

# Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society

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## Lancashire Bird Report 2009

The Birds of Lancashire and North Merseyside

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# Introduction

*Dave Bickerton*

First of all may I thank you for supporting the work of the Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society in either being a member or purchasing this report. The cost of producing this journal of record is just about covered by membership subscriptions and sales. If you are a regular purchaser of the report, please consider joining the society (see the membership section towards the end of the report).

The area covered by this report is one visited by many birdwatchers from the novice to the experienced ornithologist due to the many and varied habitats and the wealth of birds they support. Yet again we have had an incredible number of records submitted, all of which have been considered for inclusion in the report. Whether you send in just one or two records or you can offer comprehensive data on a regularly watched site, we welcome all your records. These can contribute enormously to conservation efforts and we share them with national bodies like the BTO, RSPB and Natural England and the two county biological record centres, the Lancashire Environmental Records Network (LERN) and Merseyside Biobank.

Work on the Atlas continues apace with the BTO and we have made significant headway towards our target of surveying every tetrad in the county. However, the approaching winter and summer periods are the last in the survey and so there is a final push to get every tetrad covered, especially in the east of the county. Please contact the recorder if you can help or, better still, go onto the BTO website and offer your services that way.

There has been some debate recently on the role of the Society with the resources that have been going into the local authority record centres and the proposed accessibility of data. Once upon a time, the Society was the fulcrum of record collection for the region and put in place a series of recorders for all faunal groups. Times have certainly changed and many interest groups now collect data so it makes sense for the record centres to be the repository for all records, including the ones submitted to us directly. The Society will continue to be a conduit for the bird records of the area enabling us to produce regular readable reports on an annual basis.

You will probably notice another change in the systematic list sequence in this year's report. This brings us into line with the current BOU list and further changes are possibly in the pipeline. Another slight change is the use of black and white images in the body of the report due to the lamentable lack of line drawings. We hope to have a blend of the two in future reports if suitable material is available to us.

I must thank the team of writers who give up many days of their own time to compile their sections of the report and to those on the rarities committee who sit in deliberation on records of Lancashire rarities. Most of all I must thank the recorder and editor of the report, Steve White, who puts in an incredible amount of effort in collating and disseminating the records, reviewing and editing the texts, co-ordinating the production of the report as well as numerous other activities. If you would like to contribute an article, help in writing the species accounts or take a more active role in any way, then please don't hesitate to get in touch with the editor.

Thanks once again for supporting us and I hope you enjoy reading the report

Front cover: Velvet Scoter, Barrow Lodge, December (Steve Young)

Back cover: Cattle Egret, Plex Moss, April (Steve Young)

# Review of the Year, 2009

*John Wright*

## JANUARY

The first ten days were mostly dry but very cold with some unusually prolonged and severe frosts. Thereafter the weather became much more unsettled with rain at times.

The first winter period produced regular sightings of scarcer geese, with an adult and two first-winter **Greenland White-fronted Geese** at Downholland Moss on the 1st, complemented by two adult and two first-winter **European White-fronted Geese** at Caton for most of the month. At least 2000 **Whooper Swans** were present in the county on the 7th.

Fishmoor Reservoir produced an adult **Caspian Gull** on the 2nd followed by **Iceland** and **Glaucous Gulls** later in the month. The **Long-eared Owl** roost at Marton Mere held up to nine birds. A record count of 1061 **Cormorants** was made at Seaforth on the 15th.

A first-winter **Black Redstart** was in the precincts of Blackburn Cathedral from the 12th – the first of a remarkable 23 birds recorded at 19 different locations during the year.

## FEBRUARY

The first half of the month was very cold with some heavy snowfall but the weather became much milder and more settled in the second.

**Woodpigeons** regularly form large flocks in arable areas during winter, highlighted on the 6th with a spectacular 17500 leaving a roost at Scarisbrick Hall.

Goose sightings continued with good numbers of **Tundra Bean Geese** in Over Wyre with groups of four at Horse Park Lane on the 8th and six at Staynall on the 18th.

That the cold weather was causing problems for our birds was highlighted by the finding of an emaciated **Bittern** in Bamber Bridge, but this story had a happy ending with the rehabilitated bird released at Leighton Moss where it continued to be seen throughout the year.

Despite the cold **Avocets** had begun to return to Martin Mere, Marshside and the Eric Morecambe complex before the end of the month.

## MARCH

An unsettled first half of the month was followed by a fine, mainly sunny week before turning less settled and cloudier towards the end of the month.

A **Firecrest** in Blackpool's Stanley Park from the 1st was a popular attraction and it showed well until the end of the month. Another birders' favourite, the **Waxwing**, was seen in good numbers with a peak of 120 in Preston on the 13th.

**Rough-legged Buzzards** typically delighted only single observers over Stocks Reservoir on the 5th and at Winmarleigh Moss on the 20th, the latter the first in the Fylde for over 50 years. A long-stayer in the county would be much appreciated. The first of the year's up to 70 **Ospreys** flew over Upper Foulridge Reservoir on the 18th.

A **Red-throated Diver** on Upper Foulridge Reservoir delighted observers in the east of the county from the 1st. Surprisingly, it was joined by a **Long-tailed Duck** on the 31st. The first of the year's **Garganey** were at Seaforth on the 18th.

## APRIL

Plenty of fine, settled and warm weather, especially in the first and third weeks of April.

The year's breeding atlas work began and continued to provide valuable data, one example being the presence of **Little Grebes** on 103 waters.

As **Swifts** begin to return there is always hope they might bring along one of their rarer relatives. Amazingly, county birders struck lucky twice this year. Firstly a majestic **Alpine Swift** was seen over Pilling Marsh on the 15th. Only the fifth for the county, this bird eluded most observers.

Even more remarkable was the county's first **Pallid Swift**, which appeared over Seaforth and Crosby Coastal Park on the 30th. Whilst often elusive it gave many chances to catch up with it, remaining until 27 May.

## MAY

May was a mixed bag, with plenty of sunshine but also unseasonably strong winds.

Spring wader passage continued with a huge count of 45662 **Dunlin** on the Ribble. Nearby, Plex Moss had a good run of **Dotterel** with 15 on the 5th and 18 on the 10th. These proved very popular as they saved a walk up Pendle Hill, where up to five were present at the same time. A **Common Crane** was by the River Douglas at Banks on the 15th.

Also on the 10th an immaculate summer-plumaged **Red-necked Grebe** graced Brockholes Wetland and a very late **Smew** was last seen at Lower Black Moss Reservoir. An unseasonal male **American Wigeon** was at Martin Mere from the 28th, remaining until 6 June.

Rarities included an adult **Laughing Gull** coming to breed at Marton Mere on the 25th, perhaps the same as the county's first twitchable bird in 2006. This was followed by a female **Woodchat Shrike** at Tower Lodge, Marshaw on the 29th, only the sixth Lancashire record of this species. A male **Ortolan Bunting** at Bradshaw Lane, Pilling on the 20th was Lancashire's tenth record.

## JUNE

June was warm but stormy, with thunderstorms bringing flash flooding. The month ended with a heat wave.

Breeding was well under way and a tape-lure census of **Water Rails** at Leighton Moss indicated a healthy 111 territories. **Wood Warbler** numbers have been causing concern so proven breeding at Roddlesworth was welcome; two pairs bred and six juveniles were ringed. More good news came from Roeburndale with another three pairs at this location.

Evidence of a successful breeding season in 2008 for our wintering waders was highlighted by high numbers of first-summer birds present on the Alt and roosting at Seaforth. Numbers of **Knot** peaked at 12000 on the 20th when 1100 **Bar-tailed Godwits** were also present. These remarkable numbers again highlighted the importance of the county in the rhythm of life of these birds. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was on the Eric Morecambe complex on the 7th.

The presence at Heysham of a second **Black Guillemot** on the 7th and 8th again raised hopes but there was no definite proof of breeding. Further excitement was generated by a male **Red-backed Shrike** singing at Pope Lane Fields near Brockholes Wetland on the 20th. Although showing signs of being territorial it soon moved on.

## JULY

June's heat wave did not last long into July. Despite talk of a "barbeque summer", the month was a washout with persistent rain.

184 pairs of **Common Tern** settled to breed at Seaforth but an influx of birds from a desertion on the Dee increased numbers to 1500. This caused havoc with the breeding birds and resulted in only 30 young fledging.

This early increase in numbers also appeared to influence the arrival of **Roseate Terns**. Multiple counts including four on the 4th, seven on the 15th and five on the 23rd. One bird even attempted to breed with a **Common Tern** but this proved unsuccessful.

The characteristic drumming of **Snipe** is a favourite with birders but it has been encountered less frequently in recent years. Some good news for this species came from Belmont Reservoir. Survey work produced six pairs on territory, with a minimum of twelve further 'drummers' recorded from in-bye fields elsewhere in the Belmont area.

Survey work regularly turns up surprises and a **Cattle Egret** also at Belmont Reservoir on the 1st was a good example of this. It was a good year for this formerly extremely rare species. One at Fleetwood Golf Course, two at Plex Moss and one at Cockerham were all recorded in the spring.

## AUGUST

The wet weather continued, with many areas recording twice the normal August rainfall.

This month again provided a further spectacle for wader lovers with 5400 **Ringed Plovers** on the Ribble, constituting the largest ever number recorded in the county. Favourable feeding conditions also resulted in a productive autumn passage for this species on Lower Foulridge Reservoir where a notable 486 bird-days were recorded, peaking at 31 on the 12th.

Across the county passage waders included 100 **Green Sandpipers**, 12 **Wood Sandpipers** and numerous **Greenshank** sightings, with a peak count of 42 at the River Douglas/Ribble confluence on the 17th. More exciting was a female **Wilson's Phalarope** at Martin Mere and Marshside from the 21st to the 28th.

## SEPTEMBER

Remnants of Hurricane Danny brought wet and windy weather at the start of the month. Despite this, it was the driest September since 1997.

The seabird season began with a gale-blown influx of **Great Skuas**, with four together off Jenny Brown's Point on the 3rd. Six were off Crosby on the 4th when a **Sooty Shearwater** lingered in the Mersey Narrows for more than an hour. The presence of two **Sabine's Gulls** provided further quality.

Great excitement followed on the 5th with a **Wilson's Petrel**, a county first, in the mouth of the Mersey for 15 minutes. A much hoped for bird it showed well for the lucky observers before heading back out to sea.

A lovely juvenile **Red-necked Phalarope** graced Martin Mere from the 17th. Even more obliging was a **Nightjar** at Leighton Moss on the 19th; this most sought after of county birds spent several hours roosting on a grit tray at Leighton Moss. It was admired by many birders but caused much consternation amongst the **Bearded Tits!**

## OCTOBER

Although it was a largely uneventful month weather-wise, temperatures were generally around 5 degrees above the seasonal average.

With the great numbers of breeding, wintering and passage waders the county also regularly attracts vagrants. The wet and windy weather in September brought a remarkable influx of **Long-billed Dowitchers** to the county.

The first was at Jameson Road Landfill Site, Fleetwood on 19 September, followed by a single at Marshside on the 24th. Then two birds were on Banks Marsh from 12 October and a further bird at Cockersand from the 13th. All were juveniles and many observers enjoying this multiple arrival from across the Atlantic.

Another movement on the 3rd was more usual but equally appreciated by county birders. **Leach's Petrels** appeared along the coast following a westerly gale: 40 were at Heysham, 36 at Preesall Sands and 33 at Rossall, with 20 at Ainsdale and one on the Mersey.

The movement of three separate **Great White Egrets** across the county delighted observers as they visited a variety of sites. Eventually they found each other, roosting together with large numbers of **Little Egrets** at Leighton Moss, perhaps a taste of things to come.

Further rarity excitement came in the form of a **Red-throated Pipit** giving its distinctive call over the Marine Drive at Marshside on the 20th. The county's fifth record of **Little Bunting** was at Seaforth on the 5th and 6th.

## NOVEMBER

Widespread downpours and strong winds during the middle of the month disrupted travel and transport.

The northward movement of **Cetti's Warblers** has been sporadic, with birds regularly wintering in Lancashire but no breeding records to date. The arrival of at least four at each of the county's most favoured locations, Leighton Moss and Marton Mere, suggested that this status might soon change.

Waders and wildfowl were now returning in huge numbers, again well illustrated by counts on the Ribble: 5682 **Black-tailed Godwits** at Marshside signified that this is one of the most important sites in the country for this species. The estuary also remains the second most important UK site for wintering **Teal** with 6414 at Marshside alone on the 22nd.

Another impressive count came from the Sefton shoreline from Formby Point to Southport on the 14th when over 25000 **Common Gulls** were present, an internationally significant gathering. A single **Shore Lark** was also present at the same time.

To round off the month a juvenile **Grey Phalarope** at Seaforth and Crosby Marine Lake from the 26th allowed birders the opportunity to see all three phalarope species in the county in 2009.

## DECEMBER

December saw the beginning of the longest cold snap since 1981, one that was to last well into 2010. Heavy rain and snow caused significant travel disruption over the Christmas period.

Unusually, both of the scarcer small grebes could be found at inland waters this month; **Slavonian Grebes** were present on Pine Lake and Prescot Reservoirs and a **Black-necked Grebe** was at Rishton Reservoir.

The cold weather began to impact and the associated wildfowl movements brought a number of rare birds to the county towards the end of the month. The first notable sighting involved an impressive flock of 13 **Taiga Bean Geese** at Marshside on the 21st. More than 54000 **Pink-footed Geese** were present, mostly in Over Wyre and on the south-west mosses.

The following day a female **Velvet Scoter**, the first for east Lancashire, was found on Barrow Lower Lodge. Despite the lake being largely covered by ice, it was unbothered by people and was regularly seen feeding on freshwater mussels.

To round off the year a male **Ring-necked Duck** was found at Thornton ICI Reservoir on the 29th. The first record for the Fylde, this bird proved very popular as it moved round a number of sites to avoid the big freeze.

