



BIRD NEWS
Vol. 33 No. 3 Autumn 2022

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Twinned with Cumberland Bird Observers Club

New South Wales, Australia

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Club news and announcements

Cumbria Bird Club AGM 2022

Friday 18th November 7:30pm George Hotel, Penrith

Fighting for Nature on a Lake District Hill Farm, Lee Schofield

Vacancies on Council: Chair, Vice-chair (three posts) and Treasurer.

According to the terms of the constitution the above posts will become vacant at the AGM though there is a proviso that the current incumbents may remain another year if there are no other suitable candidates. This note is to seek nominations from members to fill these posts. According to the terms of the constitution, nominations should be submitted to the secretary not later than seven days before the AGM (i.e. by 11th November).

Vacancies on Council: two ordinary members.

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

Subscriptions

You will receive a subscription form with this mailing if your membership is due for renewal on October 1st and you pay annually by cash, cheque or bank transfer.

To pay by bank transfer:

Pay into sort code 20-18-47 for Cumbria Bird Club, a/c no. 30464821

Please put your name as the reference so that the treasurer can tell who has paid. It would also be useful if you e-mailed Sue King, in-fo@cumbriabirdclub.org.uk to confirm you have paid.

Standing orders

If you pay by standing order please ensure you have instructed your bank to pay the new subscription rate:

Subscription rates: Joint/Family £25; Single/Corporate £20;

To prevent unnecessary costs, such as postage for reminder letters, please can you ensure that this is paid as soon as possible.

@CumbriaBirdClub

The club now has a Twitter account. Our Twitter handle is, not surprisingly, @CumbriaBirdClub. The account shares news about the club including indoor meetings and field outings. Some bird news will be shared on occasion, particularly when the club has been tagged in posts by members or others, but in general this will be left to the pre-existing Cumbria Birds Twitter account (@cumbriabirds) which has over 1000 followers.



An example of the benefit of the Twitter account was provided recently when we were approached to see if we could help with the retrieval of a GPS transmitter from a Shelduck that had come ashore on the Furness Coast Road at Newbiggin. The following Tweet was put out by the club:



Cumbria Bird Club @CumbriaBirdClub · Sep 13

...

Is any Furness birder able to recover this Shelduck GPS currently on the shore at Newbiggin please.

It's within 10m of Lat: 54.116036°; Long: -3.114536°
or SD 27243 69482 or What3Words:
skips.thrillers.skewing. It looks like it's at the top of
the beach by the entrance to the caravan park there:



As a result within four hours of the researcher Ros Green realising the GPS had become detached and was able to be recovered, Barrow birder Chris Millar had cycled to the site and found it. The tag can now be reused on another bird next year. Here is the information that on its migration following the transmitter being applied on the Tees Estuary.

Thanks so much for getting the tag back! Here's a map of her route around the country, & one of the tag on her. You can see all the [#Shelduck](#) [#PhD](#) tracking data on my website: shelducks.co.uk/gps-tracking/ . This tag will track another birds migration next year now.
[@_BTO](#) [@SEG_UL](#)



If you use Twitter why not follow the club as another way of keeping informed as to what's going on.

Stephen Dunstan

Flickr

A note to members who are also users of the Flickr photo-sharing site. I've created a group called 'Wild Cumberland' covering the Carlisle, Allerdale and Copeland areas. Any members who also use Flickr are very welcome to join and add any shots of interest. They don't have to be expert pics at all. I find Flickr is a good place to share birding/wildlife pics but I'm not sure how many others use it!

Anyway, the group is here: <https://www.flickr.com/groups/14783129@N25/>

David Mackie

Lowgill Swifts 2022

At Lowgill we had a great year for Swifts, with five new pairs, bringing the total now to 34 pairs. The Swifts that have not yet bred arrive a little later than the breeders, at the end of May or early June. We are especially delighted that three of these new pairs found natural nest sites in the eaves. The other two pairs are in an internal nest brick and a box. One of these new pairs bred, but obviously laid eggs later, in mid June, so the two chicks didn't fledge until mid August. The other four pairs just roosted, but it is a prelude to breeding next year and they did bring in feathers and dried grass to make the beginnings of a nest.

It seems strange that this year over 50% of our chicks fledged in late evening, often into complete darkness. Why would they do this? Never having flown before and with no others Swifts around, we have to wonder how they fare.

