

BIRD NEWS
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Club news and announcements
2024 Bird List Challenge 1st - 4th January
CBC Meetings
Blue Tit
2023 Bird records
Conor Fraser - new council member
Yellowhammers!
Ronnie retires
Mike Carrier
Geoff Horne obituary
Alpine Swift in Port Carlisle
Recent reports

[Contents - see back page](#)

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Club news and announcements

New Chair

Chris Hind was elected as chair at the AGM. Chris needs no introduction as he is also the County Recorder and editor of "Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria".

Malcolm Priestley was heartily thanked at the AGM for his outstanding contribution as the outgoing chair of the club. He took over the reins in October 2016 and has expended a huge amount of his time and energy into progressing the club's activities. In particular he took on the CBC organised surveys with a passion. He was always so determined to get full coverage that he practically covered half the county himself as well as inspiring others to volunteer.

His full commitment also shone through when it was time to deliver the Bird Reports around the county. We all tried to save postage by delivering by hand to those members who lived nearby where we lived. Malcolm regarded this as a chance to meet a large proportion of the membership personally. Travelling far and wide he would astound members in remote valleys.

Dave Piercy

Great Crested Grebe survey

Thanks again to everyone who took part in the Great Crested Grebe survey. All the results have now been submitted and are currently being analysed. The headlines are that Great Crested Grebes bred successfully at only four of the 116 survey sites, with a juvenile appearing at Hodbarrow from an additional, unknown site.

Esthwaite Water held the maximum number with five pairs, each with two chicks plus another pair still incubating at the time of the second survey. By this time, Esthwaite also held a further ten adults.

The numbers appear to represent a decline since the 2008-2011 Atlas and we hope that further data analysis might suggest some possible causes. Full results will be published in the next edition of Birds & Wildlife in Cumbria.

Sue King



Great Crested Grebe, RSPB Geltsdale, Adam Moan

2024 Bird List Challenge 1st - 4th January

Kickstart a bird list for the year! If you haven't tried it before then have a go in 2024 – it's fun, exciting and light hearted. Which places can you link together in order to find a range of bird species?

The Challenge gives us all the opportunity to get out after the festive season, between the 1st and 4th days of the New Year (depending on weather and New Year excesses) and start a bird list for the New Year. You have scope to make this a social occasion by meeting up with others to compile a list for the day or simply go your own way... except that you have to cover the ground 'under your own steam' in a single outing so this challenge depends very much on the habitats you choose to visit and the time you can stay out and keep going. You might start and finish from home or travel to the location you feel will give you a good tally for the day. The variables in this challenge clearly mean that some places (Walney Island!) are well placed and some folk are hardy and have stamina, so the challenge is personal rather than a competitive event.

A core of challengers have taken part over the past three or four years and they may look to equal or improve on their previous lists. On whatever basis you take it, the challenge makes a worthwhile outing, so give it a go in 2024 – we've had short lists, and very long lists, and we will look forward to your list this time round so here are the rules:-

- On one day between 1st - 4th January 2024 draw up your list of species seen/heard.
- 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 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.

Good hunting

CBC Meetings

Thursday February 29th at 7.30 pm at The George Hotel, Penrith.

Where eagles fly - lessons from tagging. Speaker: Dr Alan Fielding

We now have enormous amounts of data from satellite tracking devices fitted to Golden Eagles in Scotland. The information from these tags is providing many new insights into Golden Eagle ecology. For example, when do they disperse, where do they go, when and where do they settle? What does information from the birds tagged for the South of Scotland Golden Eagle project tell us about the potential for a revival of Golden Eagles in England?

CBC Outdoor Meets 2024

Offering opportunities to visit locations of bird and natural history interest around the county in good company.

Guides at our meets are volunteers who know the sites and are happy to share their knowledge but members are responsible for their own safety, security and well being on meets. Places are usually limited in order to minimise our impact on the locations, other folk and to ensure that participants get the benefit of a leader's knowledge.

To book a place and receive full details please contact organisers Mike and Lyn Mills on meetings@cumbriabirdclub.org.uk or call 01946 590616.

Saturday 27th January.

Farming with Nature at Red Hall Farm, Wigton with Frank Mawby and Martin Baird.

Wrap up and put your boots on for a tour of the farm and see just what good farming can produce – for wildlife.