# Systematic List

## MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

**Breeding resident, common winter visitor.**

**International importance: 2400. National importance: 260**

### Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	96	45	83	125	155	234	146	4	102	102	93	245
Ribble WeBS*	57	84	60	63	85	45	71	49	45	34	45	64
Southport ML	141	76	65	95	105	114	175	n/c	163	133	138	126

\*Ribble WeBS counts do not include Southport Marine Lake

In the north of the county there were again high numbers in the Glasson Dock area with peak counts of 200 on 27 March, 220 on 9 June and 266 on 26 Dec. Leighton Moss counts were higher than last year with an annual peak of 53 in March, but numbers were down at the Dockacres complex with a peak count of 50 in August. There were c.40 birds on Warton Marsh in both winter periods. Few were recorded from east Lancashire or from the Chorley recording area. Other peak counts included 19 at Brockholes Wetland on 31 Aug, 75 at Marshside in February, 26 at Hesketh Out Marsh in July, 25 at Sefton Park, Liverpool on 14 Dec and 30 at Seaforth in June.

A total of 19 pairs bred on inland waters in north Lancashire excluding the Lune Valley, producing 36 young. A survey of the Lancaster Canal from Glasson to Stainton revealed 22 pairs with 77 young, while on the River Lune from Leck Beck to Arkholme there were four pairs with 14 young. A pair which produced four young at Greenbank Park, Liverpool were the first to breed there for more than 30 years. There were few successful breeding birds in east Lancashire but two young were fledged on the canal at Burnley and four were raised at Wood End Sewage Works. A pair had eight well-grown cygnets at Charnock Richard Golf Course on 13 July, with at least two other successful pairs in the Chorley recording area. Only one pair bred successfully at Marshside.

## BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

**Common but declining winter visitor.**

**International importance: 200. National importance: 81**

### Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ribble	49	47	0	0	0	29
Over Wyre	6	30	5	0	5	9
South Fylde	36	6	0	0	0	20

This species is just about holding on in the county. The flock of up to 49 that moved between Warton, Hundred End and Longton on the River Ribble during January and February were not seen there after 14 Feb. It is probable that some of the same individuals turned up at Thurnham in Over Wyre from 15 Feb when 26 were present; numbers dwindled there until the last three left on 12 March. Very few were seen at the former stronghold of MMWWT with up to eight there on two dates in January and up to three on two dates in February; seven at Marshside on 11 Jan were presumably the same birds. The last in the county was a single adult on Longton Marsh on 2 April.

The first back were two at Out Rawcliffe on 21 Nov and up to nine were at Pilling by early December. The largest count on the Ribble in the second winter period was of 29 feeding near Hundred End during December; these birds also fed on Warton Marsh at the end of the month. Records were again very sparse at MMWWT with a peak of only five on 12 Dec. Six flew over

Downholland Moss on 13 Nov and there were two there on 7 Dec; four were at Marshside on Dec 31.

There were no definite sightings in east Lancashire, although four flying away from Fishmoor Reservoir at first light on 8 Dec were thought to be this species.

Four marked birds were seen at various sites in the second winter period, all of which were ringed at MMWWT in Dec 1990 – two as adults and two as juveniles, meaning that the adults were at least 22 years old.

## WHOOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

**Common and increasing winter visitor.**

**International importance: 210. National importance: 57**

### Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MMWWT	1850	1310	1110	200	4	70	1090	1580
Ribble	251	113	90	20	0	148	135	203
Over Wyre	120	81	50	0	3	54	130	222
South Fylde	120	97	44	1	2	0	80	85

At least 2000 were present in Lancashire on 7 Jan with 1850 at MMWWT, 40 at Marton Mere and 100 at Pilling, and possibly another 120 at Warton Marsh. This was a slight increase on 2008 and the highest numbers in the county since the record totals of 2241 in 2005.

The Over Wyre flocks fed mainly in the Cockerham and Pilling areas and there were still 13 there until 27 March. In south Fylde up to 120 fed at Warton Marsh, Ream Hills and nearby Peel in January and February, while Lytham Moss, an important site under threat of a housing development, had a flock of 40 or so in March. A large total of 250 flew northwest past St. Anne's on 16 March, and one, possibly sick or injured, was at Marton Mere and the Warton area until 12 July.

There were large numbers feeding at Plex Moss, Halsall with 393 there on 7 Feb, and 160 were at Churchtown Moss, Southport on 18 Jan. The Ribble flocks fed principally at Hesketh Bank and Hundred End, with 251 birds spread between three sites on 29 Jan and peak counts of 94 on Grange Farm, Hutton on 14 Feb; a flock of 18 stayed on Longton Marsh until 9 April. In east Lancashire 15 flew over Stocks Reservoir on 31 Jan.

On 19 March six were at Stocks Reservoir, three at Clowbridge Reservoir and 20 flew up the Dunsop Valley. Other spring records included singles at Calder Foot, Burnley from 1-9 April, Ulmes Walton, near Chorley on 11 April and Brockholes Wetland on 18-20 April. Six at Stocks Reservoir on 24 April were probably the last healthy birds in the county.

Three were seen off Blackpool North Shore on the very early date of 9 Sept, but it is possible that these birds were sick or injured and may have stayed in the region during the summer; the first definitely genuine migrants were two at Lytham on 27 Sept. MMWWT held 41 by 2 Oct but numbers built up more slowly than in recent years and there were still only 590 there by 5 Nov but late winter numbers were similar to 2008.

Counts elsewhere in the south-west included 148 at Hesketh Out Marsh on 4 Oct with 179 there on 13 Dec, and regular feeding flocks on Downholland and Halsall Mosses throughout November, peaking at 267 on 3 Nov. Surprisingly, there were only two records at Marshside in the second winter period – three on 27 Oct and twelve on 29 Dec.

Numbers peaked at 90 on Lytham Moss on 22 Nov but good numbers fed there until the year's end, sometimes flying to Marton Mere or Ream Hills. The first arrived in Over Wyre on 1

Oct, increasing steadily until the peak count of 222 at Pilling was reached on 6 Dec with 128 still there at the year's end.

Away from the main areas, there were five on the River Lune at Arkholme on 15-20 Nov, five at Alston Reservoirs on 26 Oct, four at Fishmoor Reservoir on 5 Nov and five over Jackhouse Reservoir on the same day with seven over on 8 Nov, eight at Foulridge Reservoir on 9 Nov and Clowbridge Reservoir on 29 Nov. Eight were at Belmont Reservoir on 1 Oct with six there on 3 Dec, five flew over Eccleston on 5 Nov and one was on the River Douglas at Mawdesley on 30 Dec. There were five sightings at Brockholes Wetland in the second winter period, with three flying east on 1 Oct, three there on 11 Oct, one on 12 Oct, two on 18 Oct and eight flew east on 8 Nov. Four flew north over Seaforth on 12 Oct.

## TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis rossicus*

### Uncommon winter visitor. Amber List (small winter population).

Small numbers were found with flocks of Pink-footed Geese during the early winter period. One was on Downholland Moss on 1 Jan and 6-8 Feb, and other singles were at Great Altcar on 31 Jan, Altcar Withins on 1 Feb and Barton Moss on 4 Feb. On the Fylde, the first were an adult and a first-winter at Carr House Green Common on 21 Jan but between 8-28 Feb there were numerous sightings at Pilling, Bone Hill, Sand Villa and Fluke Hall; most of these were singles but notable counts included four at Horse Park Lane on the 8th, five at Bone Hill on the 14th and The Heads from the 17-20th, and six at Staynall on the 18th. During this apparent influx there was also one on Plex Moss on 15 & 18 Feb. On 1-2 March four were at Fluke Hall Lane. There were two relatively late records from Crossens Out Marsh of singles on 30 March and 11 April.

The only late winter record was of two adults at Fleetwood Farm on 28 Dec.

A flock of six of unspecified race flew west over Hesketh Out Marsh on 20 Dec.

## TAIGA BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis fabalis*

### Rare winter visitor. Amber List (small winter population).

Two were at Downholland Moss on 1-2 Jan and perhaps the same two were then at Great Altcar on 31 Jan. One was seen again on 6 Feb on Downholland Moss and one was at Little Altcar on 22 Feb.

During the period of harsh cold weather 13 were on Marshside saltmarsh on 21 Dec.

## PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

### Abundant winter visitor to Fylde, Ribble Estuary and South-West Mosslands. Amber List (localised winter distribution).

#### International importance 2700; National importance 1900

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MMWWT	6000	3300	350	240	40	0	0	0	5000	23500	20000	10000
Pilling Marsh	16500	9000	6051	5000	2000	0	0	0	2200	30800	33750	26500

In January numbers had, as expected, dropped off considerably from the huge county record set the previous November. Nevertheless, the co-ordinated roost counts on 25 Jan recorded 45455 birds across the county; 16600 of these roosted on Pilling Sands, 4700 on the Wyre, 5700 on the Ribble, 4000 at MMWWT and 3000 at Simonswood Moss. This exceeded the roost total for January 2008 by some 16000 birds and can perhaps be explained by the dates of the counts since the 2008

count (13 Jan) was done a week before the return passage from Norfolk began. The vast majority of birds fed in Over Wyre during January, as has come to be expected.

Skeins flying over east Lancashire on their return from Norfolk were observed as early as 10 Jan when 550 flew west over Slaidburn. In total, 36 skeins consisting of approximately 6600 birds flew west over east Lancashire during the first winter period. A further 790 in nine skeins flew over the Chorley area in late January.

During late January and February a large number of the birds in the Pilling area moved up the Lune estuary where over 5000 were near Heysham Moss. The largest early winter flock was at Barton Moss where some 10-12000 fed during February.

No birds summered this year. The first to return were 30 at MMWWT on 4 Sept, closely followed by eleven at Marshside the next day. The first major influx was of 4000 at Marshside on 27 Sept and by the end of the month there were around 10000 in the MMWWT area, including 6000 feeding at Pool Hey.

Co-ordinated counts of birds leaving roost sites revealed a total of 69790 birds in the county on 18 Oct, the county's second largest count and the highest for October. Almost half of these were on the Fylde, including 30800 in Morecambe Bay and 3300 on the Wyre estuary, representing a considerable rise in the numbers using the north Fylde during autumn. 12600 left the roost at MMWWT, although roost counts from here on other days in the month indicated there was much daily variation and that as many as 23000 had roosted, and 12000 were on Taylor's Bank off Formby Point. Around this time a very large flock became established on Altcar Withins, numbering 11000 on the 18th.

November's co-ordinated count again produced a very large total of 59920 geese, but with a different distribution pattern to October. 29350 roosted on the Ribble while there were 16200 at Morecambe Bay; 9200 roosted at MMWWT but there were none on the Wyre, seemingly preferring flooded fields near Knott End.

The December count recorded an estimated 54215 birds. Of these 19100 roosted in Morecambe Bay, 4300 on the Wyre, 2250 at Stayning Floods, about 8000 on the Ribble, 6200 at MMWWT, 9150 on the Alt and 2000 at Simonswood Moss. At this time up to 11000 were feeding on Downholland Moss. Very cold weather arrived from 17 Dec and the resulting frosts led the majority of geese to abandon the mosses for the south Ribble marshes, most notably Crossens Outer Marsh.

## EUROPEAN WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons albifrons*

### **Uncommon winter visitor**

The group of two adults and two juveniles that had been at Aldcliffe during 2008 relocated to Caton on 8 Jan where they remained until 10 Feb. During the early winter period the only other records were of single first-winters, perhaps relating to the same bird roaming around various sites with Pink-footed Goose flocks. One was at Great Altcar on 31 Jan and one was at Downholland Moss from 31 Jan to 1 Feb. There were very few sightings on the Fylde: birds were noted during February at Bone Hill on the 14th, Sand Villa on the 22nd & 23rd and Thurnham on the 25th, while Pilling Marsh hosted (further) first-winters on 1 March and 4-6 April.

An adult was at Preesall Moss Side with Pinkfeet on 26 Dec and another adult at Fleetwood Farm on 28 Dec.

## GREENLAND WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons flavirostris*

### Uncommon winter visitor

An adult and two first-winters were at Downholland Moss on 1 Jan. Two first-winter birds were at Preesall on 5 Jan with one still there the following day. Perhaps the same birds as seen at Downholland Moss were then seen at Halsall Moss on 25 Jan and Great Altcar on the 31st.

Like other scarce species of geese the majority of sightings came during February with a notable arrival from the 9th onwards. Groups of three were at Pilling and Smallwood Hey on the 9th, Eagland Hill on the 10th and four at Bone Hill on the 11th. Two first-winters were at Rawcliffe Moss from 20-22 Feb while other counts of two or more included two at Sand Villa on 24th and three at Pilling on 1 March. During March there were two adults on Crossens Outer Marsh on 5th with three there on the 19th. There were late records of one at Marshside on 10 April and one at Pilling Marsh on 12 April.

The only records from the second winter period were of one at MMWWT on 1-2 Dec and five at Marshside from 22 Dec with two adults remaining to the end of the year during the period of very cold weather.

## GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

**Scarce feral breeder and uncommon winter visitor. Large feral non-breeding flocks at several sites. Amber List (localised winter distribution).**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	768	77	200	881	28	31	140	19	216	126	337	233
Ribble WeBS	74	33	36	39	72	29	23	240	297	178	302	405
Stocks Res.	42	53	21	37	66	88	73	6	33	4	8	5

The largest counts of feral birds from the Fylde consisted of over 400 at Preesall Flashes from October onwards, increasing to a peak of 513 on 24 Dec; during the summer up to ten pairs were suspected of breeding, producing a minimum of 52 young. Just four pairs bred at Marshside where numbers were low except for a post-breeding gathering peaking at 300 on 19 Aug.

The flock that regularly commutes between Leighton Moss and Carnforth Marsh and, less regularly, other sites in the Lancaster area appeared to be relatively stable. The majority of these birds are feral and it remains unknown as to how many of the wintering birds here are of wild Icelandic origin. WeBS counts indicated that close to 900 were in the Morecambe Bay South area during April whilst the peak site count was of 580 at Aldcliffe in January. Between 45-50 pairs bred at Leighton Moss, a minimum of 171 young was counted during May.

## CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

### Common breeding resident.

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	182	17	11	2	2	19	1	34	199	144	125	174
Belmont Res.	0	31	68	72	67	63	51	40	22	10	8	0
Seaforth	5	5	15	8	34	460	294	23	290	5	5	2
Southport ML	22	59	62	22	48	200	204	0	81	4	0	30
Stocks Res.	266	352	74	48	100+	411	385	192	21	272	114	130
Foulridge Res	250	250	210	42	70	/	127	550	/	225	/	460

There is a noticeable pattern within the county of birds flocking at a number of coastal reserves and Stocks Reservoir for their post-breeding moult. At Marshside, numbers were low during winter and spring with only nine pairs breeding but a major influx of moulting birds occurred during June and July numbering some 400 birds. The same pattern was seen at Seaforth where single-figure counts were recorded until a post-breeding build-up peaking at 460 on 19 June. Also in June and July, 324 were at Southport Marine Lake and 411 at Stocks Reservoir.