Another strange observation this year was that several adults left the nest before their chicks. In one nest the chicks were left alone for three days, while in others the adults departed one or two days before the chicks. Other Swift enthusiasts have reported this happening but it is not something we have observed before. Not being fed at the end is not necessarily a problem as chicks often have to lose weight before they fledge, often reducing from as much as 48 gm down to about 40-42gm. Rehabbers notice that when the chicks that they are hand rearing start refusing food, it is an indication that they are getting ready to fly.

In one nest one of the adults went missing while they were incubating eggs. After a few days, the remaining bird ejected both eggs – it must have known that it could not rear 2 chicks single-handed. The (rather fuzzy) picture shows the Swift with an egg grasped in its wide gape. It was moving so fast that we couldn't get a better photo, and it looks better as a video.



Fortunately it managed to pull in a new mate and they went on to lay two more eggs – which obviously developed into yet more late-fledged chicks.

A final observation of timing this year was the mass departure of the majority of our Swifts on 8-9th August. We had had a mass arrival on 9th May. Exactly three months, a round-trip journey of 22,000 km, to breed in Cumbria.

Tanya & Edmund Hoare

Great White Egret at Siddick ponds



Great White Egret, Brigsteer, Robert Pocklington

I do the Wetland Bird Survey (WEBS) at Siddick Pond. On Sunday 14th August I was walking along the path by the big pond; when I was stopped by another birdwatcher. Siddick Ponds is quiet on a Sunday morning I was the first person who he could tell that there was a Great White Egret on the big pond.

I didn't hang about, I walked down to where he said he'd seen it down near the pedestrian bridge and sure enough there it was standing in the water, a Great White Egret. I had never seen a Great White Egret before therefore it was particularly pleasing to see my first one at my local patch at Siddick Ponds. It was an obliging bird. It caught something in the water so I was able to see it feeding, observing the way it cricked its neck to catch its prey. The bird waded through the water and stood tall so I could see what a strikingly big white bird it was. I wanted to see the yellow beak as the Little Egret has a black beak. Although I could not see colour on the beak with my naked eye the yellow could easily be seen with binoculars. I said it was an obliging bird – so obliging I recorded it on the sightings for Cumbria Bird Club on the 14th and it was recorded on the 15th and 16th by another birdwatcher,

I look forward to my visits to Siddick Ponds to carry out the WEBS surveys. Autumn and Winter are the best seasons to visit in to see wetland birds, The site gets flocks of Teal and Wigeon a few Shelduck and Shoveler. There are always Greylag Geese but you can sometimes see an occasional Pinkfoot or Barnacle mixed in with them. But what I like is the unexpected. I never know which month the Whooper Swans will show up, sometimes October sometimes November. Or if there might be a Mediterranean Gull mixed in with the Black-headed Gulls. Or even better a Great White Egret.

Denis Renney

Barn Owls had a good year, assuming the twenty or so boxes that I monitor are typical of the area. The majority were significantly earlier than usual too. Such that they had already fledged and left the building at one site. Two other sites each had three flying juveniles.

From memory, I checked twenty two boxes and ringed twenty chicks in seven boxes. Three other boxes were occupied. In one box, which the owner follows with a camera, the first four eggs all failed to hatch. The bird laid another four and that clutch also failed, suggesting one of the pair may be infertile. In another late box of four eggs only one hatched and this chick should fledge in early October. I hope to be able to check a few boxes for second broods during October.



Barn Owl, Geltsdale, Adam Moan



Swallow, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

Swallows. At the farm near Bowness on Solway, where I have been ringing and nest recording since 2004, there were twelve occupied nests, two more than 2021. This is still significantly lower than the high of twenty occupied nests in 2019. Most had two broods and at the end of August there was two nests of third broods.

The interesting feature of this farm is the number of nests that have been used almost every year since 2002. (the farm livestock were an early casualty of foot and mouth disease in 2001 and all nests present then would have been removed in the cleaning operation). It is possible that some would have been rebuilt in 2001. However, at Watchtree Nature Reserve none of the three regular sites were occupied and I heard of other sites Swallows did not return to.

House Martins returned a little earlier than usual to the nests in the eaves of our house. Overall seven old nests were occupied and two new nests were built. I believe that at least two other pairs attempted but harassment by **House Sparrows** drove them away. This is one nest less than the two previous years. By the end of August only two pairs seem to have attempted second broods, which given how early they started, is rather surprising.

The **Great and Blue Tits** I monitor in nest boxes at Watchtree and Finglandrigg Wood NNR had another hard time from Stoats.