Knot flock & Turnstone, Flimby, Tony Marsh

Sunday 24th March.

Flimby Shore with Mike and Lyn Mills.

Get into position and let the tide bring the waders to us, with an optional look at Siddick Pond if time and weather allow.

CBC Meetings

Sunday 28th April.

Ulverston – Sea Wood and Birkrigg Common with Mike Douglas.

Spring time on Morecambe Bay – the combination of spring migrants and the birds of the limestone common, coastal woodland and a lunch stop watching the rising tide. Bliss.

Saturday 22nd June.

Around Hodbarrow, Millom.

There's more to Hodbarrow than a host of nesting terns, but they certainly make a great spectacle! Come and see what else we can find.



*Goldcrest, Portinscale,
Kingfisher, Harrington
Tony Marsh*

*Stonechat, Bullfinch,
Raven
RSPB Geltsdale
Adam Moan*

Saturday 7th September.

Ravenglass Estuary.

Dave Shackleton, village resident, guiding us to the delights of the estuary at this exciting time of year.

If you have any requests or suggestions for other locations then do let us know, or better still why not offer a venue which you know well and which you think that others may enjoy.

Blue Tit

With a population of 3.4 million pairs the Blue Tit is Britain's seventh most numerous bird. It was recorded as the second most common garden bird, after the House Sparrow in 94% of gardens during the 2022 RSPB Big Garden Watch.

For many of us, the Blue Tit is rather special having probably introduced us to bird watching in the first place particularly in winter when individuals being fed would come close. It is a well studied species and on record that over 50 individuals may visit a garden feeder over the winter months.



Blue Tit, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

Not always a popular bird. In 1837 a bounty was paid to church wardens for Blue Tit's heads. One warden actually recorded killing over 200 Blue Tits because the birds were supposed to inflict damage on orchard fruit trees. Whilst a typical lifespan is but three years there are records of a few living up to ten. However mortality is high due to predation, cold weather and at times a lack of food.

The Blue Tit occurs in much of mainland Britain, not Orkney or Shetland, and is widespread in Europe east to the Urals and just into North Africa. It is a species of light oak woodlands and this remains its natural habitat.

However it has become a much loved part of many of our gardens and is also found in suburban and city parks. Quick to adapt and take advantage of a fresh food supply, in 1921 it was first recorded attacking the caps of milk bottles left on people's doorsteps. Amazingly many articles were written on this subject and special boxes were produced to protect the bottles and their contents. Other interesting behaviour includes paper tearing - birds have been recorded entering vacant properties to tear off wallpaper. Why?. The habit of eating putty from window frames is also commonly recorded in the UK.

The birds take regularly to nest boxes to breed. If you keep your box up during the winter it may also be used as a roosting site for the tits and for Wrens.

Mike Carrier & Trevor Gunton

2023 Bird records

It is extremely helpful if bird records are submitted to us as early as possible after the end of the year. They certainly need to be sent to one of the Regional Recorders, whose details are on the CBC website, by the end of January 2024 if they are to be published in *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria 2023* (the Cumbria 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 about this on the Rare Breeding Birds Panel at <https://www.rbbp.org.uk/>

Chris Hind (County Recorder)



Little Egret, Anthorn, Roger Ridley



. Pochard, Tindale Tarn, Roger Ridley

Connor Fraser - new council member



Hi everyone,

It is a great pleasure to join the CBC Council this month and I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself.

My interest in birds only began five years ago, when I studied zoology at the University of Sheffield under the tutorship of some inspiring ornithologists. Since then, birding has taken over my life in the best way possible, becoming my hobby and my career. Currently, I work for an ecological consultancy which carries out offshore aerial surveys and my job is to ensure all avian and marine life captured is identified as accurately as possible.

As I am based in Carlisle, I try to visit the Longtown area as often as possible on my weekends, but I also enjoy birding many sites along the Solway and in the east of the county, such as Geltsdale and Miltonrigg. Perhaps unusually, I record my bird sightings on eBird, and last year I took on the role of becoming eBird Regional Reviewer for Cumbria where I have helped to integrate records from this growing platform into the official Cumbria database. I have always been fascinated by the power of large datasets such as eBird, especially regarding the role they could play within local and global avian conservation efforts.