Breeding was widespread but few records detailing the number of pairs and fledged young were received. Nine pairs raised 20 young at Marshside and five pairs bred at Leighton Moss. In east Lancashire a considerable decline in breeding attempts was noticed, for example just ten young were raised at Stocks Reservoir. Again egg-pricking and a large cull of adults took place at a number of the upland reservoirs. There was a combined total of 45 nests at Anglezarke, Belmont and Upper Rivington Reservoirs with 214 eggs pricked and 15 young fledged.

A large flock numbering at least 100 was present throughout the year between Warton Marsh and Granny's Bay; the peak count was of 530 on 1 Oct. At Preesall birds regularly numbered over 100 during the autumn, peaking at 149 on 4 Oct. Other counts included 150 at Brockholes Wetland in March, 329 at Fairhaven Lake in June, 162 at Marton Mere in October and 310 at Freckleton in November.

## BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

### Uncommon winter visitor and scarce feral breeder.

#### Wild birds

**2008.** The flock of 21 at Cockersand on 3 Oct were regarded as wild birds, not part of the essentially sedentary feral flock at Blackpool Zoo.

**2009.** One was at Downholland Moss on 1 Jan, two near Ormskirk on 13 Jan and singles were seen occasionally at Marshside with two on 17 Feb.

Small groups were seen throughout the autumn at Marshside, the first of which were three adults with large flocks of Pinkfeet on 2 Oct. Twelve arrived on 18 Oct including three first-winters; this group remained together as a discrete group, usually amongst Pink-footed Geese for the remainder of the year.

Further inland one in a large flock of Pink-footed Geese at Croston Finney on 31 Oct was also presumably a wild bird. A first-winter was at Downholland Moss on 12 Nov and probably the same at Halsall Moss on 15 Nov. On the Fylde, four were at Pilling on 4 Nov.

#### Feral Birds

There were, as usual, several flocks of feral birds roaming the county. The one which summers at Knowsley Safari Park and winters in the MMWWT area peaked at 66 during January. The Blackpool Zoo flock was seen regularly at Marton Mere, numbers were very similar to 2008 with a maximum of 44 in December. In the Leighton Moss and Carnforth Marsh area up to 23 were present in January. Another feral flock, at Stocks Reservoir, contained up to 37 birds in August.

## DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla bernicla*

### Scarce winter visitor

It was a better year than 2008 for this race. One was with Greylags at Claughton on 9-10 Jan and an adult and a first-winter were in the Pilling and Sand Villa area from 31 Jan right through to the late date of 19 May. Sixteen distantly off Heysham on 10 April were almost certainly of this race as was a single on 2 May.

The first autumn record was of one at Cockersand on 4 Oct and again on the 15th. On the Ribble, one was at Hesketh Out Marsh on 8 Dec and a first-winter was with Pink-footed Geese on Crossens Outer Marsh from 11-27 Dec.

## PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla hrota*

### Scarce winter visitor

There were numerous records from the Fylde mosses, presumably all relating to the same first-winter bird. One at Pilling Marsh on 17 Jan and 21 Feb was also seen at Eagland Hill from 17-20 Feb. The only March record was from Stalmine on the 15th before the bird spent April in the Pilling area where it remained on and off until at least 19 May. One, again perhaps the same bird, flew north past Heysham on 25 May.

Four flew south past Rossall Point on 1 Oct; perhaps these were the same birds as the four on the saltmarsh at Marshside on 4 Oct. Two adults flew past Knott End on 5 Oct before being relocated at Heysham on the 6th. A first-winter was at Marshside from 23 Dec remaining into 2010.

## SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

**Common winter visitor at coastal sites, common breeder. Scarce in east. Amber List (localised winter distribution).**

**International importance 3000; National importance 782**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alt WeBS	45	270	58	43	61	86	81	40	138	248	200	77
Seaforth	24	50	63	89	56	15	20	7	20	48	50	55
MBS WeBS	3755	1362	1011	882	827	763	547	413	3993	2793	2013	1278
Ribble WeBS	964	1611	1817	1136	796	2879	2211	789	1574	1873	2138	733
Marshside	26	29	120	133	92	58	56	0	1	6	45	12
MMWWT	1290	/	545	287	370	/	/	20	12	10	311	1050

The counts from both the Ribble and Morecambe Bay continued the pattern of large numbers at both sites from the winter of 2008. In particular, the September post-breeding build-up at Morecambe Bay was more than double the five-year average but numbers to the end of the year were significantly lower than the comparable figures for previous years. It is therefore difficult to assess whether these counts reflect any changes in the population or just changes in the location of many of the birds.

In east Lancashire pairs were present at a number of sites during March and April, including two pairs at Alston Reservoirs. On the River Lune at Arkholme there were 13 pairs and at least three broods were observed later in the season. Twelve pairs bred at MMWWT and just two pairs bred at Marshside despite there being at least 50 birds present throughout the spring and summer.

## MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

### Uncommon feral resident and escapee.

The majority of records came from the regular haunts of Bispham Marsh and Singleton. At Bispham up to four were recorded throughout the year but there was no proof of breeding. At Singleton four males and two females were present with a sizeable peak in early October with twelve on the 5th and 21 on the 7th. Breeding was confirmed at Cliviger and Upper Foulridge Reservoir, a new breeding site, with females seen with ducklings at both sites. Elsewhere, two males were on the Lancaster Canal at Brock on 26 Feb and 17 May while a male at Ashton Garden

on 16 Feb remained to the end of the year. Two males and a female visited Preesall Flashes from 4 Dec to the end of the year.

### WIGEON *Anas penelope*

**Common winter visitor to coastal sites. Smaller numbers at some eastern sites. Amber List (localised, internationally important winter distribution).**

**International importance 15000, National importance 4060**

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	3861	1422	510	27	0	0	0	3	382	2143	993	1728
Ribble WeBS	35205	31226	9236	18	17	4	0	44	10933	30047	64633	28164
Marshside	5795	6375	5000	64	3	1	0	0	3000	2500	7227	5000
MMWWT	1010	670	595	5	0	3	0	1	21	68	450	990
Foulridge Res.	60	26	28	0	0	0	0	2	2	52	42	101
Stocks Res	121	22	17	29	0	0	0	1	9	26	210	40

Many birds left the Ribble over the New Year, the January WeBS count contrasting with 97000 in Dec 2008. Ribble numbers remain relatively stable with annual fluctuations and the site remains by far the most important in the UK for wintering Wigeon. Numbers on Morecambe Bay have declined over the past few years but the Lancashire sections remain nationally important. At Marshside a peak of nearly 6500 was recorded regularly through the early winter period before a major departure in early March after which only 500 remained by the 28th. At MMWWT, birds peaked at about 1000 in both winter periods whilst elsewhere the peak count from the Eric Morecambe Complex was 620 in January, only slightly lower than in 2008.

Very few remained into the summer although there were threes seen during May and June at Freckleton, Marton Mere, MMWWT and Leighton Moss; there was no indication of the species breeding within the county.

The first returning birds were at Leighton Moss on 13 July but the main influx did not begin until mid-September. Numbers built up rapidly at Marshside from the first on 16 Sept to 3000 on the 27th. A single flock of 20000 on the saltmarsh at Crossens Outer Marsh on 15 Nov must have been quite a sight yet the peak totals for the Ribble as a whole were down by 50% on 2008 although higher than the 1990-2008 average for that month

### AMERICAN WIGEON\* *Anas americana*

#### Vagrant.

A male was found at MMWWT on 28 May, remaining, although elusive, until 6 June (finder unknown). Almost certainly the same bird was seen on 10 June at nearby Marshside.

An American Wigeon x Eurasian Wigeon hybrid was at Cockersand on 13 Jan before being seen again at Glasson on 20 Jan and Cockersand again on 4 March.

## GADWALL *Anas strepera*

Fairly common in small flocks at western wetland sites. Rare in east of county. Scarce breeder in south-west and far north of county. Amber List (internationally important national wintering population).

International importance 600; National importance 171

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EMC	6	18	44	52	24	30	18	21	22	14	152	74
Leighton Moss	132	155	110	56	34	45	90	110	86	132	105	94
MMWWT	10	2	10	6	2	4	0	0	19	0	4	2
Marshside	1	34	28	20	28	26	4	2	8	2	10	0

The largest winter numbers were found at Leighton Moss, where co-ordinated counts took into account the frequent movement of birds between there and the Eric Morecambe Complex. A count of 165 on 11 Feb was considerably higher than the 2008 figure. In the late winter period the co-ordinated counts were similar to 2008, with 170 on 16 Nov and 120 on 12 Dec. Relatively large numbers were present during the winter at Mere Sands Wood, peaking at 85, but numbers continued to be low at MMWWT where the maximum count was just 19 in September and only one pair bred.

Breeding at Marshside was lower than in previous years with up to 13 pairs and about twelve fledged young seen. The county breeding stronghold for Gadwall remains Leighton Moss where about 40 pairs were estimated to have nested and at least ten broods were seen during July. Elsewhere, one pair bred at Seaforth.

As usual counts from the Fylde were low, the highest was 21 at Marton Mere in October; two pairs were present for much of the spring and at least one pair bred successfully raising eight young. Numbers at Brockholes Wetland were stable with a maximum of 37 in January.

## TEAL *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor to western wetlands, smaller flocks in east. Rare breeding species. Amber List (internationally important national wintering population).

International importance 5000; National importance 1920

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	1778	481	203	63	9	29	0	322	745	2792	516	548
Leighton Moss	580	490	230	120	3	15	22	110	380	360	310	390
Ribble WeBS	3953	3647	1219	39	11	6	12	736	2241	2700	8064	2734
Marshside	815	850	1000	62	2	13	8	200	1500	460	6414	700
MMWWT	1340	700	246	78	10	4	90	100	1700	2200	5200	2100
Marton Mere	600	800	32	22	5	2	2	6	30	320	500	1090
Seaforth	481	450	131	52	0	7	4	51	133	140	350	638
Stocks Res	160	48	48	19	8	8	5	48	324	250	500	315

After the record-breaking count in Morecambe Bay in December 2008 numbers returned to the much lower levels expected. It is difficult to establish whether the November WeBS total for the Ribble accurately reflects the wintering population, if so it could perhaps represent an encouraging population recovery from the very poor year in 2008. The Ribble estuary remains the second most important UK site for wintering Teal. At Marshside 6414 were counted on 22 Nov, the very low numbers that followed in December were likely caused by the onset of freezing conditions

Thirteen summered at Marshside but there was only one breeding pair, which reared two young. Up to 15 were at Leighton Moss during the breeding season but no breeding was suspected.

Elsewhere, there were 495 on the Lune at Arkholme in January, 220 at Downholland Moss in February and 370 on Silverdale Moss in December.

## GREEN-WINGED TEAL *Anas carolinensis*

### Rare winter visitor

The long-staying male wintering at Marshside from 2008 remained until 23 March. Two males were seen on the Fylde on 11 Jan, one at Burrow's Marsh and one at Freckleton Naze. A male was also seen at Seaforth on 1 & 22 Feb.

What was presumably the returning male from the first winter period was seen at Marshside on 22 Oct and on three further occasions: 22 Nov, 2 & 6 Dec. A male hybrid Eurasian Teal x Green-winged Teal was seen at Marton Mere on 30 Dec.



Green-winged Teal, Marshside, 8 January (Steve Young)

## MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

**Common and widespread winter visitor and breeding resident. Amber List (declining winter population).**

**International importance 20000; national importance 3250**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	717	292	232	125	193	844	259	324	1268	668	351	737
Leighton Moss	145	134	118	95	95	65	465	580	385	260	180	120
Ribble WeBS	953	594	386	296	242	363	338	560	797	813	948	460
MMWWT	1030	/	743	670	727	/	/	400	/	960	2000	2250
Alt WeBS	316	304	55	31	15	71	111	205	265	407	384	48
Stocks Res.	400	20	12	16	16	140	142	182	230	350	100	121

There were 1050 at Preesall Flashes on 24 Dec. Peak counts from regular post-breeding moult sites included 815 at Winmarleigh in July and 580 at Leighton Moss but no counts were received from MMWWT. Counts from other sites included 400 at Cockersand in September, 107 at Brockholes Wetland in November and 314 at Marshside in November. The largest count from Marton Mere was just 130 in January, considerably lower than in previous years.

The national decline of this species is reflected across the county – there have been declines of 50% on the Alt and 33% on both the Ribble and Morecambe Bay South since 1990.

Breeding was noted at many sites although there were no records from many of the main sites. An estimated 79 pairs bred at Leighton Moss while at least 32 pairs bred at Marshside and four or five at Seaforth. Although there were very few confirmed breeding attempts at Belmont Reservoir, it was suspected that as many as 40 pairs may have nested.

### PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

**Common winter to western wetlands. Very rare breeder. Amber List (internationally important national wintering population).**

**International importance 600; National importance 279**

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	155	320	138	45	0	2	0	11	491	130	289	1105
Ribble WeBS	783	580	59	0	0	0	0	0	150	26	2124	615
Marshside	103	200	38	24	1	2	0	8	6	15	164	65
MMWWT	348	330	250	5	3	3	3	3	30	60	312	410
Stocks Res	144	3	3	0	2	0	0	0	6	1	150	186

The largest counts came as usual from the Ribble at Lytham and Granny's Bay with peaks of 640 on 4 Jan and 1250 on 22 Nov. A maximum of 200 were counted at Marshside during February whilst at Pilling numbers peaked during September and October with up to 300 present. Elsewhere, the highest count from Leighton Moss was of at least 430 on 3 Oct. The late winter period WeBS counts from Morecambe Bay showed a significant increase on the five-year average. The usual reduction in numbers in December on the Ribble was noticed again this year but there were some 400 fewer birds than in 2008. The highest count from Stocks Reservoir was 186 in December.

Although two males were on the Eric Morecambe Complex and three were at MMWWT in June, there was no indication of breeding at any sites in the county.

### GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant and rare, occasional breeder. Amber List (rare breeder).**

Regular migrants were recorded at the traditional sites of Leighton Moss, Marshside, MMWWT and Mythop during the spring. The first of the year was a pair at Seaforth on 18 March followed the next day by another pair, this time at Stocks Reservoir.