I captured one box of Great Tits being taken on a trail cam. At Watchtree eight Great Tits and two Blue Tit Broods were taken. In Pond Wood only one Great Tit fledged young. In Pow Wood at least two Blue Tit broods and three Great Tit broods were taken. This is the second year Stoats have raided the boxes at both sites.

A **Pied Wagtail** nest in one of the wood stores at Watchtree was also taken by the Stoat. The nests in Finglandrigg Wood fared much better with only six Great Tit broods taken. Brood sizes for both species were about average for both species, mostly eight for Great and 11 for Blue Tits. One brood of Blue Tits was cleaned out by a **Great Spotted Woodpecker**. A single **Nuthatch** nest was taken at egg stage, probably by a Stoat.



Pied Wagtail, Tony Marsh

From the BTO **Woodcock** survey I did at Finglandrigg I estimated at least four roding males, possibly more and the regular one at Watchtree was recorded. The remains of a Woodcock was found with a single **Tawny Owl** chick in a box at Finglandrigg. The pair at Watchtree also produced a single chick. This species is of some concern.

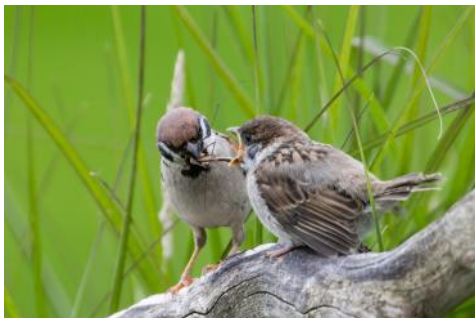


Nuthatch, Sizergh, Tony Marsh

Two pair of **Coots** at Watchtree reared broods of four and five chicks although three **Little Grebes** had only managed two chicks by mid-August. We wondered if the Coots were causing some problems.

There were also good results for at least two pair of **Moorhens** and at least five broods of **Mallard** ducklings were seen. During the previous two seasons an **Otter** caused mayhem for the breeding waterbirds and in 2021 it was captured on a trail cam in a duck nest box.

Starlings seem to have had an exceptional season with many pairs rearing two broods. Two pairs, that use nest boxes on our house, had second broods and a third box was also used by a pair presumably attempting a second brood. **House Sparrows** again bred prolifically and there were newly fledged chicks begging for food on our lawn in mid-August. Our ringing effort suggests **Tree Sparrows** bred well, but those using nest boxes at Watchtree only managed single broods.



Tree Sparrows, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

Our ringing effort at Watchtree was less than usual but it seems that **Willow Warblers**, **Chiffchaff** and **Sedge Warblers** have done well. There are good numbers of juvenile **Blackbirds** and **Goldfinch** too. Only one of five **Long-tailed Tit** nests I found at Watchtree fledged chicks, three were taken by predators and one usurped by Bumblebees. I have insufficient information to comment on the other species that breed at Watchtree.



Long-tailed Tit, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

I continued my efforts with **Willow Tits** but was unsuccessful in my attempts to locate nest sites. There were partial excavations at four of the nest boxes I provided at the CWT Bowness Gravel Pits Reserve but none were used. I found no evidence of territories during any of my visits. On the north side of Glasson Moss the colour ringed male was often on territory but I failed to locate the nest site. A bird was still present in August but I was unable to ascertain if any juveniles were reared. On the SW fringe of Glasson I completely lost track of the pair but in early August we captured and colour ringed an adult and a juvenile. At both sites there were nest hole excavation starts in some of the boxes but none were completed.

Frank Mawby

Woodpigeon feeding young



In early July a rather dopey pigeon decided to frequent the front lawn in Rockcliffe. On a casual glance I wondered whether it could be a Stock Dove due to the lack of white marking on the neck. Whatever it was, I kept a close eye on it as it was directly in the right-of-feline-way shared by several domestic cats. It could fly but didn't seem to react quickly to any dangers so I poised myself ready to shoo away any potential predators.

Next day the puzzle of its identity was resolved as I saw an older Woodpigeon feeding it and I filmed this. [YouTubeWoodpigeon](#)

I'd heard of "crop milk" but had never seen a baby pigeon being fed before. From my various bird books I cannot determine whether males and females produce this milk. I found the performance fascinating and rather comical. The baby was determined not to be ignored. To my anthropomorphic vision, the parent looks slightly exasperated and runs away from time to time.

I have since seen a similar brief feeding of crop milk performed while both were perched in a tree.

See also an interesting note : [BirdMilkNote](#)

Dee Gaffney, Rockcliffe

New Swift groups - Penrith and Keswick

Swifts need your help!