I am very much looking forward to working and meeting with many of you over the coming days and to hopefully contribute to the great ongoing work of the CBC.

Connor Fraser

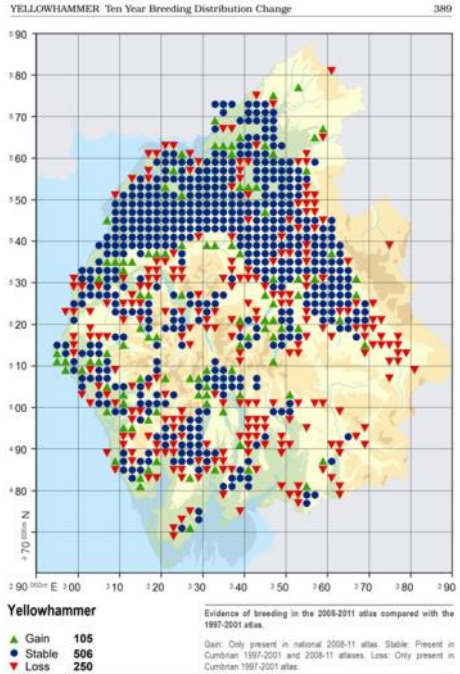
Yellowhammers !

In this country a major part of the biodiversity crisis stems from changes in farming practices and the impact of these changes in Cumbria are graphically shown in the Atlas 2008-11 map for change in the breeding distribution of Yellowhammers.

The atlas maps are fascinating and this one tells a story of the loss of Yellowhammers from many of the peripheral 2kmx2km squares (tetrads), of some gains and the retention of the species where favourable habitat allows, over the previous 10 year period.

Another 12 years have now passed and it would be good to see how those Yellowhammers are faring now. Yellowhammers are such an iconic species of summer in the British countryside, a bird that we all know, or knew, so well. They are also a relatively easy bird to survey with their classic song and presence over a four month period in summer.

The survey method would have to follow a timed tetrad count (TTC) of a



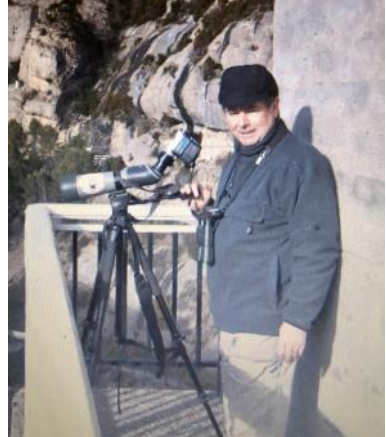
Yellowhammer, Tommy Holden

2 hours visit in April/May and a second visit in June/July which should enable many members to at least take part on their local patch. What we need then is an expression of interest, not just in covering tetrads but from any club members interested in helping plan and organise the survey – no previous experience necessary.

Please contact Mike Mills, Lyn Mills and John Callion via mike.lynn@talktalk.net Tel. 01946590616 to register your interest in either helping with the planning and running of the survey or carrying out survey field-work in 2024

Ronnie retires – the end of an era for bird recording in South Cumbria

In 1989 when the Cumbria Bird Club was formed, it was decided that, due to the large geographical size of the county, the county recorder would be supported by three regional recorders representing north, west and south Cumbria with recording in east Cumbria being split between the regional recorders for north and south Cumbria. The inaugural regional recorder for South Cumbria was Ronnie Irving and he has remained in post ever since supporting a succession of county recorders over an unbroken period of 34 years. Nobody could ever accuse him of lack of staying power!



His association with bird recording goes back way further than this with his first personal birding record, a Herring Gull from Maryport, being made in 1948! He trained as a ringer with none-other than Ralph Stokoe in the very early days of the ringing scheme and it was this background that was formative in his adoption of sound birding and later, bird recording principles. This stood him and Cumbrian bird recording in good stead throughout his long period in office. In his early days as regional recorder, before the advent of computers and technology, records were submitted in many forms – phone calls, letters, post cards as well as record cards, a far cry from the days of spreadsheets, and on-line bird recording. A house-full of shoeboxes containing thousands of record cards came with the territory before the digitalisation of bird recording, a transformation which was certainly one of the biggest challenges he was able to overcome during his long period in office.