It was an excellent year for this species at Marshside. The first was a male on 10 April followed by single males on 18 & 20-21 April with a pair on the 27-30th. Four males were present on 1 May with three still present on the 5th and two regularly through the rest of May, with a female on the 14th. There was a late record of two males on 1 June with one the following day.

Two were at Leighton Moss on 9 April with one remaining to the 13th, while two at Aldcliffe on 3-4 April was the only pair seen away from Marshside. Single males in April were at Ainsdale

Sands Lake on the 11th and Marton Mere on the 15th, and in May males were at Myerscough Quarry from the 1st to the 10th, Marton Mere on 23 May, Brockholes Wetland on the 19th, Freckleton Naze Pool on the 20th and Mythop on the 30th-31st. Two males were at Leighton Moss from 5-7 May, and one male at Seaforth on 1 June.

Autumn records were far fewer in number. The first was an eclipse male at Brockholes from 18-24 July followed by a first-winter there from 1-26 Aug and another male on 9-16 Oct. First-winters were at Mythop on 14 Aug and Marshside on 5 Sept. A long-staying female was at Mythop from 6 Sept to 1 Nov, joined briefly by a second on 22 Sept and 1 Oct. Meanwhile, at Marton Mere, singles were recorded on 15 & 26 Oct.

### SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

**Common winter visitor to west and far north. Scarce breeder. Amber List (internationally important national wintering population).**

**International importance 400; National importance 148**

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	13	21	28	39	0	0	0	9	10	6	29	20
Leighton Moss	40	27	42	28	16	14	24	94	110	135	94	26
Ribble WeBS	164	193	92	40	32	5	2	7	64	70	271	86
Marshside	200	150	81	39	25	17	5	5	58	65	243	55
MMWWT	1	6	8	40	16	7	2	50	60	16	66	46
Seaforth	11	10	15	14	1	3	2	5	11	15	16	7

During the freezing conditions at the start of the year at least 20 were off Jenny Brown's Point with a number of Teal and Pintail, and up to 55 were at Ainsdale Sands Lake during January. As usual, the highest counts came from Marshside and Leighton Moss, although numbers were somewhat lower than in 2008. Elsewhere, 28 were at Willow Grove, Preesall on 28 Dec. At Brockholes Wetland, numbers were similar to previous years with peaks of 22 in the early winter period and 23 in the second winter period.

Breeding was only confirmed at two sites, at Marshside and MMWWT, where eleven and five pairs bred respectively. There were, however, 40 males and 28 females at Leighton Moss during the breeding season and it is almost certain that many of these were breeding birds.

### POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

**Common winter visitor, scarce breeder. Amber List (declining winter population).**

**International importance 3500; National importance 595.**

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Leighton Moss	60	55	55	35	19	8	15	12	112	168	42	2
Dockacres	138	92	3	2	/	/	6	2	/	23	172	195
Brockholes	18	27	19	0	0	3	0	3	17	14	36	6
Marton Mere	40	27	11	3	2	12	20	50	35	12	32	20
Marshside	84	40	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	15	50
MMWWT	155	240	121	21	4	6	0	0	8	0	90	163
Seaforth	75	54	8	1	0	1	1	1	5	20	32	56

The main wintering population found at Leighton Moss and the Dockacres Complex was slightly down on last year. The peak count was of 195 at Dockacres on 24 Dec during the period of prolonged cold weather. The first winter peak at Prescott Reservoirs was of 41 but just 17 in the

second winter. Up to 53 were at Fairhaven Lake in the first winter period but counts fell to as little as three in March and the late winter peak of just twelve was very low.

Four pairs bred at MMWWT. Breeding was not confirmed at Leighton Moss but up to 27 males and eight females were present during late spring.

## RING-NECKED DUCK\* *Aythya collaris*

### Vagrant

A male was found at Thornton ICI Reservoir on Dec 29th (I Gardner), the first record for the Fylde. It was relocated the following day on the Preesall Flashes where it remained to the 31st and into 2010, and was also seen at Fleetwood on a couple of occasions.

## TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

**Common winter visitor, scarce breeder. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern).**

**International importance 1200; National importance 901.**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	34	18	43	50	22	13	18	3	5	24	11	108
Leighton Moss	128	108	94	65	28	14	28	22	28	54	52	33
Dockacres	97	112	66	40	15	8	5	20	87	60	80	135
Brockholes	40	45	47	35	15	0	18	30	43	59	37	28
Ribble WeBS	200	65	18	31	12	17	26	17	16	40	46	127
Marshside	80	60	80	26	9	14	15	0	6	0	0	7
MMWWT	44	33	35	29	34	25	0	0	0	0	40	32
Seaforth	131	42	27	36	20	52	106	129	114	78	94	60

An impressive 210 were at Glasson on 5 Jan, a site record, before counts reverted to the usual figure of 70-80; the late winter peak there was of 138 on 4 Dec. Leighton Moss numbers were considerably up on last year's during the early winter period while those at Ainsdale Sands Lake were fairly stable, with 175 in January and 183 in December. Marton Mere held up to 50 during January to April and 70 in November but no reports of breeding were received. Mere Sands Wood had a peak of 82 during January.

Breeding occurred at a number of sites but both the number of pairs and productivity was low at several. No confirmed breeding evidence was received from Leighton Moss but at least 21 males and 13 females were present during the spring. Eleven pairs bred at Brockholes Wetland while up to five at Sand Villa Pool during May were thought to have bred. Three pairs were confirmed breeding at MMWWT while eight nests at Fairhaven Lake produced just nine fledged young. Other breeding records were of ten pairs at the Dockacres complex, five at Glasson Marina and one on Middleton Industrial Estate.

## SCAUP *Aythya marila*

**Uncommon winter visitor to coast in small numbers, scarce inland. Red List (declining national winter population).**

**International importance 3100; national importance 76**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seaforth	39	34	8	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	13	27
Morecambe Bay	6	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	6

The county's main wintering population appeared in typical numbers at Seaforth in the early winter period, although the majority of birds left almost a month earlier than in 2008, but numbers were a little lower in the second winter period.

Elsewhere, five females and a male were off Morecambe in January and singles were at Glasson on 9 March and Brockholes Wetland from 13 March to 16 April.

Two were seen off Cockersand on 28 Sept. A pair was on Fairhaven Lake between 21 Nov and 18 Dec. A female was seen on and off off Morecambe from 17 Sept to the end of the year with three more there in October and up to six by December; a male off Jenny Brown's Point on 3 Oct may have been one of these. There were two records in the east: a female on Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 4 Dec and on the Upper Reservoir on the 19th, and a female on Alston Reservoir from 18-21 Dec.

## AYTHYA HYBRIDS *Aythya sp.*

A bird thought to be a female hybrid Pochard x Ferruginous Duck was at Marton Mere on 4 Jan. Another female hybrid of this apparent parentage, presumably the same bird, was at Brockholes Wetland on 23 Feb.

A male 'Lesser Scaup type' was at Seaforth on 27-28 Jan, and presumably the same bird returned with Tufted Ducks and Scaup from 20 June to 15 July.

A male Ring-necked Duck x Tufted Duck arrived at Seaforth with an influx of Tufted Ducks on 20 March, remaining until the 31st.

## EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

**Common winter visitor to Fylde coast and Morecambe Bay, scarce elsewhere. Scarce breeder. Amber List (declining winter population).**

**International importance 12850; national importance 730.**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	72	218	365	625	233	103	70	49	36	257	157	241
Ribble WeBS	3	21	109	183	140	86	85	35	9	1	0	0

Wintering numbers were noticeably up on last year, most notably the Morecambe Bay peak of 625 which compared very favourably with last April's 180. Numbers off Jenny Brown's Point declined from 72 in April to single figures after May.

Few breeding records were received from the Ribble where an unknown number of pairs bred. The WeBS counts for May and June show that at least 80 birds summered on the Ribble but the highest count of females was just 14, indicating that a large number of the birds there were non-breeders; twelve females were seen accompanying 49 first-winters on 3 July. Up to 30 remained on the Lune estuary during May and June, one brood was seen at Sunderland Point on

29 April. Breeding was also confirmed at Glasson where a nest with four eggs was found, and at Carnforth Marsh, although this attempt was unsuccessful.

### LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

#### **Uncommon winter maritime visitor, rare inland.**

The female or immature that was at Seaforth during December 2008 remained until 4 Jan and an immature was off Jenny Brown's Point on 10 Jan, while seawatching from Formby Point produced two on 27 Jan and one on 7 April. A female passed Rossall Point on the late date of 10 May. A first-winter male on Upper Foulridge Reservoir on 31 March was the year's only inland record.

Only one was seen in the late year, a first-winter male at Sunderland Point from 15-26 Nov.

### COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

**Abundant visitor to Liverpool Bay, especially in winter, although main flocks are hardly visible from land. Scarce migrant to inland waters. Amber List (localised winter distribution).**

**International importance 16000; National importance 500**

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Blackpool	100	2000	130	100	97	15	150	600	1071	1500	500	450
Formby	85	245	215	140	28	2	210	370	830	300	450	75

Although this species is present on a daily basis off both the Sefton and Fylde coasts, very few counts were received. Undoubtedly the numbers given here are only a small proportion of the true number further out to sea in Liverpool Bay.

Unlike previous years, there was only one inland record during spring – two males at Prescott Reservoirs on 1 March. Return passage was noted at many reservoirs from June onwards, including nine males at Stocks on 22 June and two females there on 12-13 June.

### VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

#### **Uncommon winter visitor**

On 28 March a male flew north past Blackpool and three were there on 21 April. Two off Heysham on 20 April and a male and a female off Rossall Point on the 21st & 22nd were closely followed by two females at Rossall on the 25-27th. There were very few autumn records: singles flew north past Blackpool on 5 Sept and Bispham on 24 Sept.

A very rare inland record – the first for east Lancashire – was of a first-winter found on Barrow Lower Lodge on 22 Dec. Despite the lake being largely covered by ice throughout its stay, it was unbothered by people and was regularly seen feeding on freshwater mussels. Given the unrivalled views on offer, it was unsurprisingly very popular with birdwatchers and remained into 2010.



Velvet Scoter, Barrow Lodge, 26 December (Steve Young)

## GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

### Common winter visitor

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	228	54	47	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	24	82
Glasson	200	137	40	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	16	135
Leighton Moss	12	18	22	10	0	0	0	0	0	5	8	10
Brockholes	16	25	23	5	0	0	0	0	0	6	5	4
Alston Res	31	25	16	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	10	22
Seaforth	42	47	66	53	0	0	0	0	0	18	36	64

The highest counts came as usual from the Lune Estuary at Glasson and from Seaforth, where the last bird of the spring was recorded on 25 April. The January WeBS count on Morecambe Bay was the largest there for many years. Further upstream on the Lune at Arkholme, 15 were regularly present during February and March.

It was a very poor year for this species at Fairhaven Lake with no records during the early winter period and only four seen during November and December; up to seven recorded were at Marton Mere during November.

Unusually, two were on the pool in Waddington Fell Quarry on 30 Oct. The largest counts in east Lancashire were all in the first winter period; in addition to those at Alston in the table these included peaks of twelve at Foulridge in March and eleven at Hurst Green and Stocks Reservoir in February.

**SMEW *Mergus albellus*****Uncommon winter visitor.**

There were only two records, both of redheads: at Leighton Moss on 21-23 Feb and a very late bird at Lower Black Moss Reservoir from 3-10 May.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*****Fairly common coastal winter visitor. Scarce breeder inland.****Monthly peak counts**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	13	41	20	44	19	7	4	6	20	18	37	27
Formby Point	/	2	21	49	/	/	/	/	/	1	7	126

Numbers in Morecambe Bay returned to the low levels of before 2008, with peaks of 41 during the early winter period and a flock of 34 off Heysham on 31 March.

In a poor year for Fairhaven Lake there were no records during the early winter period and a maximum of just five were present on 12 Nov with only one remaining to the end of the year.

Birds were again present during January at the traditional breeding site of Stocks Reservoir, increasing to a peak of eleven in April. At least five pairs were present on the River Hodder and Stocks Reservoir during April but successful breeding was only confirmed by one pair with six ducklings at Stocks on 28 June – these birds were presumed to relate to the four first-winters there on 11 Sept. Elsewhere in the Hodder catchment a pair was at Langden Castle on 19 April and, unusually, a female in Slaidburn on 25 May. Further afield there were singles at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 15 March and by West Bradford Bridge on 22 Dec.

**GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*****Fairly common and increasing winter visitor especially in the east. Scarce breeder.****International importance 2700; National importance 161****Monthly peak counts**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alston Res	17	39	5	23	2	2	/	5	1	15	9	36
Foulridge Res	5	45	41	20	/	8	/	/	/	/	/	15
River Lune	22	13	13	11	36	12	8	40	18	15	26	6
MBS WeBS	25	11	3	0	1	7	8	0	12	15	11	14

Numbers were the lowest for a decade at Delph Reservoir, peaking at just 26 during February but at Alston Reservoirs they were stable. As usual the River Ribble at Preston held some of the largest numbers with 34 there on 5 April. The upper course of the Lune at Arkholme also held reasonable numbers, including 22 during January, a migrating flock of 23 males on 20 May and 40 in August – this was up from 24 in August 2008.

Breeding was reported from at least six sites; as usual these were predominantly from the catchments of the Hodder and Calder. On the River Lune near Arkholme, only three nest boxes were occupied, two of which were successful.

## RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

### **Decreasing winter visitor and scarce breeder.**

Across the county a decline in sightings has been noted in recent years, reflecting the cull of this species at many of its major wintering sites in England. There was a marked reduction in sightings in the county compared to 2008 and also in suspected breeding attempts.

Small numbers were recorded throughout the year from three sites on the Fylde: up to two at Marton Mere, Myerscough Quarry and Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park. Breeding was confirmed at this latter site where at least one fledgling was seen on 15 July. Elsewhere, two were at Marshside on 24 Feb, a female was present from 10-13 April and four visited there briefly on 15 April; these were the only records in North Merseyside including from the previous county stronghold of Prescott Reservoirs/Knowsley Park. A female was at Leighton Moss on and off between 16 July and 7 Aug.

There was only one record from east Lancashire, a single at Lower Black Moss Reservoir on 27 Sept, and none in Chorley, where it is now thought to be extinct.

