th November. Away from Walney the only **Little Gull** reported was a 1st winter on 24th October. There was a regular movement of **Mediterranean Gulls** through September of mainly juveniles and first years heading north past Silecroft. The highest count was 13 at Flimby on 8th October. A second winter bird in Barrow Park sported a darvic ring. **Yellow-legged Gulls** were reported from the Irt Estuary for a period from early September with another at Greenodd on 14th October.

Eighty four **Sandwich Terns** passed Silecroft on 11th September and eight passed Allonby on 1st November. A **Black Tern** was on Longtown Ponds on 6th October. Up to three **Arctic Skuas** were off Silecroft on three dates in September. Single **Black Guillemots** were at Silecroft on three dates. Single **Little Auk** were reported on three days in late October, early November from Walney.

Owls to Buntings

Few owls were reported but a **Long-eared** was on Walney on 13th October and a **Short-eared** was at Foulney on 7th November. No **Common Swifts** were reported in the period with 40 through RSPB Campfield on 28th August seem to be the latest date recorded. **Kingfisher** were regularly reported from the River Eden round Carlisle and from Workington Harbour.



*Swallow & Sand Martin,
Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

Eight **Jays** passed through Walney on 23rd October whilst one at Frizington on 25th September was “unusual”. Large numbers of **Jackdaw** passed through Walney in early November with 1,520 on 2nd, 2,650 on 3rd and 1,160 on 4th. There were several reports of **Skylark** passage with 24 over Binsey on 15th September, birds passing over Allonby and Grune in early October and early November respectively: 51 birds were on Humphrey Head on 7th October.



Skylark, Grune Point, Tony Marsh

Fifty **Swallows** were at Jockey-shield on 13th September but there seemed to be birds moving in early October with 50 at Ainstable on 2nd, 25 at Allonby on 4th, 36 at Sunbiggin and 20 nearby at Orton on 5th and 22 at Humphrey Head a couple of days later; the last birds seemed to be a single at Hever-sham on 2nd November.

Recent reports



House Martin and juvenile, RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan

At Walney the peak day of passage seemed to be 15th September when 1,585 birds were logged with 33 **House Martins** and 1,175 **Meadow Pipits** the same day.

Single **Cetti's Warblers** were at Bardsea and Barrow in the second half of October and in November two were at Brigsteer and singles at both Siddick Pond and Walney. There were also regular sightings from a southern site from 18th October. The latest ever **Wood Warbler** in Cumbria was sighted at Kents Bank on 15th September. **Chiffchaff** were reported from the Solway Plain at the end of September and into October and November with a maximum of six at Watchtree NR on 21st September.

Harrington NR had a **Yellow-browed Warbler** on 22nd October and one was logged on Walney on 10th November, the same day as a **Dusky Warbler** which was present until at least the 13th. fells at Sandale on 13th October and one was singing in Miterdale on 21st.

Blackcap were present in Wigton and Cockermouth areas in November. A **Firecrest** was in Tindale on 9th September and also in Upper Blengdale on 27th November.



Fieldfare, RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan

A male **Ring Ouzel** was photographed feeding on berries in a Keswick garden on 19th November. Overnight on 10th November 109 **Blackbird** calls were picked up over Ulverston. Sixteen **Mistle Thrushes** on 7th October were presumably migrants.



Wren, Keswick, Tony Marsh

Redwings started to arrive on 17th September with a single bird at Ainstable but by mid October large numbers were widely reported – 3,050 call overnight on 12th over Ulverston (1,640 there on 10th November), 150 at Anthorn being “first of the autumn” there on 14th and 500 at Port Carlisle on 5th November. A roost in the North Pennines had 1,360 birds in late October and 1800 by the end of November. **Fieldfare** were less in evidence this year arriving later apart from a bird at Ainstable on 12th September and then small numbers but 200 on Border Marsh on 7th November were of note. Noddy effort at Ulverston picked up 99 **Song Thrush** calls on 12th October and 134 on 10th November.

Single **Spotted Flycatchers** were present on the Solway Plain in September with the last on 27th. A male **Black Redstart** was seen briefly in Silecroft car park on 7th November. A **Whinchat** was on Binsey on 15th September and the last at Foulshaw on 29th. Twenty four **Wheatears** passed through Walney on 16th September with six in the Bowness/Port Carlisle area on 17th, nine on Grune Point a day later and seven still there on 19th all presumably part of the same movement. Four were at Flookburgh on 5th October. Three **Stonechats** were on Binsey on 15th September and at Allonby three pairs were on winter territories on 4th October and six migrants were on the beach on 12th. On 6th September 53 **White Wagtails** and 26 **Grey Wagtails** were recorded on Walney.

Recent reports



Redwing, Carlisle, Roger Ridley



Bullfinch, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Tree Sparrow numbers built up at Walney in early September with 146 on 2nd, 325 on 5th and 235 on 7th. Twenty eight were on Humphrey Head on 5th October and on 3rd November 19 passage birds were at Lowca where “they hadn’t previously been reported on the patch” ; birds were also recorded on the Calf of Man on that date suggesting a wider passage. **Brambling** were first reported from Finglandrigg on 12th October and then relatively small numbers widely spread with the highest count being 70 at Threlkeld on 31st October.

Forty **Goldfinch** were feeding on thistles at Moresby on 25th September and 80 were at Allonby on 4th October. Reports of **Greenfinch** flocks came from Allonby (35 on Rosa Ragusa on 4th October) and Maryport where there more than 30 on 7th November.

A “small group” of **Twite** were on the shore at Mawbray on 12th November. The largest flocks of **Linnets** reported were 350 around St Bees on 14th September (250 of which were on a set-a-side crop strip) and 390 at Flookburgh on 5th October. At least one **Lapland Bunting** was seen on Farleton Knott on 13th November. A flock of **Crossbills** were at Whinlatter Centre for a period and included 22 there on 22nd November. A few were in Miterdale on 21st October with some song.



Crossbill, Spadeadam, Adam Moan



Starlings, Siddick Ponds Tony Marsh

As ever, we are indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list.

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

Many thanks to Bob Jones who is stepping down from writing the “Recent reports” column. He has carried out this role for many years and has successfully kept up to date with the ever changing sources of data. His enthusiasm and knowledge have shone through at all times.



Lapwing, Drumburgh, Russel Austin



Grey Wagtail, Grinsdale, Russel Austin

Contents

Club news and announcements.....	87
Bird Race and Bird List Challenge 2022 <i>Mike and Lyn Mills</i>.....	90
New council members elected at the AGM <i>Stephen Dunstan and Mike Douglas</i>	91
Bird Records for 2021 <i>Chris Hind</i>	92
A Superb Swift Summer <i>Tanya and Edmund Hoare</i>	92
Long-toed Stint <i>Nick Franklin</i>	94
Some breeding bird observations <i>Frank Mawby</i>.....	97
Recent reports <i>Bob Jones and Dave Piercy</i>.....	102

Information for contributors

The deadline for copy for the next issue is March 1st 2022

If you have a computer: please send contributions to Dave Piercy
daveandkathypiercy@btinternet.com

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

Opinions expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of Cumbria Bird Club, its Editor, nor any of its Officers.

© Cumbria Bird Club, December 2021

'Cumbria Bird Club' is a Registered Charity, number 1001459

Cumbria Bird Club Website

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

Contributions for the website to: daveandkathypiercy@btinternet.com