For Penrith contact **Susan Rowlands**: susanrowlands1@hotmail.co.uk

For Keswick contact **Nicki Baker**: nicki.baker@btinternet.com

Harbour walls

In the New Atlas of Breeding Birds 1988-91, I can remember reading and being intrigued that **Black Guillemots** nested in the harbour walls of Port Patrick harbour in Dumfries and Galloway - not too far from the Cumbrian coast.

In the 1980s when I went looking for Stonechat nests along the coastal strip between Harrington and Whitehaven, I occasionally saw Black Guillemots at high tide, especially below the high railway wall along the wagon road south of Parton. It crossed my mind they might be 'prospecting'? Almost annually, Black Guillemots are recorded away from their only known breeding site of St Bees Head but no other nesting sites have been confirmed.



Maryport Lighthouse, Derek McAlone

As a testament to the West Cumbrian industrial age, five deep harbour docks are sited in the 35km stretch of the coast between Whitehaven and Silloth-the others are Harrington, Workington and Maryport. Each of them hold ornithological interest at all times of the year, and in the breeding season, offer 'substitute' nest sites as an alternative to natural ones; mostly in blocked drainage outlets in the harbour walls.

Rock Pipits nest at all of these locations, mostly using harbour wall cavities, but sometimes using man made artefacts such as buildings and remnant 'slag banks' where the coastal wind and rain has eroded suitable cavities.



Sand Martin at nest Maryport Marina, Derek McAlone

Feral Pigeons also nest at all of these sites, using the larger cavities; here, such as at Maryport they can be seen nesting very close to **Starlings** that are using smaller cavities only a few bricks away.

At Workington, Silloth and Maryport, **Sand Martins** nest in the tiniest of crevices, with their nests only a few centimetres into the entrance, unlike the traditional tunnelling they do in riverbanks or sand quarries.



*Jackdaw at nest, Wellington Pit, Whitehaven,
Derek MacAlone*

The Wellington Walls at Whitehaven have nesting **Jackdaw** and **Feral Pigeon**.

As well as around the harbour; large walls have been built to protect the west coast railway, here, **Stock Doves** nest south of Harrington in blocked drains.

At Workington, **Little Owls** nest in suitable holes in a large protective wall in the harbour grounds - sometimes **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** nest there too, usually on the ground.

Unlike the other three harbours, Workington and Maryport are at the mouth of rivers and are subject to daily inter-tidal activity,

Large roosts of **Cormorants** and gulls gather at Workington; at low tide, **Redshanks** feed in the exposed mud of Silloth and Maryport; large gulls are a feature at Whitehaven and at all five harbours **Purple Sandpipers** can be found roosting in the lee of the wind during the winter months.



Purple Sandpiper, Workington, Tony Marsh

Apart from Workington and Harrington, coffee shops, pubs and restaurants can be found in walking distance and car parking is available to all harbours and free at Silloth and Maryport.

John Callion



Redshank, Workington, Tony Marsh

Lorton Ponds

We started on the ponds in mid May 2021 with the cutting of the rushes and me getting stuck in the only boggy bit



The digging was started around the 7th of June and most of the work completed by 28th June. There is a small pond at the top which is fed off a gutter that runs after a days rain. The second larger pond is fed by a stone drain and any excess water running out of the first pond. The third pond is the biggest and is fed by the outlet from the second pond and also more stone drains which then run out of the bottom of the pond and join Whitbeck

We tapped into the stone drains which run through the area and closed the outlets in the main pond so they would start to fill.



By 5th of July the ponds had found their level and stay pretty constant, rising and falling a little with rain-fall.



In October we added a further two ponds at the top of our land and a Sand Martin box at the bottom pond.



At the end of October the River Cocker broke its banks and filled the whole area with around eight foot of water taking about ten days to start dropping.

Before the flood we had shoals of Minnows at the inlets of the stone drains which disappeared around Christmas time, which I think went up the drains, and after the flood plenty of small Trout/Salmon in the two bigger ponds.



Lorton Ponds

Dragonflies moved in rapidly but the only ones I can reliably identify are Golden-ringed, Broad-bodied Chasers, Common Darters and Banded Demoiselle.

The Damselflies confuse me the more I try to positively identify them!!

We are seeing Kingfishers regularly on the ponds at Lorton now, two Little Grebe which is a first for the farm arrived on the 5th of August and are seen most days now, up to eight Teal from 18th of August .