## RED GROUSE *Lagopus lagopus*

### **Common breeding resident. Red List (breeding decline).**

Systematic spring counts on four estates in Bowland by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust indicated a decrease in spring stocks with a mean density of 35 birds/100ha, down from 44/100ha in 2008.

However, the breeding season was considered productive with an average brood size of 4.6 young/pair and later counts in July averaged 114 birds/100ha. This resulted in some estates reporting the largest shooting bags for several years with some of the smaller moors having sufficient stock to justify driven shooting for the first time in a decade.

There was a notable increase in casual records from Bowland with 65 reports received from 44 areas of fell, notably 145 in the Brennand/Whitendale area on 7 Oct, 145 around Whitendale on 10 Dec, 141 in The Trough on 4 Dec with up to 40 reported from Croasdale, Grizedale Head, Beatrix Fell, Wolfhole Crag and the Hornby Road.

Several records were also received from the outlying Leck Fell, Caton Moor, Longridge Fell and Waddington Fells with the highest count being 16 on Bradford Fell on 7 Jan. An exceptional 68 on Pendle on Christmas Day was probably the highest count there since 1976 with twelve nearby on Spence Moor on 2 Dec. Elsewhere in east Lancashire there were 28 on Boulsworth Hill on 2 Sept and ten at Coal Clough on 10 Dec.

In the West Pennine Moors, July sample plot counts by gamekeepers on Darwen Moor resulted in 135 adults and 243 young, indicating a relatively poor breeding season that produced 300+ driven over guns on 10 Sept with 48 shot. Shoots on neighbouring moors resulted in 25 shot from 200+ driven over guns on Anglezarke Moor on 8 Oct whilst 65+ were seen during a shoot on Belmont Moor on 15 Aug. A rarely witnessed case of local migration was seen on 4 Oct when two flew east high off Anglezarke Moor, over pasture land and onto Darwen Moor.

Of significant note was the presence of a group of four on Cheetham Close/Turton Heights in the second winter period – the first birds there since the 1970s.

## RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

**Fairly common breeding resident. Population supplemented by regular releases in most areas.**

As with Pheasants, sizeable numbers are released but relatively few records are received for this report.

In the north of the county large scale releases were reported from Caton and Whittington in the Lune Valley plus the adjacent parts of Bowland, with pairs with young seen at Arkholme and Upper Hindburndale.

Over 90 records were received from the Fylde where very large numbers were turned down near Pilling with highlights being 180 at Fluke Hall, 40 at Cockerham and 16 at Preesall Flashes. Breeding was reported from Fluke Hall, Cockersand, Bank End, Bone Hill and Moss Side whilst the most bizarre location for this species in 2009 related to a bird singing from a house rooftop in Woodplumpton on 29 March.

Birds were widespread across the south-west in the early year with peaks of 51 on Downholland Moss on 8 Jan, 30 on Churchtown Moss on 4 Jan and twelve near Rufford on 23 Jan. Breeding in this area was only reported from Crossens Out Marsh, whilst in late summer 3000 were reported to have been released on Plex Moss with later reports of small numbers from Merseyside coming from Prescott Reservoirs, Crank, Little Crosby and Croxteth Park.

In the Chorley area, six were at Croston Finney on 26 Sept, 18 at Bretherton on 15 Nov whilst the first ever at Cuerden Valley was reported on 29 Aug. In the West Pennine Moors, very few remained from the large scale releases near Darwen Moor in 2007, with the only notable record being an adult with young at Roddlesworth in July. The only records of note from east Lancashire involved 17 at Marl Hill on 21 Dec and twelve near Newton on 21 Jan.

## GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

**Common but declining resident in the south and west. Red List (breeding decline).**

The species' peak hatching time is traditionally 'Ascot week' in mid-June and for the third successive year the weather was poor at this time of year which invariably results in heavy chick mortality. The number of records received was down to 274 in 2009 (342 in 2008) whilst the number of locations remained similar at 124 (122 in 2008). Given these figures, the county would still appear to hold a widespread, albeit reduced, Grey Partridge population that could hopefully recover given favourable brood-rearing summer weather in the future.

The main sites in north Lancashire were in the Cockersand and Aldcliffe areas where a maximum of eleven were seen on 20 Nov. Releases were undoubtedly responsible for 16 at Silverdale in January with three pairs later and a brood of ten seen in June. One at Middleton was the first there since 2005.

The Fylde remains a county stronghold with 151 records (169 in 2008) from 47 locations (30 in 2008), the highlights being 23 at Bradshaw Lane on New Year's Eve with other double-figure counts from Cockerham on 2 Jan, Cogie Hill and Winmarleigh Moss on 28 Feb, Warton Marsh on 6 Dec and Rawcliffe Moss on 8 Dec. Broods or nests were reported from Bone Hill, Bradshaw Lane, Pilling, Newton Marsh and Clifton Marsh.

In the Preston area there were eight at Penwortham on 14 Jan with nearby Farington Moss reporting some six pairs in the spring with coveys up to 13 frequent later. In the West Pennine Moors only one pair was located at Belmont in the spring, down from nine pairs in 2007. Restocking releases in the summer were responsible for a covey of 30 near Belmont in September and October with two coveys totalling 20 still present there at the year end.

The decline continues in east Lancashire with only 21 records (25 in 2008) from 15 sites (17 in 2008), although several good coveys were seen including twelve at Doeford Bridge on 25 Jan, 14 at Rodger Hey Brook on 15 Feb and 22 at Dinkling Green on 26 Sept. The only brood seen was at Trawden on 5 July.

The species remains widespread throughout the south-west with 15 on Downholland Moss on 4 Sept, ten on Hesketh Out Marsh on 9 Sept, and eight near Newton-le-Willows and seven at Haydock both on 22 Dec the largest coveys reported. Breeding was reported from Downholland Moss (two pairs), Lower Burgh Meadows, Hesketh Out Marsh, Marshside and MMWWT, whilst 300 were reportedly released on the Meols Hall Estate.

Grey Partridges remain common on the Liverpool fringe with over 20 records from twelve sites including a nest of 17 eggs at Cronton on 24 May and coveys of 13 near Croxteth Park on 30 Sept, 31 at Oglet on 12 Oct, 14 at Huyton on 26 Oct and nine near Speke on Christmas Eve.

### QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

**Scarce summer visitor to west, often in influxes. Occasional evidence of localised escapees. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern).**

2009 was a reasonably good year for Quail in Lancashire, particularly on the Fylde, with the county recording 20 singing birds from 15 sites.

The first were reported on 28 May and concerned two singing birds on Downholland Moss in the south-west whilst on the Fylde near Pilling, one was in song and another was found dead on the same date.

Further reports from the south-west concerned two in song on Plex Moss on 2 July with singles in song at Rainford on 7 June and near Ormskirk on 16 June.

Judging from the numbers of records received, the Over Wyre area of the Fylde would appear to be the county stronghold which, despite some possible duplication, probably totalled some eleven singing birds from nine sites between 28 May and 8 Aug. Apart from twos on both Rawcliffe Moss and Winmarleigh Moss, all were singles. The only Fylde report away from Over Wyre concerned a singing bird at Warton Marsh from 21 June until 21 July.

A bird calling in Roeburndale on 2 June was away from the usual cereal-field haunts on the mosses.

### PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

**Common resident. Population maintained at a high level in many areas by releases.**

Even fewer records than usual were received and these remain wholly unrepresentative of the huge numbers released and the widespread naturalised population.

In north Lancashire the six breeding pairs recorded on Warton Crag RSPB was the same as in 2008, whilst three sightings at Middleton were the first seen there since 2008.

Over 190 records were received from the Fylde with 38 at Singleton on 15 Sept and 28 on Cockerham Moss the largest numbers reported.

In east Lancashire the number of records received was down from 248 in 2008 to 175 in 2009. Highlights were 35 at Whitewell on 13 March, 30 at Winkley on 20 Nov and twelve at Wood End Sewage Works on 11 Dec, whilst breeding was reported from Martholme, Wood End, Stocks Reservoir, Champion Moor and Slaidburn.

In the south-west, eleven were at Mere Sands Wood in the autumn, one was at Seaforth on 29 April, small numbers were seen throughout the year in the Speke, Oglet, Halewood and Garston

areas of south Liverpool whilst the four in Croxteth Park on 7 Oct was a far cry from the huge numbers once present there in years past when it was a private estate.

Two pairs bred at Brockholes Wetland whilst in the West Pennine Moors there was an early brood at Belmont on 11 May with a large brood of twelve there on the more typical date of 5 July; 250+ nearby on 29 Nov was the only report that hinted at the scale of releases county-wide.

### RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

**Fairly common winter visitor and spring passage migrant. Scarce inland.**

**International importance: 10000. National importance: 50**

Birds were seen in all months except August but as usual only a very small proportion of those known to be offshore were seen on seawatches.

Heysham's reasonable numbers from December 2008 continued into 2009 with nine present on 5 Jan and eleven on the 25th. Elsewhere, 21 were off Formby Point on the 27th, four off Rossall Point on the 8th and birds were off Blackpool on most days with peaks of 25 on the 1st and 30 on the 26th.

Numbers increased in February with peaks of 115 off Formby Point on the 9th, 26 off Blackpool on the 4th with 30 there on the 9th & 26th, and 17 off Heysham on the 6th.

Spring passage ensued with moderate numbers at all coastal sites, including peak counts of 30 at Heysham on 28 March, 28 at Rossall on the 22nd, 20 at Blackpool on the 3rd and twelve at Formby Point on the 12th.

Double-figure counts continued off Blackpool in April including 30 on the 21st and 88 were off Formby Point on the 7th with ten there on the 30th. Few were seen in May with infrequent single-figure counts from coastal sites. Singles were off Heysham on 21 June and Blackpool on 2 July.

Autumn passage was typically much less marked than spring's; peak counts included twelve off Rossall on 21 Sept, eight off Blackpool on 16 & 30 Oct and low single figures off Formby and on the Mersey. Late year counts included 24 off Formby on the 4th, 22 off Blackpool on 1 & 13 Dec and 15 off Rossall on the 29th.

There were two inland records: singles on Upper Foulridge Reservoir on 1 March to 5 April and Rishton Reservoir on 27 Sept. Close to the coast singles were on Crosby Marine Lake on 15 Feb and at Leighton Moss on 23 Nov.

### BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica*

**Uncommon annual winter visitor, mostly on coast.**

Only two were recorded this year, both in April: a second-calendar-year bird off Heysham on the 27th and a summer-plumaged adult off Formby Point on the 30th.

### GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

**Scarce, less than annual, mostly on coast.**

A juvenile was on Prescot Reservoirs for the first six days of January, an adult was off Heysham on 5 March – with possibly the same bird seen off the same day – and another was off Formby Point on the 10th.

At the other end of the year singles were off Heysham on 3 Nov – with possibly the same bird off Jenny Brown's Point on the 18th – Cleveleys on the 25th and Blackpool on the 30th.

**FULMAR** *Fulmarus glacialis***Fairly common on coasts in late summer and early autumn during onshore winds.**

Numbers were typically low with only three double-figure counts during the year: 16 off Heysham on 8 April, eleven off Rossall Point on 3 Sept and ten in the Mersey Mouth on 5 Sept. One was off Formby Point on 25 Feb with four there on 3 May and additional singles on the 4th & 23rd and two on the 25th.

In June one flew over Brockholes Wetland on the 13th and one was off Formby Point on the 20th.

Formby Point seawatches provided most records for July and August with singles reported on two dates in July and counts of two on 17 Aug and three on the 18th. Three birds were in the Mersey Mouth on 29 Aug with seven there on 7 Sept.

Heysham recorded 65 bird-days on 21 dates spanning the period from the end of March to the beginning of October and Blackpool 20 bird-days from 13 sightings between mid-April and early Sept; there were 30 sightings from five other coastal sites from April to Oct.

**SOOTY SHEARWATER\*** *Puffinus griseus***Rare autumn visitor.**

One lingered in the mouth of the Mersey for more than an hour on 9 Sept and was seen by several observers from both sides of the river (T Vaughan, P Kinsella). This was the ninth record in Lancashire since 1991, the last being in 2007.

**MANX SHEARWATER** *Puffinus puffinus***Common offshore in late summer-autumn, especially during onshore winds.**

Spring passage started as usual in April with the first off Heysham on the 8th. Numbers rapidly rose to 43 off Blackpool on the 19th with 30 there on the 21st, and six were off Formby Point on the 30th. Counts increased at Blackpool in May peaking at 68 on the 3rd with numbers in double figures, probably including some of the same birds, from Cleveleys and Bispham. At Formby counts rose from 15 at the beginning of the month to 147 on the 27th.

Return passage began slightly earlier than last year and June counts included 20 at Formby on the 5th, and 121 off Blackpool and 17 at Heysham on 18th. Peak counts in July included 77 off Blackpool on the 2nd and 350 at Formby on the 7th. Numbers peaked at all sites in August: 380 off Blackpool on the 11th (with 15 at Cleveleys and 27 at Rossall Point the same day), 1350 flying south off Formby on the 20th with 745 there on the 17th and 377 on the 21st, and 40 in the Mersey Narrows on the 28th.

Numbers typically dropped rapidly everywhere in September with all coastal sites from Seaforth to Heysham recording up to five birds and largest counts of 17 at Rossall /Heysham on the 3rd and ten off Crosby the following day.

For the first time in two years records continued into October with singles reported from Bolton-le-Sands, Cleveleys, Crosby and Ainsdale on the 3rd and three on the Mersey on the 10th – the last of the year.

**WILSON'S PETREL\*** *Oceanites oceanicus***Vagrant**

One was in the mouth of the Mersey for 15 minutes on 5 Sept, at times close in to the Seaforth Radar Tower (AJ Conway, T Vaughan).

Given its rarity and the difficulties associated with seawatching the record was referred for adjudication to the BBRC and was accepted by them.

This is the first record for Lancashire (see separate article).

## STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*

### **Uncommon offshore in late summer and autumn. Less than annual in occurrence**

An extremely poor year with only five birds recorded from four sightings. A single was offshore at Seaforth on 18 July with a single at Heysham on the 24th and two at Jenny Brown's Point on the 31st. The only other record was another single at Heysham on 1 Aug.

## LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

### **Fairly common offshore in variable numbers during September and October gales.**

There were no early records this year and birds started to appear in small numbers in September. The first was a single in the mouth of the Mersey on 3 Sept, rising to twelve the next day. Two were recorded at Formby Point on the 22nd and one at Blackpool and Rossall Point on the 27th.