Part of the job of regional recorder is chasing up descriptions for species considered scarce, rare or vagrant and in this respect, Ronnie has now requested and handled over a thousand descriptions, a request not always welcomed by the observer concerned but his tenacity in chasing up descriptions has contributed strongly to the Cumbria Bird Club maintaining a records database of a very high standard. If that wasn't enough, Ronnie took on the job of secretary to the bird club records panel on the sad passing of his good friend Ian Kinley in 2015.

Recently Ronnie announced that he intended to retire from both positions at the end of the year and he has succeeded as regional recorder by Mike Douglas and as secretary to the records panel by Roy Atkins. At the end of an era, we can only thank Ronnie for his zeal, tenacity and dedication in the tasks described above and wish him a long and happy retirement.

Dave Thexton

Mike Carrier

We were sad to hear of the passing on 2nd November of one of our most passionate and dedicated members. Mike served continuously on the council from the inaugural meeting of the CBC. He was the club's first vice-chairman and later went on to serve as chairman. It is difficult to encapsulate all his achievements but hopefully the tributes below will give some idea of the breadth of his interests and knowledge. His enthusiasm will be greatly missed and his ability to inspire others into volunteering was incomparable. Also just a friendly likeable man always with an interesting tale to tell in that warm welcoming voice.

Dave Piercy

It was a great tribute to Mike Carrier to see so very many people queueing to attend his funeral. It was icy-cold but a gloriously sunny day, and he would have enjoyed the conversations afterwards about recent area sightings of Waxwings. We particularly remember Mike for embracing our enthusiasm for Swifts- Thank you, Mike, for your interest in all things avian, and especially Swifts. We will miss you.

Tanya and Edmund



Swift, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

My first encounter with Mike was at talks on two of his passions; Cormorants and The Isle of May. Later, I worked closely with him when I was editing the bird component of 'Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria' and he was the overall editor. At that time he always gave welcome and useful support.

In later years I always looked forward to a quick craic with Mike at the Club meetings. He played a major part in the development of the Club and will be missed.

Derek McAlone

I first met Mike when he formed the Carlisle local group of the RSPB in 1976. My abiding memories were of a vibrant young membership that used to sell out the theatre at the art college for our talks and film shows. Our outdoor trips were well supported and children used to come on them. Mike was brilliant with the children - always making time for them and ensuring they saw the bird and why it was that species. Such an important role in stimulating an interest in birds. Mike arranged an enjoyable long weekend on Islay for the group. He remained on the committee often as leader and also arranging the indoor programme for over 30 years until the time of his death.



Tree Sparrow, Watchtree, Tony Marsh

Others will mention his work at Rockcliffe, Isle of May, NSRG and his love of Cormorants and his work with them on the N. Solway. There is a statue of a Cormorant by the Sands Centre that he was responsible for - a fitting tribute to a colossus of the Cumbrian bird world. As age caught up with him he was content on his home patch at Armathwaite. He put up a large number of Tree Sparrow nest boxes (encouraging us to do the same) and used to fill up feeders in the wood during the winter for them - often at his own expense.

Richard Dixon, sec. N.C. RSPB Group

I first met Mike back in the late 1980s when he came to rescue and ring an exhausted Long-eared Owl which I had found on the ground in Swindale. Subsequently I got to know him through work at Geltsdale and Haweswater when he was active with the Carlisle RSPB group. Armathwaite was a useful stopping off on my route home from Geltsdale to Askham! He was very supportive when I became treasurer of the Cumbria Naturalists Union when he was it's Chairman and finances were in a poor way back then. This had always been the case and I think in the past he had contributed financially to the publication of the annual birds and wildlife report himself! He was a great supporter of wildlife recording in the county, particularly the annual report and the network of local natural history societies. But mostly he was a great font of knowledge, particularly about the Solway and its birds and was always willing to share it.

Dave Shackleton



Rook, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

I was very sad to hear about the passing of Mike. His contribution to the promotion of a better understanding of birds in Cumbria and their conservation over the last fifty years has been immense.

His passion for birds was always evident when he spoke at any CBC event. He had a natural delivery that was capable of both inspiring and captivating audiences. Not only was he a gifted orator, he was also someone who did not shy away from taking on responsibilities, having been a major figure throughout the life of CBC, holding both the role of chairman and vice-chairman of our club.