Kingfisher, Russel Austin

We are now up to seeing 64 species since the ponds were completed. We have added to our list this year:

57. Woodcock 58. Mute Swan 59. Jack Snipe 60. Red-breasted Merganser
61. Tufted Duck 62. Curlew 63. Skylark 64. Little Grebe

The bird boxes this year had the following

Pied Flycatchers 23, Blue Tits 22, Great Tits 18, Redstarts 1, Nuthatch 1

More boxes had Pipistrelle bats in earlier this year, possibly due to the hot weather.

I have also built a small hide and will soon get some Kingfisher perches put into the ponds so may even get some photos when I get time!

John Temple

For Sale

Swarovski HD 80 25-50x angled scope with case (and Hoya protective UV filter) in excellent condition for a CBC member it would be £1500 ono.

Manfrotto MHX head which is one of the best for large scopes £60.

John Peatfield john.peatfield@yahoo.co.uk mob. 07711325288

Breeding season notes near Aspatria



Swallows, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

Swallows were very late back to the point I thought they weren't coming but when they finally arrived they seemed to do ok, plenty whizzing around now. Swifts were pretty much on time (and only about a week after the swallows!) and we had our usual three pairs nesting but up to 15 screaming in the evenings. They left sometime before 20th August (we were away so not sure exactly when) which is earlier than last year when some were still here on 1st September.

Our Barn Owls raised three young in the nest box and there seemed to be no shortage of prey for them, adults back and forward feeding the youngsters, I counted four feeds in less than 15 minutes one evening.

Plenty of young Blue Tits, fewer Great Tits. We had several Yellowhammers coming for seed on the ground in May and June, with a male singing nearby but they dispersed during July so presumably nesting failed (probably cat related).

Simon and I came on the CBC guided walk at St Bees, lovely day with a very informative guide and all the expected birds spotted. Simon was youngest there by a considerable number of years but he had a great time with everyone making sure he got as good a view as he could of all the birds and hopefully he learnt something too. He absolutely loved seeing the ringing at Watchtree earlier in the year by the way.

Hazel Wainwright

Possible Siberian Lesser Whitethroat 11th Jan-3rd Mar 2021



Despite it being a long time after the event I think it may be useful to share some photos of the Lesser Whitethroat seen at Linstock near Carlisle between January and March 2021 to everyone who may be interested.

Unfortunately because the Coronavirus Pandemic was at its height at the time and the bird was coming to feeders at an off road private residence, the presence of the bird was not widely announced.

After consulting, it was thought that it was a possible Siberian Lesser White-throat 'Blythi' or Eastern race. This was because it was obviously a highly unusual time of year for a Lesser Whitethroat to be in the North of England, together with the following features:-

It was a sandy brown bird, the sandy brown mantle graduating into the nape and hind crown with no marked contrast between the crown and mantle.

Primaries darker shade than the mantle. White outer tail feathers prominent.

Pale peach wash on the breast, contrasting with the obviously whiter throat.

Ear coverts slightly darker grey than the sides of the crown (dependent on the light).

Broken white eye ring visible above and below eye.

Orange/buff patch between under tail coverts and vent.

Brown eye with black pupil

Bill grey. Black legs and black feet.

Forked tail.

Dependent on the light it sometimes showed a slight supercilium.

Despite visiting on four occasions, viewing from an outdoor step on some cold snowy days I was unable to obtain a dropping or feather sample.

Roger Ridley



Observations from the river bank

Osprey

Here is a picture of an Osprey that I took on the riverbank on June 28th. After that pass, I took a picture from below from which a leg-band could be read. Two days later, in the same area, I saw it with (very definitely) a female, both riding a thermal.

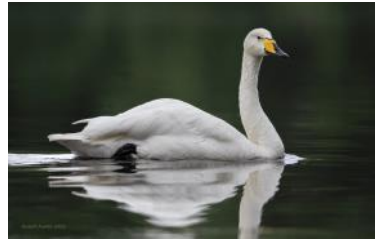


On Pete Howard's suggestion, I sent that leg-band picture to Roy Dennis in Scotland. They eventually replied, telling me that the bird had been ringed by a certain Pete Davies. From "that" Pete I have learned that it (which he refers to as **Blue 406**) is one of three Osprey chicks that he ringed in 2020 at the Roudsea NNR in south Cumbria. He told me that **Blue 406** had been photographed on August 20th disturbing an artificial nest in Kielder. No mention of the female. It remains to be seen whether he will come back around here next year with his mysterious mate. I'll be there watching for them.

Injured Whooper Swan

Last year I reported on an injured (damaged left wing) Whooper that had been adopted by a group of six Mute Swans.