Counts at all sites reached their yearly maxima on the 3 Oct following a westerly gale. Forty were at Heysham, 36 at Preesall Sands and 33 at Rossall (possibly, in the main, the same birds) with 20 at Ainsdale and one on the Mersey. Only two were reported the following day – from Formby Point.

The last of the year were singles at Heysham on 23 & 25 Nov and at Cleveleys on the 26th.

## GANNET *Morus bassanus*

### **Common summer and autumn visitor offshore in variable numbers. Scarce in winter.**

The first of the year were six off Formby Point on 2 Feb. The next flurry of birds occurred on 22-24 March with one at Heysham, 19 off Blackpool and ten off Formby. All of these sites returned counts in April with maxima of 36 at Formby Point and 74 at Blackpool on the 7th, 76 at Heysham a day later and 41 off Blackpool on the 19th.

May witnessed a large movement with 42 at Heysham on the 5th and 40 off Blackpool towards the end of the month. All other sightings were off Formby with 376 there on the 9th, 194 on the 23rd and 160 on the 27th. The last birds of the spring passage were 82 off Formby and c.40 off Blackpool in mid-June

Return passage was noted in July with all records coming from either Formby Point or the Blackpool coast; 80 were off Formby on the 7th, rising to 110 on the 20th and 188 on the 22nd, while Blackpool counts were in low double figures. Similar counts continued at both sites into August, peaking at 50 off Blackpool on the 5th and 955 off Formby on the 17th. Other large Formby counts included 550 on the 18th and 925 on the 20th.

Typically, all counts at all sites decreased steadily through from September until the last single off Formby on 11 Nov and two off Blackpool on 13 Dec.

## CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

### **Common and increasing on coasts and estuaries. Local but increasing inland.**

#### **International importance: 1200. National importance: 230**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	94	9	87	62	46	18	51	91	146	75	119	100
Ribble WeBS	275	202	194	115	107	132	130	106	395	415	659	446

Alt WeBS*	1061	469	265	263	145	118	80	493	404	762	691	425
Seaforth	1061	469	265	263	100	30	50	225	361	762	470	425
Stocks Res	18	57	40	22	7	15	25	50	64	55	60	70

\*Including Seaforth, Crosby Coastal Park and Formby Point.

The increasing number of Cormorants throughout the county is shown by three sets of figures – rising WeBS counts, increasing lengths of stay and counts at inland sites, and expansion to new inland sites. The first of these parameters is increasing slowly (accepting annual fluctuations) while the latter two, especially the last, are increasing more rapidly.

Features of note include at a new county record at Seaforth on 15 Jan, birds present at Heysham all year (peak of 61 in September), the highest peak count for Morecambe Bay WeBS for five years (146 in September), falling numbers at the Dockacres complex due to deterrent measures being employed, and increasing numbers on the River Lune.

Counts at inland sites during January to March included 38 at MMWWT, 31 at Hurst Green, 30 at Stanley Park, Blackpool, 28 at Dean Clough & Rishton Reservoirs, 24 on Pine Lake, 21 on Upper Rivington Reservoir, 17 at Marton Mere, 16 at Whitemoor Reservoir and twelve at Delph Reservoir, with counts of ten or fewer at several other sites.

Post-breeding counts included 119 at Freckleton Marsh and 20 at Slipper Hill Reservoir in September, while October peaks included 57 at Mere Sands Wood and 42 at Foulridge Reservoirs.

Records of *sinesis* were received from three sites – a single, possibly two birds, around Fairhaven Lake/Preston Dock in both winters, a single around Conder Pool/Glasson Basin at both ends of the year, and eight on 18 April at Stocks Reservoir. The latter is the largest count of continental race birds in Lancashire and perhaps presages future colonisation by this tree-nesting sub-species or intergrades.

### SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

**Uncommon but probably increasing on coasts. Most records are of immatures.**

The only adults were reported from Blackpool in January with two on the 2nd, one on the 6 & 13th and four on the 26th before they all departed flying south.

All other records were of juveniles. Singles were at Heysham in January and on and off from August to October, being joined briefly by another in November. One in the Mersey Mouth on 29 Aug was probably the same bird seen off Formby Point on 5 Sept; two were on Crosby Marine Lake from late November until the end of the year with four there on 21 Dec. Fairhaven Lake had a long-staying individual from 11 Oct until 18 Dec, being briefly joined by a second towards the end of November before one was found dead on 1 Dec, and one was at Blackpool on 22 Nov. The only other record was one at Hesketh Out Marsh on 16 Dec.

### BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

**Rare breeding bird at Leighton Moss, uncommon winter visitor there and elsewhere. Red List (Rare breeder; Species of European Conservation Concern).**

It was an exceptional year for records away from Leighton Moss. In the first winter period there were at least three sightings at Mere Sands Wood in January and February and one in the Rimrose Valley, Crosby on 18 Jan. One was reported on the Old Tram Road, Lower Penwortham Park on 21 Jan and perhaps the same was picked up in Bamber Bridge in distress in the second week of February before being released successfully at Leighton Moss. At what is traditionally the most favoured wintering site away from Leighton there were at least two from January to 24 March at Marton Mere.

Birds were again gull-calling before probably departing Leighton Moss in spring: two on 18-20 March, one on 11 April, two on 20 April and one on the 21st. Several of these were seen to leave in a south-easterly direction. There was one booming male, which began calling on 5 March but was generally not very strident. Rings read in the field showed at least two Leighton-born females present including one marked in 2002. There was activity at a nest site for three weeks in June but it was ultimately thought to have failed. A second nest was suspected but not proven.

Water bailiffs reported one on Downholland Moss at the end of June/early July – an unusual date but not unprecedented. Gamekeepers also reported one here on 13 Sept, with perhaps the same on 20 Sept and another on 19 Dec; one was nearby on Altcar Moss on 13 Dec. Birds were at Mere Sands Wood on 3 & 20 Sept, 16 Oct and unspecified dates in November. Near Leighton birds were at Haweswater on 22 Oct and 28 Dec.

At Leighton one was, unusually, seen and heard gull-calling for 20 minutes on the early morning of 29 Oct, and the released bird continued to be seen there into 2010. At Marton Mere there were birds from at least 29 Oct, with two from at least 29 Dec and perhaps three at the year's end as this number were seen early in 2010.

## CATTLE EGRET\* *Bubulcus ibis*

### Rare visitor, vagrant until recently.

With good numbers elsewhere in the country it was no surprise that the county total moved on to eleven records of fourteen birds.

One briefly on Fleetwood Golf Course on 6 April (I Gardner) was conceivably one of those which had previously been on the Isle of Man. Later that month two were in the Woodvale and Plex Moss area 22-25 April (E McDonald *et al*), one remaining until the 27th. One at Sand Villa, Cockerham on 9-10 May (RE Danson, B Dyson) was also seen roosting at nearby Preesall on the 9th and several days later on the 19th. Finally, one was at Belmont Reservoir on 1 July before being driven off by nesting gulls (SJ Martin).

## LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

### Uncommon but increasing visitor, mainly to coastal marshes.

#### Maxima at roost sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Freckleton	/	/	/	/	/	/	22	61	62	27	/	/
Leighton M	/	/	29	26	/	3	10	45	51	63	57	52
S'port ML	26	18	/	/	/	/	/	/	44	49	/	/
Willowgrove (Preesall)	26	21	22	/	7	/	/	/	12	24	/	21

#### WeBS

MBS	14	23	18	20	4	4	3	25	72	57	32	7
Ribble	12	24	30	8	8	10	26	43	81	45	45	18

The above figures highlight the extent of the population increase in recent years, with at least 50 in the county in the first winter period, 75 in the second winter period and in excess of 150 during post-breeding dispersal in autumn. Despite this there remains no evidence of breeding, which is surprising given at least two of the three roost sites might be considered suitable and in the light of the numbers now nesting in Cheshire. It will be interesting to see if the hard winter of 2010 leads to a temporary drop in numbers since it was also felt further south where birds might have taken refuge.

There were, of course, many other coastal records during the year. At Warton Bank, a popular feeding area for birds roosting at Freckleton Naze, there were up to 23 in March, 32 in September and 26 remaining in December. Similarly at Marshside, favoured by birds roosting at Southport Marine Lake, there were up to 18 in March, 44 in September and 51 in October. Up to eight were at Skippool and adjoining stretches of the Wyre in May, which is in addition to totals in the table at that time. There were 22 at Hesketh Out Marsh on 15 Aug, 13 at Bank End, Cockerham in October and 22 at Banks in November.

Inland records remain notable, if perhaps less so than in the past. There were a number of singles at MMWWT. Reflecting the general increase, singles at Brockholes Wetland from July to September preceded four on 19 Sept and another four singles into early October. In east Lancashire perhaps just one bird was seen in the Clitheroe area on a number of occasions between 13 Feb and 12 April but there were others at Ightenhill Bridge on 20 Feb, Foulridge Reservoirs on 4-16 July and on the Ribble at Brungerley on 15 July. This spate of records was thought to involve at least three birds compared with just one in 2008. Similarly in the Chorley area there was one at Bretherton on 11 April, one near Belmont on 7 May, perhaps the same at Heath Charnock and Upper Rivington Reservoir in early September and finally one at Anglezarke Reservoir on 20 Nov.

## GREAT WHITE EGRET\* *Egretta alba*

### **Rare visitor, increased from vagrant status in line with national trend.**

**2008** A description has now been received and accepted for a bird at Warton Bank on 14 Sept 2008 (F Bird *et al*). The county total therefore moves to nine up to the end of that year.

**2009** There were considered to be five birds during the year, making it the most productive to date. Both birds in the first half of the year were in the north of the county – at Leighton Moss on 31 March and 1 April (E & E Prince) with another at the same site on 10-11 June (per LDBWS).

In the autumn one at Warton Marsh on 15 Sept was relocated in the egret roost at Freckleton Naze Pool on the 17-19th (G Clarkson *et al*) before presumably moving to Leighton Moss from 19 Sept (per LDBWS). Soon afterwards a colour-ringed juvenile was found at Bank Marsh on 24 Sept (M Jones), moving to Brockholes Wetland the next day (C Patrington), returning to the Ribble Marshes on 26-27 Sept then moving to Leighton Moss (P Welch) on the 30th where it remained for over a month. On 8 Nov this ringed bird was back on the Ribble, commuting between there and the north of the county where it was at Bolton-le-Sands in early December (J Wood) and roosting at Leighton Moss before being seen again at Crossens Out Marsh and Churchtown Moss in late December.

Up to three roosted at Leighton Moss in the autumn, and this means that there must have been a fifth bird in the north of the county from at least 27 Oct until 16 Nov. Birds roosting at Leighton Moss were also seen flying over Jenny Brown's Point and Bolton-le-Sands in November. Given that the ringed bird was on the Ribble for much of this time there could have been a sixth bird as well, but this suspicion cannot be confirmed as the juvenile frequently moved between the Ribble and Morecambe Bay. The county total therefore moves on to 14 accepted records.

## GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

### Scarce breeding resident.

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seaforth	17	6	2	4	5	14	12	17	20	19	17	31

An unusual record in the first winter period concerned 21 sheltering from the cold in the lee of a wall at Langden Bridge on 2 February.

In the spring there were two presumed migrants at Heysham, one in-off then flying inland on 24 April and one high northeast on 18 May. There were nine at Prescott Reservoirs on 17 April.

Extensive breeding information was received. Overall numbers were similar to the previous two years in north Lancashire: the largest colony at Tunstall had 49 occupied nests, with 18 near Forton, 15 at Skerton Weir, nine at Bolton-le-Sands and seven at Ashton Hall Lake and a single pair successful at Silverdale Moss.

At least 42 nests were occupied at Stanley Park, Blackpool and elsewhere on the Fylde at least 21 nests were occupied at Lea Gate, Savick Brook. To the east there were 35 occupied nests at Entwistle with 30 later showing signs of containing young. Nearby, there were eight occupied nests at Rivington, at least three of which were successful, and it was thought probable that a pair nested again in the Delph Plantation. At least ten nested at Chaigley in east Lancashire, with three pairs at Winckley Hall Wood. In Rossendale the Waterfoot colony had nine occupied nests and there was a new colony of two nests at Crawshawbooth. No information was received from the traditionally large though declining colony at Cloughton-on-Brock, nor from any of the Merseyside heronries.

Few large gatherings were reported in autumn – Little Egrets seem to be seen in larger assemblies these days. There were 20 at MMWWT on 24 July and five at Garston Docks on 22 Sept. Movement was evident in late September, with one south 1.5km offshore at Formby Point on the 23rd and two over Caton Moor on the 27th.

## GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*

### Vagrant.

A rather unsatisfactory year for reports of this species. There was an unconfirmed report of the long-staying bird in January at Marshside and six were reported over MMWWT on 24 Sept. A subsequent record of six on the Kent Estuary in Cumbria that has been accepted by the BBRC might give some weight to this report but no description has been submitted from MMWWT.

## SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

### Scarce annual visitor, mainly to coastal marshes. Has bred in the past.

It is perhaps a misnomer to talk about a 'typical' year for a species which bred successfully in the county fairly recently, but this year's records were typically at or near several of our favoured passage sites.

The first was at Leighton Moss and the Eric Morecambe complex from 13 to 18 April. There were further singles there on 17 & 21 May and again on 19-20 June and an adult and a juvenile were in the area from 4 July until 21 Aug, with the juvenile remaining until the 28th. Not too far away, singles were seen at Sunderland Point on 31 May to 1 June and on 20 June.

Further south there were singles at MMWWT on 31 May and 7 & 10 July, and the year was rounded off with one lingering on the beach off Southport Pier on 16 Aug.

## LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

**Uncommon but increasing breeding bird. Fairly common in winter.**

**International importance: 3400. National importance: 78.**

Breeding Atlas work continues to add to the list of sites that hold Little Grebes with over 500 reports indicating presence on more than 103 waters, compared to 50 sites reported last year. However, proof of breeding is largely lacking with a mere 13 sites having confirmed breeding – less than half that reported in 2008.

Most reports were of singles or lone pairs. Ten sites had between four and ten birds at some time in the year – usually during post-breeding dispersal or winter build-up, and seven ten or more: Mere Sands Wood (11 in June), Marshside (10 in July), Lee Green Reservoir (10 in September and October), Myerscough Quarry (13 in October), Thornton ICI Reservoir and Middleton Industrial Estate (11 in October), Conder Pool (12 in November) and Seaforth (12 in August). Small numbers also wintered on the Lune, Ribble and Calder.