His infectious enthusiasm and vision were behind many of the club's initiatives. One that comes to mind is the countywide Rook survey where he had the vision to see that this seemingly unglamorous and common species might be in trouble, and that only through thorough surveying would its situation be really understood.

He had an unprecedented understanding of Cumbrian birdlife, using this knowledge to good effect advising and aiding numerous individuals and organisations to make Cumbria a better place for birds.

He will be sadly missed

Pete Ullrich

I was involved with Mike in the late 70s and 80s. We were both on the committee of what was then called The Carlisle RSPB Members Group. I was also fortunate to spend days birdwatching on and around the Northumberland coast with just the two of us. His main interest was his local patch and when the family moved to Armathwaite, he was in his element with such a variety of habitats.

Harry Kay

I was privileged to have Mike as a friend for nigh on fifty years, many rich memories in that time: Early on, hitching a ride with him to a conference in the Midlands, we were well down the country, (in what I realised later must have been "home ground" for him when he was younger), when he stopped the car, got out and said "let's go for a walk". Bemused, I joined him, and we ambled to the edge of a piece of scrub nearby. "Look in there" he said, and when I did, I was amazed to see several roosting Long-eared Owls....

Mike Easton

When we arrived in Cumbria in 1986 I joined the North Solway Ringing Group and through them was introduced to Mike. Under his supervision I learnt much about handling and aging birds in his garden at Armathwaite. We ringed many Gull pulli on Rockcliffe Marsh too. On the open coast counts he covered almost all of the shore from St Bees to Sellafield, getting there and returning to Carlisle on the train. I was somewhat in awe of him for the low water count area I inherited from him on the west side of Moricambe Bay, covering the area around Grune Point and along the Waver as far as Border Marsh. I think he covered it in a day, it took me two trips! For many years he and a local chap Gordon Baker, from Silloth, enhanced the old target to provide nest sites for breeding Cormorants and ringed the chicks. When you realise just how far the 'target' is off Calvo Marsh and the height of the posts, it was no mean feat. I estimate 22 pair of Cormorant still breed there, one nest on every post, although Mike's additions have long gone.

Frank Mawby

My personal recollection - Golden Eagles, Mute Swans and Snow Buntings! In February 1975 a small group of us flew out to Benbecula to survey wintering birds on the Uists. Mike and his young son David proved great company, his energy, enthusiasm and approach to his birding and life were an inspiration to me. He retained a love for the island amongst the many he visited over the years.



Cormorant, St Bees, Tony Marsh

Amongst his other achievements - his work on Tree Sparrows, his 30 years of monthly Radio Cumbria bird reports, 30 years of Isle of May visits, 50 years as a volunteer with RSPB not to mention his long involvement with CBC. His day job at Carlisle Station in the early days of the Ospreys at Loch Garten saw Mike arrange a chartered day trip train journey, Carlisle to Aviemore, for Cumbrian birdwatchers to see the Ospreys.

Mike Mills

Geoff Horne obituary

Geoff died on Sunday 27th November at his home in Dalston near Carlisle aged 87.

We believe he began bird ringing in his early twenties and amongst his well known mentors were Ralph Stokoe and R H (Robbie) Brown. He joined Carlisle Natural History Society in the early 1960's and was soon the Secretary of the Society working with the President Earnest Blezard, who was also the long serving curator of Tullie House Museum. When Blezard died in 1970 Geoff became Society President for the next five years. Geoff then served on Carlisle Nats Council until his death, as an Honorary Vice-President and has served the society longer than any other known member.



Derek Ratcliffe, who grew up in Carlisle and retained close links with the region, recognised Geoff's ability and enthusiasm for monitoring birds of prey, especially the Peregrine. Derek recruited Geoff to help with research into why Peregrine breeding was failing during which time they became close friends. Derek would stay with Geoff and his wife Avril for a few days each spring when they would pack in as many Peregrine and Raven sites as they could. During his nest monitoring and nestling ringing Geoff collected many unhatched eggs for Derek and the result of this study are well known and published proving the damaging effects of DDT and sheep dip chemicals Aldrin and Dieldrin and which led to their ban. Geoff was said to have ringed more Peregrine chicks than anyone else in the world and was rewarded for his work in 1994 when he was awarded the RSPB medal and the BTO Tucker medal. His records are published in The Transaction of Carlisle Natural History Volume 12.