I lost track of the bird through the Winter but it re-appeared in Spring, around our riverbank, but separated from the Mute Swans. Some days later I saw the Whooper flying. Its wing must have repaired itself when it grew new flight-feathers.



It has now left our area. I expect it has gone downstream towards the estuary and will likely fly back with this winter's migrant group.

Greylag brood

On the 3rd of June I saw on the river a female Greylag leading an orderly parade of **17** goslings. They hung around in the river between where I first saw them and our riverbank all through the summer, although in the latter part, two of the goslings went missing.

I was amazed by how well she managed and regimented the massive brood. No human mother could look after and discipline 17 kids (all the same age) like that, especially if at least half of them weren't hers!

They all fledged at the same time and flew back in the next morning as a group. It was a thrill to see.

Russel Austin

Greenish St Bees

The title could almost be a rarity WhatsApp message, perhaps if it was another saint (Abbs, Agnes or Mary's for instance). Greenish is normally suffixed by warbler in birding, and a word you never hear used in any other context. I have a soft spot for Greenish Warblers, partly because they've been lumbered with such an underwhelming name though since Plain Leaf Warbler registered on my consciousness I think *Phylloscopus trochiloides* got off lightly. They are also the nationally scarcity I've had most luck with, having found four over the years. But I've digressed before I've even started. This article is about dipping a toe in low carbon longer range birding, and the 'greenish' bit will become clear.

When I saw the club were doing a morning at St Bees it really appealed for some reason. I'd toyed with going over to Bampton to see some seabirds in the quiet summer period, but counter-intuitively the presence of the Black-browed Albatross and Turkestan Shrike put me off as I generally don't like birding in crowds. I then wondered if Blackpool to St Bees by public transport was achievable for the 9am meet-up on Saturday 9 July. Perhaps surprisingly it was, with an hour to spare. So I booked, and sorted my rail ticket and when I explained I was going on the train Mike Mills kindly offered for he and Lyn to pick me up at the station on their way through. So far so good.

Checking the train times on the Friday night showed it was cancelled. Drilling down into the three train journeys it was the Barrow train north that has been pulled. Further searching showed it was still possible to arrive on time going up to Carlisle and then back south east. At 4.40 I therefore walked onto the front to Blackpool station, expecting to be among a handful of people headed for Manchester airport but actually in a throng of party goers just ending a very good night. One meaning of green is naïve, and I was clearly a bit greenish not to know that Friday night is party night in these parts.

At Preston the departure information showed the Glasgow service to be akin to Schrodinger's Cat, as it was simultaneously passing through stations to the south and cancelled. In the end cancelled won out, the train to Barrow service was also cancelled and there was basically nothing going north for an hour. I was about to get on a train to Blackpool when it was announced that there was a replacement bus to Glasgow and intermediate stations.

The bus was a minibus, and the only passengers on it were myself and a French lady heading for Glasgow. This was fortunate as without asking where we were travelling to they had decided not to stop at Lancaster, Oxenholme or Penrith. But essentially two of us are being driven up the M6, one to Scotland. The credentials of this journey were rapidly dipping from green to greenish.

I missed the connection at Carlisle as expected but felt really upbeat. The last weather forecast I'd seen was for cloud but it was a glorious day as we headed down the Cumbria Coast Line through Dalston and Aspatria. As the line joined the coast there were a few birds to be seen, mostly gulls and wildfowl, and passing Workington my mind was taken back to the first summer Ross's Gull I twitched there on the unusual date of late June 1994.



Razorbills, St Bees, Tony Marsh

Alighting at St Bees I made my way to the coastal path to head north and pick up the CBC party somewhere near the lighthouse. I was stopped in my tracks by a couple of bird feeding frenzies which I gave some attention for cetaceans. There was no joy at the first gathering of Kittiwakes and auks, but eventually at the second I had reasonable views of two or three Bottlenose Dolphins. A dolphin day is always a good day and any remaining doubts I had harboured about the three leg journey were fully dispelled.

I did find the group, and it was great to catch up with Dave Shackleton and Doug Radford who I hadn't seen for a long time and an extremely long time respectively. Someone else will probably write up the meeting more comprehensively than me, but I was able to contribute to the outcomes by finding a Porpoise at another bait ball and the first Puffins of the morning. I left before the end as I had to get back to St Bees and even on the train I did catch I was away from home for twelve hours.

Many readers will know that St Bees round to Lancaster on the train covers a number of estuaries – the three at Ravenglass (Esk, Irt and Mite), the Duddon, the Leven and the Kent. The opportunities for casual birding are relatively high for a train journey and I managed c70 Eider, a Common Sandpiper, the increasingly expected Little Egrets and rather more Grey Herons than I had expected.