Breeding was reported as successful on at least 13 sites throughout the county. These included Holmes Terrace Lodge, the only known breeding site in Rossendale, which held three well-grown young on the 12 July, with five smaller ones, possibly a second brood, being present on the 8 Aug. A pair at Astley Park Lake was also double-brooded with broods of one and six, all believed to have fledged. Most sites held single pairs but three were at MMWWT.

## GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

**Uncommon but increasing breeding bird. Common in winter with concentrations in Morecambe Bay. No longer of national importance on the Mersey.**

**International importance: 4800. National importance: 159.**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	18	14	2	12	1	3	0	14	33	16	4	4
Formby Point	12	62	3	12	4	7	4	2	1	1	1	22
Foulridge Res	5	2	15	19	10	6	5	6	/	14	6	/

Despite the harsh winter conditions there was little evidence of any increased movement of birds to the coast with 62 off Formby Point in February the only substantial count; 17 off Warbreck was the only coastal double-figure count not included in the table. Inland counts, however, were perhaps slightly higher than usual, possibly reflecting birds moving around inland rather than moving offshore. Early spring counts included 19 at Foulridge Reservoirs, 14 at Marton Mere, eight at Stocks Reservoir, six at Dean Clough Reservoir and five at Rishton Reservoir, Mere Sands Wood and Brockholes Wetland.

Post-breeding counts were generally higher, including 57 off Morecambe, 30 at RSPB Morecambe Bay, 22 off Formby Point, 21 off Jenny Brown's Point, 14 off Blackpool, nine at Pilling Marsh and four on Crosby Marine Lake. Inland, 14 were at Foulridge, nine at Lower Rivington Reservoir, eight on Pine Lake and five on Wayoh Reservoir.

Breeding was reported from 30 sites, being unsuccessful at eleven, the height of which was one pair at Yarrow Valley Park making six attempts. At least 34 juveniles were reported although the total figure would have been higher as four sites reported successful breeding but without a juvenile count. Additionally, no counts were received this year from either Carr Mill Dam or Eccleston Mere in St. Helens, which are two of the region's major breeding sites.

## RED-NECKED GREBE\* *Podiceps grisegena*

### Scarce winter visitor

For the second year running one was at Brockholes Wetland: an adult in full summer plumage on 10th May (A. Holmes).

## SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

### Scarce winter visitor

Singles past Formby Point on 27 Jan and Ainsdale on 16 Feb were the only records in the first winter period.

At the other end of the year one was off Rossall Point on 23 Nov and there was a long staying individual on Pine Lake from 18 Oct to 10 Dec; another was on Prescot Reservoirs on 7-10 Dec and again on 21 Dec.

## BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

### Scarce visitor, mostly in spring and autumn.

### International importance: 2800. National importance: 50.

Atypical records were of one on Carr Mill Pool, St Helens on 6 Jan and a long-staying individual on Rishton Reservoir from 13 Dec until the end of the year. One off Formby Point on 9 Feb was the only offshore record.

There were several inland records during April: singles at Preston Dock on the 7th, Eccleston Mere the next day, Stocks Reservoir on the 9th and Blea Tarn Reservoir on the 23rd, and two at Leighton Moss during the month. One was on Crosby Marine Lake on 23 April with another in full summer plumage there on 30 May. Also in May a pair was displaying on Blea Tarn.

Single juveniles were at Crosby on 2 Sept and Brockholes Wetland on 15-26 Sept .

## HONEY BUZZARD\* *Pernis apivorus*

### Rare passage migrant.

This species continues to be problematic in terms of record assessment, with some records of probable birds not proven (see report from the records committee). There were two accepted records this year, one in spring and an early autumn bird. The spring bird was an adult male that headed north over Seaforth on 28 May (P Kinsella). On 1 Aug one flew over Brockholes Quarry (WC Aspin).

Several others were reported which were probably this species, including singles at Upper Foulridge Reservoir on 27 Aug and over the River Mersey on 14 Sept.

## RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

### Scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor from successful reintroduction schemes.

There was a wide scattering of reports early in the year, typically with very few in winter and most in spring. The first were at Tarleton and Stocks Reservoir on 16 March, with perhaps the latter at Dean Clough Reservoir the next day. It was a month until any others were seen, but on 12 April presumably different birds headed west over Brockholes Wetland and south over Seaforth. The next day one was in the Langden Valley and later in the month a wing-tagged bird was over Ince Blundell on the 27th and was reported on the 28th over the M65 at an unspecified east Lancashire location.

In May one was at Belmont on the 15th, another at Yealand Storrs near Leighton Moss on the 20th and there was then a flurry of reports from Brockholes Wetland on the 25th, Allerton, Liverpool on the 26th, Cliviger on the 29th-30th, Skitham and Pilling on the 30th and Mere Sands Wood on the 31st. In early June a wing-tagged bird was over Wray on the 3rd with others at Sunnyhurst Woods on the 4th and 13th, Dolphinholme on the 7th, in the Yarrow Valley on the 8th and through Salt Ayre, Lancaster on the 11th and Burnley on the 28th.

Records then thinned out considerably with no confirmed sightings in July and only one in August – reported on the north shore of the Ribble on the 11th. September also produced just a single bird, this time south over Seaforth on the 20th. A brief flurry of reports in early November probably related to just the one bird: over Leyland on the 1st, nearby Eccleston on the 4th, Great Altcar and Ormskirk on the 6th and finally over Downholland Moss on the 11th.

Given the relative paucity of records in the second half of the year and the harsh winter that followed which could hit scavenging species quite hard, it will be interesting to see how many Red Kites are seen in Lancashire in 2010.

## WHITE-TAILED EAGLE\* *Haliaeetus albicilla*

### Vagrant

**2008** A sub-adult flew north over Seaforth on 15 April (S Morris, S Slade). The bird was photographed and is the second modern record for our recording area, following one at Stocks Reservoir on 12 March 2003. 'The Birds of Lancashire' describes two generally accepted historic records and one which was accepted by Mitchell but not by Oakes.

This record was omitted from the 2008 systematic list in error, but was included in the Review of the Year and the photographic section in the centre of the report.

## MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

**Fairly common passage migrant, scarce in east. Rare breeder. Rare in winter. Amber List (localised breeder).**

**2005** A pair nested on arable land at Hesketh Out Marsh before the managed retreat and creation of the RSPB reserve. Several nearly-fledged young were seen.

**2009** Two birds were at MMWWT in January and one on several dates in February, when another or possibly the same was on the Ribble at Warton Bank.

Return migration commenced in mid-March with singles over Nether Kellet on the 11th, Marton

Mere on the 18th and Conder Pool the following day. Several migrants were noted near the coast in April and May including three at Downholland Moss and a female north over Heysham on 14 April. Inland, one was at Champion Moor on 28 May and presumably the same was over Dale Head Church the next day. A female was at Brockholes Wetland on 13 June.

The first female arrived at Leighton Moss on 20 March and the first male on the 29th; an estimated five females and at least three males bred and 14 young were fledged from four nests. Once again birds summered on the West Lancashire mosses but without definite evidence of breeding.

Birds were widespread in the autumn, particularly on coastal marshes and lowland agricultural areas. Counts included five (an adult and four immatures) on Downholland Moss on 19 Aug, four at Marshside (all immatures) on 23 Aug, three at Hesketh Out Marsh on 9 Sept and four at Downholland Moss again in September. An interesting report at this time concerned a male at Arkholme on 19 Aug hunting large flocks of Goldfinches on the thistles along the river gravels. Others well inland included singles at Stocks Reservoir on 22 & 27 Aug, one over Haslingden

Moor on 25 Aug, one over Caton Moor on 2 Sept and a juvenile at Brockholes on 7 Sept. The only record of the year at Seaforth was on 9 Sept.

Birds lingered into October at Leighton Moss and on the Ribble with reports from Hesketh Out Marsh, Marshside and Warton Bank. There were also reports from Altcar Moss and Downholland Moss in October and the last of the year was at nearby Plex Moss on 11 Nov. It seems that no birds attempted to winter in the recording area, the prolonged cold snap presumably dissuading them.

## HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

**Fairly common visitor to coasts and hills outside breeding season. Rare breeder. Red List (breeding decline, rare breeder).**

In the first winter period there were regular singles on the saltmarshes at Marshside and Crossens until mid-April, with three males at the former site on 16 Feb. Elsewhere ringtails were at Carr House Green Common, Inskip on 17 Feb and Mere Sands Wood on 7 March. In May one was at Leighton Moss on the 7th and a male grounded by thunderstorms at Mawdesley on the 22nd could conceivably have been the one at Brockholes Wetland the next day. A male was seen over Thirteen Stone Hill, Rossendale on 12 Jan.

Most records in east Lancashire came from Bowland. There were seven nesting attempts on United Utilities land from which five young fledged, both being a significant drop on 2008 levels and the latter the worst productivity since the early 1990s. Despite this the desperate plight of this species meant the above represented 58% of all nesting attempts in England. There was one other pair in Bowland which successfully fledged five young, the most productive nest in England in 2009.

Post-breeding dispersal was underway by early August, with a ringtail at Downholland Moss on the 7th and another at Bank End, Cockerham on the 9th. Males were seen over Haslingden Moor on 14 & 24 Aug. There was also one at Leighton Moss on 9 Sept and another on 13 Oct. A ringtail was at Belmont on 10-16 Sept, with a male wintering there from mid-October and possibly also at Stronstrey Bank on 28 Nov. Another male was seen over Thirteen Stone Hill on 24th Nov.

Birds were back at Marshside from 11 Oct, a female was seen on that date but thereafter all reports were of males, including two on Boxing Day. Across the Ribble Estuary a male was at Warton Bank on 13 Nov and 13 Dec. An interesting presumed hard weather related movement occurred on 30 Dec with a ringtail moving north past Gynn Square, Blackpool, half a mile offshore.

## GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

**Rare resident feral breeder.**

No confirmed breeding information was received, though this may reflect confidentiality of nest sites rather than declining numbers of pairs. Birds were present at a minimum of two sites in the east of the recording area during the breeding season.

There was again an intriguing scatter of casual records from the south-west. One was near Rufford Park on 2 Jan, another over Lathom Hall on 18 Feb and finally a male was seen with Fieldfare prey at Downholland Moss on 23 Dec. It is not clear whether these are dispersing birds from upland sites or escaped falconers' birds.

Equally intriguing were two females drifting slowly west high over Anglezarke Moor on 20 Sept with Buzzards and Peregrines for comparison.

## SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

### **Fairly common breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant.**

An interesting record in the first winter period involved one which took a Jack Snipe at Fairhaven on 28 Jan. Spring passage was noted as Seaforth where two headed north on 2 April; on the same day four were seen at Brockholes Wetland but these may all have been local birds. There was no evidence of passage at Heysham this year. An unusual record concerned one flying south one kilometre off Formby on 9 May.

Pairs nested at four sites in south Liverpool, with four young fledged from the former Garden Festival site. Nine pairs were reported from the Lune valley in the Arkholme-Melling area. Two monitored pairs in the Pilling area laid ten eggs from which seven young fledged. The pair at Heysham fledged three young, and a pair on the island at Fairhaven Lake fledged at least two young; a pair at Jackhouse, Oswaldtwistle fledged two young. From information received it appears to have been a good season for breeding productivity.

There was no evidence of autumn migration. The only significant count at this time was four at Brockholes on 20 Sept.

## BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

### **Fairly common and increasing breeding resident. Uncommon passage migrant.**

Although the breeding information received was rather limited, peak counts at all times of the year continued to increase, suggesting that the population continued to climb. Presumably saturation point has been reached in some parts of the recording area, although even small copses can hold breeding pairs.

Early in the year there were up to twelve in the Great Altcar area in January, 13 at Prescot Reservoirs on 5 Jan, ten at Rawcliffe Moss on 1 March and twelve at Silverdale on the 19th. Just four sightings were reported in Rossendale between January and March.

Spring passage has become increasingly difficult to discern with birds present in all areas, but eight north over Marton Mere on 19 March may have reflected passage and eleven over Seaforth in March and ten in April were all assumed to be migrants. At Heysham, where the species remains scarce, one flew south-east on 15 April. Wandering birds were seen in Rossendale in May and June, and there were 14 in the Dunsop Valley on 11 April.

Of the four territorial pairs at Arkholme in April, two nests were monitored and fledged four young in total; six pairs were thought to have bred at other sites in the Lune Valley.

Post-breeding counts included twelve on Downholland Moss, seven at Coppull on 9 Aug and up to nine regularly at Belmont. Up to 20 were seen in the vicinity of Brockholes Wetland in both September and October; peak Fylde counts were nine at Barnaby's Sands on 20 Sept and at Mythop on 4 Oct. Early October brought several large aggregations including ten drifting south-west over Chipping Moss on the 5th and 14 at Prescot Reservoirs and 19 in the Arkholme area on the 7th.

Southbound autumn migrants included six south over Seaforth on 10 & 12 Sept, two over Heysham on 12 Sept and nine over Sefton Park, Liverpool on 5 Oct including seven together. There were five sightings in Rossendale in September to October.

## ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD\* *Buteo lagopus*

### **Rare winter visitor from northern Europe.**

Both of this year's records came in March, suggesting they may have been on spring passage – a view supported by the fact that neither lingered very long.

One headed north over Stocks Reservoir and then Bowland Knotts on 5 March (Mark Breaks). The other, a juvenile, was at Winmarleigh Moss on 20 March (B Dyson). Bowland is perhaps unsurprisingly the best area for this species in Lancashire, whereas the Winmarleigh bird is the first in the Fylde for over 50 years.

## OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

### **Fairly common passage migrant.**

Whilst it can be difficult to strip out duplication, and the seasons can be blurred by midsummer records, spring passage was about three times heavier than autumn's and there were in the region of 65 to 70 records in total.

The first of the year at Foulridge Reservoirs on 18 March was followed by a brisk passage: singles over Preston and Darwen on the 19th, Brockholes Wetland and Darwen on the 20th and Aldcliffe, Brockholes (different bird), Low Meadows, Rufford and Parbold on the 21st. Another ten or eleven were recorded by the end of the month, of which eight or nine were in the last four days. About 20 records in April were spread fairly evenly throughout the month but passage quickly dried up in May with the only records from Leighton Moss on the 7th, Crosby on the 10th, Brockholes on the 11th, Silverdale on the 16th, Marshside on the 20th and Leighton again on the 31st.