Geoff will go down as another legendary figure who made a significant contribution to bird conservation in Cumberland and Westmorland.

Numerous current Cumbrian wildlife enthusiasts fondly remember Geoff as the experienced kindly friend who got them started with bird related field studies and continued to mentor them throughout their progress in expertise. All mention that Geoff had the eyesight of a hawk and the climbing abilities of a mountain goat. Sadly his knees paid the inevitable price in later years.

Guy Broome, Frank Mawby, Steve Hewitt



Redwing, Mockingbird, Derek McAlone



Blackcap, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

Alpine Swift in Port Carlisle

At 21.50hrs on the evening of the 10th July, while I was loading my fieldwork kit into my car for the following day, a very large swift flew past me around 10m away. I immediately thought it was an Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* from its falcon-like flight action and size, but to be sure I had to confirm its distinctive white belly and throat. After a couple of minutes watching, I realised it was performing a circuit. The weather was fairly miserable with a strongish westerly breeze and persistent drizzle. In these conditions it is common in Port Carlisle to see hirundines (Swallows etc.) and Swifts feeding in the lee of the wind behind some large Small-leaved Limes *Tilia cordata* and conifers on Field view (I have seen Swifts *Apus apus* gleaning insects off the leaves of these trees in very poor feeding conditions). This swift was doing the same and then leaving over the tennis courts before looping round the front street and returning to the limes for, presumably, another feeding bout.

After a few more passes and, in spite of poor light, I got good enough views to confirm the white belly. I tried to get record shots with my phone, but the light was too poor and the bird was too fast. So, I did something I haven't done for many years and sprinted (by my standards) to Field View and hammered on Dave Blackledge's door. As he approached the door, I shouted loudly "Alpine Swift!". He responded perfectly, picking up his pace and the two of us ran back to the tennis courts. The swift behaved perfectly, continuing its foraging circuit and allowing Dave to get a clear view of the white underbelly. Without leading, I asked Dave if he was happy with the ID and he said yes. Remarkably, the swift was only about 10m from where I found a Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* a few years before!

2023 saw a remarkable influx of Alpine Swifts to the UK, including the first Cumbrian bird for over 50 years in Burton-in-Kendal on April's Fool's day. The influx lasted a few weeks but very few had been seen in the weeks leading up to the Port Carlisle bird. I tried to follow the bird until it went to roost, but the foul weather and poor light meant I missed that. The following day we searched the area and while it was reported as present by persons unknown, we're convinced it didn't show again.

A big discussion between birders on the next day was where it might have roosted. There are no large buildings or cliffs around the port, both habitats used by roosting Alpine Swifts on the continent. However, if it did roost, I suspect it did in the old coaling wharf (the "island") off the port. When my wife and I worked on Loggerhead Turtles *Caretta caretta* on Cephalonia, Greece, we would regularly see Alpine Swifts flying in and out of the small cliffs at the ends of the turtle beaches. As night fell, we would hear them change from typical swift calls to clicking sounds, strongly suggesting they were using echolocation (not yet demonstrated in this species despite my efforts to prove it in Portugal, where they refused to click for me!).

The sandstone wall of the coaling wharf is very similar to the cliffs where we saw the swifts, with holes large enough for Stock Doves *Columba oenas* to nest.

Several studies have suggested that Alpine Swifts are due to colonise the British Isles (following the vanguard of the egrets and other species). If they do, it may be worth naturalists checking coastal industrial features as well as the usual breeding sites mentioned in the literature.

Roy Armstrong



Robin, Portinscale, Tony Marsh

Recent reports

The period covered is October and November 2023. Some records are unauthenticated and may require review.

Wildfowl



Teal, Bampton Junction, Adam Moan



Gadwall, Talkin Tarn, Adam Moan

A **Ring-necked Duck**, probably a returning individual, was at Longtown from 19 November. Other diving duck records included two **Pochard** at Tindale Tarn on 7 October and one on Bassenthwaite on 30 November. A reasonable showing of **Scaup** included three singles at Walney and eight there on 22 November, one at Talkin Tarn on 13 October and one at an undisclosed Furness site.

Garganey were on Walney on 9-10 October, and also at the other end of the county at Campfield Marsh on the latter date. A **Velvet Scoter** passed Bowness-on-Solway on 14 October. A smattering of **Long-tailed Duck** comprised birds at South Walney on 2-14 October and 5-17 November, a drake on Bassenthwaite on 22nd October, one south at Silecroft on 23rd and an immature drake on Longlands Lake, Cleator on 31 October.