So where am I going with this? It's not exactly a new idea that visiting nature reserves by rail is environmentally friendly, it was being promoted when I was a student visiting Leighton Moss in the 1980s. But all other things being equal it still feels 'greenish' in the naïve sense, or at least eccentric, to take a multi-legged public transport journey in Cumbria to go birding when you have a car as so much can go wrong. The not particularly staggering conclusion of this article is that it's possible to do so, and still have a rewarding and enjoyable day.

Stephen Dunstan

Recent reports

The period covered is from June to August 2022 inclusive. Some records are unauthenticated and may require review.

Game Birds

A **Quail** was reported at Mardale Ill Bell on 1 July, and six were at Red Hall in August. A good count of eight **Grey Partridge** at Blennerhasset on 29 August may have been a family party; this was certainly the case with a pair and twelve grown young at Wampool and a pair with seven young at Newton Arlosh the same month.

Wildfowl

A female or immature **Long-tailed Duck** flew south past Silecroft on 20 August. A **Mandarin** was on the Eden at Ginsdale on 31 August. On 2 July a female Tufted was with two young, at Hodbarrow.



Common Scoter, RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Weather conditions were conducive to grounding **Common Scoter** on over-land passage. Records included one at Wastwater on 22 June, seventeen at Tindale Tarn on 30 June, three at Haweswater 20 July, four at Derwentwater on 24 July, three at Bassenthwaite on 30 July, one at Wet Sleddale on 16 August and eighteen at the southern end of Windermere on 18 August. Meanwhile on the coast counts included 1200 at Walney on 16 June, and 1245 at Silecroft on 30 July. A **Goldeneye** lingered at Hodbarrow into the summer.

There were 78 **Red-breasted Merganser** on the Duddon Estuary on 7 August. A count of 27 **Goosander** at Bassenthwaite on 30 August presumably included a high proportion of locally raised juveniles. The Foulney WeBS count for **Eider** in August was a minimum of 9260 and possibly as high as 11200.



Tufted Duck, Hammonds Pond, Roger Ridley

A **Pink-footed Goose** at Drigg on 26 August had presumably summered somewhere nearby rather than being an early migrant.

Nightjar, Swift, Cuckoo, Pigeons and Doves

A **Turtle Dove** was in a Kents Bank garden on 6 June. The largest **Swift** total was a meagre fourteen at Walney on 17 July. **Nightjars** were recorded on the southern mosses.

Waders

Five Woodcock were over Duddon Mosses, late evening on 28th June. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** lingered at Wedholme Flow from 18 to 21 August. **Wood Sandpipers** were also at this site on 17-19 July and 6 August, whilst another brace of reports came from Walney on 21 June and 6 August.

Dotterel breeding was confirmed in the Pennines, with a pair and chick seen.



Pectoral Sandpiper, Wedholme, Roger Ridley

The only **Spotted Redshank** were at Anthorn on 29 August and Walney 24-30 August. A scattering of **Green-shank** were seen including three over Kendal on 16 July, but as usual the biggest counts were at Walney where there were 22 on 29 July and Ravenglass where there 25 on the same day.

The only **Ruff** record received was a single at Wedholme Flow on 20 July. **Green Sandpiper** reports included up to three at Wedholme Flow. **Curlew Sandpipers** and **Little Stints** both appeared in pulses in late July and August. Curlew Sands comprised two at Port Carlisle 28-30 July, two Anthorn 30 July and one Hodbarrow 31 August. Little Stints were at Halforth on 30 July and Arnside on 29 August.



Dunlin & Sanderling, Grune Point, Tony Marsh





Green Sandpiper, Howard Pond, Barry Robson

Counts of more common species included 40 **Grey Plover** summering at Walney, ten **Common Sandpipers** at Port Carlisle on 15 July, 530 **Ringed Plover** at Ravenglass on 22 August and **Dunlin** flocks of 1500 at Port Carlisle and 1200 at Walney in August.

Gulls, Terns and Skuas

A **Sabine's Gull** went south past Whitehaven on 3 July. Given the very early dates it seems likely this was the bird with a missing foot subsequently seen just over the border in North Lancashire for several days.