The **Brent Goose** flock in the Walney – Foulney area reached a record total of 562 birds on 16 November, of which 548 were Pale-bellied. All other reports of the species were from Campfield Marsh, with three Pale-bellied birds on 13 October and two Dark-bellied on the 25th.

The peak **Whooper Swan** flock in the north of the county was 186 birds at Laythes on 4 November, whilst birds heading for Lancashire were widely recorded in October. There were c5000 **Eider** at Foulney on 23 November, further north four at Ravenglass on 2 October was notable.



Talkin Tarn, Adam Moan

Swifts, Nightjar

A late **Swift sp** at Skelton on 28 October was considered likely to be Common Swift by the observer.

Grebes

A popular **Red-necked Grebe** was on Talkin Tarn from 6th to 22nd November. Its difficult to know how many birds were involved in **Slavonian Grebe** records in Workington Harbour on 5-8 November, at South Walney on 14 and 16 November and finally off Foulney on the 23rd.



Red-necked Grebe, Talkin Tarn, Adam Moan

Waders

The **Lesser Yellowlegs** mentioned in last the last set of sightings from Port Carlisle was relocated at Grune Point on 14 October, staying to at least the 28th. The other wader highlights of the period were a **Grey Phalarope** on Coniston Water on 5th October and a male **Dotterel** on Eel Crag, Buttermere on the 11th.



Grey Plover, Dunlin & Bar-tailed Godwit, Grune Point, Tony Marshall

A **Little Stint** was at Port Carlisle on 10th October, with single **Curlew Sandpipers** at Anthorn on the 24th and Glasson / Port Carlisle the following day. There were up to two **Spotted Redshank** into early November, whilst floods in the Halforth-Leasgill held up to eight **Ruff**.

Greenshank were seen on several estuaries, but the peak counts were from the usual favoured haunts with up to 35 on the Ravenglass estuaries and 24 on Walney in October. Three **Common Sandpiper** on 26th November were on the Esk at Muncaster, now a regular wintering area,

Recent reports

Gulls, Terns and Skuas



Glaucous Gull, Maryport, Derek McAlone

A **Glaucous Gull** was at Maryport on 7 November. A **Black Tern** visited floods at Leasgill, Halforth from 3rd to 6th October. The only skua reported in the period was a **Great Skua** off Walney on 7 November.

All **Little Gull** observations came from Walney with two on 2 October, five on 1 November and further singles on 14th, 17th and 22nd. The largest **Mediterranean Gull** counts received were 20 on Workington shore on 5th October and six at Siddick Pond on 3 November.

A late **Common Tern** was off Walney on 3 November. Late **Sandwich Terns** were off Walney on 6 November and Silecroft on 19 November whilst one was found dead on Waterhead, Windermere on the 20th.

Auks

A late **Puffin** was seen from Walney on 18 October. **Black Guillemot** were noted at Walney on 7th October, on the Mite Estuary on 13 October and finally Foulney on 23 November.



Guillemot, Workington, Tony Marsh

Divers

A **Black-throated Diver** was on Talkin Tarn on 10-12 November, on the last date it was seen to gain height and head east.

An inland **Great Northern Diver** was on Windermere and the River Brathay on 6 November. On the coast there were birds seen on five dates at Walney and one flying past Foulney on the 23rd.

Some excellent **Red-throated Diver** counts from Maryport included 480 on 16 October and 310 on 25 November, whilst inland there were two together on Windermere on 22 October.



*Black-throated Diver, Talkin Tarn,
Adam Moan*

Petrels, Shearwaters, Gannet, Shag, Cormorant

Shag maxima at Walney were no fewer than 45 in October, and 27 in November. The only other coastal record was a single at Drigg on 10th November, but notably two were inland on Windermere in early November.

Herons and Allies

Cattle Egret probably changed status for the foreseeable in the county during the period. Whilst mobile birds may have led to some duplication a series of records included seven together at Arnside on 15th October and eight at Meathop on 20th November.

A **Spoonbill** flew over Ulverston with Little Egrets on 19th October. A **Bittern** was at a confidential site in October. There were several **Great White Egret** observations in the period, including three at both Kents Bank and Rockcliffe Marsh on 15th October that were presumably different birds given the distance apart. A record Walney count of 108 **Little Egret** was made in October.

Owls



Short-eared Owl, SW Cumbria, Ashley Cooper



A roost of up to 18 **Short-eared Owls** were on moorland in the southwest of the county. Others were seen at Shap and Lowca Barns in October and Walney in November.

Woodpeckers

Two **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** in the Roudsea / Hare Syke area on 11 November suggested the intriguing possibility the species retains a perilously small foothold in the county.

Recent reports

Raptors

Marsh Harrier records included up to two at both Anthorn/Campfield Marsh and Foulshaw Moss / Ulpha Meadows. **Hen Harrier** reports included birds on Walney on 18th October and at Lowick Common on 3 November, Whinlatter on the 5th and Drumburgh CWT on the 6th.



Marsh Harrier, Mockerkin, Derek Mcalone

Corvids

The resident **Hooded Crow** at Walney Tip remained throughout, and a second bird was seen on 28th November.

Waxwing



Stephen Goodwin, Carleton; Andrew Morrison, Harraby; Tony Marsh, Keswick



Lowry Hill, Roger Ridley

Unless you've been in a cave for two months or something you'll probably have noticed it's a **Waxwing** irruption year. Birds were seen at many sites in the county, with peak counts in November of 65 in Carlisle, 44 in Keswick, 40 in Penrith and 20 at each of Talkin Tarn, Appleby and Sizergh.

Hirundines

Four late **Swallow** were through Walney on 1 November.

Warblers, Crests

The only **Yellow-browed Warbler** in the county in the year to date was on Walney on 26-28 October, assuming the same lingering individual. **Cetti's Warbler** reports included up to four at Foulshaw Moss / Ulpha Meadows and the first multiple record on Walney with two on 11 November.



Fieldfare, Geltsdale, Adam Moan

Thrushes, Chats and Flycatchers

Ring Ousel were seen on Walney on 28 October and 1 November, and inland at Sleddale on 5 November. A late **Wheatear** was on Walney on 1 November. Up to 1000 **Fieldfare** were at Campfield Marsh on 15th October.

Recent reports

Wagtails and Pipits

Five **Water Pipit** joined 12 **Rock Pipit** on the regular flooded field sites at Biggar Bank on 29 October. Up to 14 **Rock Pipit** were seen at Whitehaven.



*Black Grouse, Red Grouse, Geltsdale,
Adam Moan*



Finches and Buntings

The good autumn for **Snow Bunting** continued. Inland there were six at High Snockrigg on 28 November, two on Black Combe on 4 November and one on Grisedale Pike on 3 November whilst one plus was/were heard only at Binsey on 11 November.

On the coast birds were seen on Walney on 14th and 25th October.

Twite counts included 80 at both Grune Point and Sandgate Marsh, with flocks also at Walney and Roosecote Sands. A **Hawfinch** was at Culgaith on 25 October.

Escapes

A **Lady Amherst's Pheasant** at Blencarn on 5 November had apparently been present for some time.

Stephen Dunstan

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.*



Wren, Braithwaite Moss, Tony Marsh

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Club news and announcements..... | 91 |
| 2024 Bird List Challenge 1st - 4th January <i>Mike & Lyn Mills</i> | 92 |
| CBC Meetings <i>Sue King</i> | 93 |
| CBC outdoor meets <i>Mike & Lyn Mills</i> | 93 |
| Blue Tit <i>Mike Carrier & Trevor Gunton</i> | 95 |
| 2023 Bird records <i>Chris Hind</i> | 96 |
| Conor Fraser - new council member <i>Conor Fraser</i> | 97 |
| Yellowhammers ! <i>Mike & Lyn Mills</i> | 98 |
| Ronnie retires - the end of an era in bird recording in South Cumbria <i>Dave Thexton</i> .. | 99 |
| Mike Carrier | 100 |
| Geoff Horne obituary <i>Guy Broome, Frank Mawby, Steve Hewitt</i> | 104 |
| Alpine Swift in Port Carlisle <i>Roy Armstrong</i> | 106 |
| Recent reports <i>Stephen Dunstan</i> | 108 |

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The deadline for copy for the next issue is March 1st 2024

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