Little & Sandwich Tern, Hodbarrow, Tony Marsh

A **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Drumburgh on 23 July, what was perhaps the semi-regular individual was then in Whitehaven Harbour on 1 August. **Mediterranean Gulls** began to reappear from late June, increasing to a minimum of 153 between Maryport and Workington on 26 July and 303 between Siddick and Flimby on 25 August. Breeding success of **Kittiwakes** was high at the sites monitored, but despite this the roost at Sellafield largely didn't materialise in August.

A **Roseate Tern** was seen off Hodbarrow on 6 July. A smattering of **Black Tern** reports comprised two at Hodbarrow on 3 June, three at South Walney on 9 June and a juvenile past Silecroft on 20 August.

Arctic Skua was the only skua species noted in the period under review. A total of 21 bird days included July peaks of three at Hodbarrow on 10th, Walney on 24th and Silecroft on 30th.

Auks

The good numbers of **Puffin** recorded at Walney in the spring continued well into June. Counts included peaks of eighteen on 2nd, seventeen on 9th and eighteen again on 21 June.

There were other auk movements recorded here that month peaking at 161 **Guillemot** and 63 **Razorbill** on 9th.

Divers

The first **Red-throated Divers** of the autumn at Walney were seen on 19 and 24 August.

Petrels, Shearwaters, Gannet, Shag, Cormorant

Single **Storm Petrels** were seen off Workington on 11 June and past Silecroft on 30 July. The return of **Shags** to Walney Island in late August saw up to eight birds present, another was off Silecroft on 26 July.

Other seabird records included 520 **Manx Shearwater** past Walney on 24 July and 448 from Silecroft on 20 August; on the latter date at the same site 235 **Gannet** and ten **Fulmar** were noted. The 73 Gannets off Lowca on 23rd June was a peak with them present most days offshore in summer.

Herons and Allies

A **Bittern** was seen at Brigsteer Wetland on 24 August, there were reports from another site in the summer and one was recorded on nocturnal monitoring over Ulverston on 17 August. **Spoonbills** included up to three at Campfield Marsh, four at Hodbarrow and one over Workington on 10 August.

Great White Egrets included birds in the north at Siddick Pond on 15 August and Cliburn Mill on 27th, whilst up to two were at Arnside in July and August.



Heron, Russel Austin



Little Egrets, Port Carlisle, Tony Marsh

Birds Of Prey

A **Honey Buzzard** moved west over Grune Point on 3 June.

The only **Hobby** reports were at Wedholme Flow on 15 August and at sites close to each other in the south of the county on several dates.



Kestrel , RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Marsh Harriers were seen at ten widely scattered sites, including Sunbiggin Tarn and Wet Sleddale in August. **Red Kites** were widespread, including a peak of three at Durdar Castle in early August.

Owls, Woodpeckers, Shrikes

A mid summer **Long-eared Owl** at Walney BO on 20 June was unusual.

Corvids

The **Hooded Crow** at Walney remained throughout, and having paired with a **Carriion Crow** raised four hybrid young. Following a good spring for records all other birds appeared to have moved on.

Hirundines

Swallow passage totals at Walney included 1050 on 13 August and 1200 on 28 August.

Warblers

The consolidation and spread of **Cetti's Warblers** in the county was reflected in one by the River Eden in Carlisle on 15 and 16 June.

Starlings

A **Rose-Coloured Starling** was in a Kirkland garden on 9 and 10 June.

Thrushes, Chats and Flycatchers

Black Redstarts were at Flusco Business Park on 15 August and Culgaith on 20 August. There were 80 **Mistle Thrushes** in a roost at Irton Pike in August.



Juv Treecreeper, Castle Carrock Reservoir, Adam Moan

Sparrows

The first confirmed record of **Tree Sparrow** breeding on Walney was followed by some significant passage there. Counts in August included 45 on 13th, 60 on 14th and 115 on the 30th.



Whinchat, Torver Common, Ian Tallon

Wagtails and Pipits

Yellow Wagtails included two juveniles on the Esk at Longtown on 10 July, and four singles through Walney between 27 July and 27 August.

An adult **White Wagtail** was with **Pied Wagtails** at Walney on 29 July.

There was notable **Tree Pipit** passage over Walney in August, particularly 39 on the 10th and 23 on the 28th whilst a total of 43 were recorded from nocmig over Ulverston during the month.



Linnet, RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Finches

Two **Crossbills** were seen over Bootle on 6 June and birds returned to Irton Pike after being absent for a year.

A count of 210 **Linnet** was made on Walney on 10 July.

Escapes / Unknown Origin

Black Swans were noted on 2 July at Siddick Pond and in late August at Ormsgill Reservoir.

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.

Stephen Dunstan

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Information for contributors

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

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