A notable record involved 'Morven', a satellite-tagged bird which was observed at Heysham at 0725 on 11 April and registered on its breeding site in Scotland later that evening. Another bird photographed in flight at Leighton Moss on 31 May was bearing colour rings showing it to be a Bassenthwaite bird from July 2007.

A number of non-breeders or failed breeders were seen in June: at Arkholme on the 1st, Dunsop Valley on the 2nd, Carr Mill Dam on the 8th and half a dozen dates between the 5th and 18th at Leighton Moss where the total number of birds involved is unclear.

One at Stocks Reservoir on 14 July was the first of the autumn passage, which continued sedately in August with the only reports from Foulridge Reservoirs on the 2nd, Leighton on the 17th, perhaps the same over Brockholes and Eccleston Mere on the 21st and finally Leighton Moss on the 24th. There were ten in September, the latest being at Aldcliffe on the 19th and Fluke Hall the next day.

## KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

### **Fairly common breeding resident and winter visitor. Amber list (Species of European Conservation Concern).**

It is increasingly difficult to summarise this species. There has clearly been a reduction in numbers, significantly so in some localities, but on the other hand it remains widely distributed and familiar so casual records are not submitted or are difficult to interpret. Clearly the current national and county atlas project will provide more meaningful data about the extent of any decline.

Very few winter records were received, the only one of note being of 'several' in the Eagland Hill area on 24 Jan.

The only clear-cut spring passage record received was one that came in-off at Heysham on 25 April before heading north-east. In the autumn one flew high south over Heysham on 21 Sept.

Twelve pairs bred in the Pilling-Preesall area, laying 58 eggs from which 35 young fledged; one pair fledged five young near Alston Wetland. Family parties of three juveniles were at Brockholes Wetland and Seaforth in the summer. There were six birds at Hesketh Out Marsh on 15 Sept but no evidence of the large gatherings that have occurred in the past at this time at Marshside.

### MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

**Scarce breeding bird in uplands, fairly common winter visitor particularly to coastal marshes and mosses. Amber List (recovering from historic decline).**

Up to two were at Marshside and various sites on both sides of the Ribble Estuary throughout the first winter period. As usual there were regular sightings of ones and twos at a wide range of sites across the south-west mosslands and saltmarshes and the Fylde (including a male and female apparently working together to catch prey at Eagland Hill) with the last of spring at MMWWT on 21 April and Downholland Moss on the 24th

Further inland, singles were at Alston Wetland on 1 Jan, Sunnyhurst Hey Reservoir on the 2nd, Brockholes Wetland on the 10th and two dates in March, and Wycoller on 2 Feb. Singles on Oswaldtwistle Moor on 2 April, Rossendale in April, Whitebirk on 5 May and Pendle Hill on 10 May were presumably returning birds.

Coastal migrants included singles at Sunderland Point on 2 April, Seaforth on the 8th, Heysham on the 9th (trying to head out to sea before going inland) and the 13th (heading north over the sea) and the Eric Morecambe complex on 6 May. One was perched on a TV aerial next to the main road at Liverpool Pier Head in the morning rush hour on 18 March.

It was a good breeding season on the United Utilities estate in Bowland with five nests fledging 18 young – the highest total since 2005 – although elsewhere in the east numbers were reported to be continuing to decline. One bird summered on the West Pennine Moors.

Birds were returning to the lowlands by mid-August, with one at Downholland Moss on the 17th, another at Brockholes on the 21st and birds back on the Ribble by the 31st. There were autumn migrants at Heysham on 4 Oct and 11 Nov, Seaforth on 19 Oct, offshore at Blackpool on 21 Oct and one making repeated passes at Common Scoters 800m offshore at Formby Point on 7 Nov before heading west out to sea. One flew south over Prescott Reservoirs on 27 Oct, and singles were seen in Rossendale in September and October.

Sites holding at least two birds in the second winter period included the Eric Morecambe complex, Hesketh Out Marsh and Warton Bank but Marshside retained its usual pre-eminence with four seen on 13 Oct and a minimum of five (two males and three females) on the saltmarshes in November and December.

### HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

**Rare breeding bird and uncommon passage migrant.**

Breeding took place once again in the West Pennine Moors. Four young were hatched, three females and a male, the male later being found dead. Nesting presumably also occurred at other sites as it is often difficult to prove with this species. At least one, probably more, were regularly reported at Brockholes Wetland in May and June and there were two at Mere Sands Wood at the end of June. The 26 reports in east Lancashire was considered likely to reflect a genuine increase compared with twelve in 2008.

First arrivals were singles at Seaforth on 20 April, Claughton-on-Lune on the 21st and Belmont on the 29th. Birds were recorded in the ELOC area from 11 May (at Altham).

Birds were regular in the summer in the Calder catchment and reported widely in east Lancashire and at several locations in the south-west and in north Lancashire. On the Fylde, where the species remains scarce, there were six singles between 8 July and 30 Aug. Two were near Bolton-le-Sands on 23 June and singles at Leighton Moss on 12 & 17 July.

Records at Brockholes Wetland in the early autumn were generally of singles, except the last two south on 13 Sept, but there was clearly a turnover of birds with juveniles in August and adults in September. There were fairly late records at Leighton Moss on 2 Sept, MMWWT on the 13th and Knowsley Park on the 27th. A good year at Marshside comprised seven bird-days from 6 Aug with the last on 1 Oct. Even this was surpassed by a very late bird at Allsprings, east Lancashire on 5 Oct.

## PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

### **Scarce breeder, fairly common winter visitor.**

Birds were widespread outside the breeding season, particularly on the coast. Assemblies included four at MMWWT on 3 Sept and on Winter Hill on 4 Dec. Up to three were seen together on the Ribble Marshes, especially Banks Marsh and Marshside, and at least four birds were seen during the year at Alston Reservoir, including two second-calendar-year birds and a colour-ringed adult. On the United Utilities Bowland estate, six out of eight pairs were successful, raising 15 young. Elsewhere in Bowland another pair is known to have bred successfully and possibly up to seven others, with a further successful pair at Clitheroe. It is likely that birds also bred in other parts of east Lancashire.

The Southport gasometer pair were encouraged to use a new site but unfortunately the eggs were flooded. A pair also used a gasometer in St. Helens, this site is also soon to be demolished and contingency plans are being developed. There were no fewer than three pairs in central Liverpool within 1-2 kilometres of each other, and another in the north of the city, making a total of six pairs in North Merseyside. A pair fledged three young at Scarisbrick Hall. In Rossendale one pair bred successfully and another pair is thought to have done.

## WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

### **Fairly common winter visitor. Rare breeder.**

A tape-lure census at the county stronghold of Leighton Moss indicated 111 territories of which 45 were two-bird registrations (probable pairs) and 66 single registrations (probable territories). The largest counts there in the winter periods were eight in February and twelve in December. Nearby, birds were present in the breeding season at Haweswater and at Silverdale Moss, where a minimum of nine were calling. Elsewhere in the north of the county a single was at Sunderland Point in March and up to two were present in both winter periods at Heysham and Middleton with breeding possibly occurring at the latter.

There were 57 reports from the Fylde (64 in 2008), mostly from Marton Mere with peak counts of five in February and eleven in November. Birds were also reported from another seven sites but the only other multiple counts came from Staining Nook (three on 3 Nov), Warton Marsh (two on 5 Aug) and Bispham Marsh (three on 16 Nov) with no signs of breeding reported.

In east Lancashire singles were at Lee Green Reservoir, Grove Lane Marsh, Rowley Lake and Wood End Sewage Works in at least one winter period, the only higher counts being two at

Lowerhouse Lodges in January and December, two near Clitheroe in October and up to three at Chatburn on 21 Oct.

Brockholes Wetland recorded a peak of four in the second winter period, with the Chorley area recording singles in at least one winter period from Adlington Reservoir, Yarrow Valley Park, Ulnes Walton and Eccleston. In the West Pennine Moors, a remarkable record concerned a Kestrel flushed off a freshly dead Water Rail at Belmont on 12 Nov.

Multiple counts in the south-west concerned two in the first winter period and three in the second at Seaforth, peaks of two at Marshside in March, two at Cabin Hill in November and four on the Ribble WeBS in October. Singles were recorded in either winter period at Birkdale Green Beach, Prescott Reservoirs and Mere Sands Wood, whilst MMWWT recorded an early bird in late July with up to two present in both winter periods.

## MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

**Common winter visitor and breeder.**

**International importance: 20000. National importance: 7500.**

2008 34+ were on Downholland Moss in February.

2009

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MMWWT	200	/	242	157	240	210	/	/	/	146	/	330

Numbers at MMWWT in 2009 were slightly down on 2008 while the 20+ pairs reported breeding there was surely an underestimate given the numbers present in spring.

The only notable count received from Leighton Moss was of 45 on 23 Oct, whilst elsewhere in north Lancashire ten pairs bred at Heysham and Middleton and 45 were reported on the Morecambe Bay WeBS count in December.

The total of 464 records from the Fylde was very similar to the 436 received in 2008 with the largest counts being 47 at Willow Grove on 4 Jan, 18 on Fairhaven Lake in February, 47 on the Presall Flashes on 17 Oct, 27 at Marton Mere on 26 Oct and 30 on Newton Marsh on 22 Nov. Breeding was reported from 23 sites including ten clutches on Fairhaven Lake and four pairs from Stanley Park.

Six pairs bred at Brockholes Wetland and ten pairs at Belmont Reservoir where there were 33 on 8 Aug with ten nearby at Upper Rivington Reservoir on 15 Nov.

Further east, 13 were at Stocks Reservoir on 7 Oct, eleven at Lee Green Reservoir in October and December and up to ten reported from Alston Reservoirs and Wood End Wastewater Treatment Works.

In the south-west, Marshside reported 50 on 4 Jan with 18 pairs breeding and up to 14 were at Seaforth where five pairs bred. Thirty were at Mere Sands Wood in August, 17 on Southport Marine Lake in December and 75 on the Ribble WeBS count in March. In the south Liverpool area pairs bred at Sefton Park, Princes Park, Greenbank Park, the Garden Festival site and Halewood Triangle, whilst seven were by the Netherley Brook on 7 Nov.

## COOT *Fulica atra*

**Abundant winter visitor and common breeder.**

**International importance: 17500. National importance: 1730**

**2008** A site record of 60+ were on flooded fields on Downholland Moss on 30 Jan.

**2009**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dockacres	697	310	118	62	45	55	89	179	522	548	751	782
Leighton	636	660	360	145	180	327	510	540	585	665	616	366
MMWWT	454	/	77	39	35	56	/	/	300	80	285	1025
Seaforth	168	116	68	41	35	54	153	72	83	113	62	40
Southport ML	815	245	41	19	16	110	168	/	538	794	658	637

The count of 782 at the Dockacres complex in December was reported as a site record, however a count of 842 was also received from Pine Lake in December.

Counts were much higher at Leighton Moss in the first winter period than in 2008 whilst the December count at MMWWT was exceptional. Numbers on Southport Marine Lake were substantially lower than in previous years as were totals from Marton Mere which reported peaks of 190 on 20 June and 208 on 25 July.

Away from the tabulated sites, the north of the county recorded 200 on Glasson Basin in January with 65 on the Eric Morecambe complex on 4 Aug and 18 in February at Middleton, where eight pairs bred.

The 461 records from the Fylde were similar to the 484 received in 2008 with peaks of 41 on Fairhaven Lake in January, 166 in November and 212 in December on the Preesall Flashes, and 200 in Stanley Park on Christmas Day. Breeding was reported from 24 Fylde sites including five pairs in Stanley Park and four pairs on both Fleetwood Marsh and Heron's Reach.

At Brockholes Wetland, 19 pairs bred with a peak count of 286 on 22 Jan; two pairs bred successfully at both Astley Park, Chorley and the Ornamental Reservoir, Belmont.

In east Lancashire the species was recorded breeding on at least eight sites with peaks of 23 at Foulridge Reservoirs and 20 at Brookside Lodges in March, 26 at Stocks Reservoir in September and 21 at Rishton Reservoir in December,

The WeBS peak count from the Ribble was 301 in February whilst the 23 pairs breeding at Marshside was down from 52 pairs in 2008 and the site recorded a peak count of 192 in February. Other maximum counts from the south-west included 29 at Mere Sands Wood and 56 at Sands Lake, Ainsdale in January, 171 on the February Alt WeBS count and 202 at Prescott Reservoirs in December.

The Liverpool parks of Sefton and Princes each held two breeding pairs with one in Greenbank Park whilst the winter maximum count was 39 in Sefton Park on 29 December.

## COMMON CRANE\* *Grus grus*

**Vagrant.**

**2008** Three flew over the International Garden Festival site in south Liverpool on 3 May (P Slater). This was the 19th county record since 1961, almost all of which have been 'flyovers' and all but five in spring.

**2009** One was seen by the River Douglas at Banks on 15 May (J Ormerod, D Priestley, N Hughes).

## OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

**Abundant winter visitor. Common breeding bird.**

**International importance: 10200. National importance: 3200**

### WeBS counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS	19903	16472	16348	9449	7742	4631	10640	18159	33482	23143	20855	17633
Ribble	3191	4291	6108	1699	1167	862	1142	8707	8518	6226	4520	3817
Alt	1034	628	856	60	91	284	310	796	766	645	739	1166

Morecambe Bay remains by some considerable margin the most important national site for Oystercatchers but peak winter counts, on its Lancashire sectors at least, have been declining somewhat for the past five years or so. However, autumn passage numbers have held up, perhaps hinting at early depletion of food resources. A count of 28646 on 3 Nov on the RSPB properties from Silverdale to Morecambe was missed by WeBS.

Very low numbers wintered on the Ribble at either end of the year and the estuary now barely qualifies as internationally important. Numbers on the Alt – mostly at Seaforth – were typical of the past few years.

A handful of January records included 64 at Arkholme on the 17th (40 of which were on territory) and eleven at Ribchester on the 24th. The movement away from the coast accelerated in February and included 32 at Langden Bridge on the 7th, 58 at Burholme and 30 at Spade Mill Reservoir on the 22nd, and 58 at Stocks Reservoir on the 24th. Numbers at stopover sites increased in March, including 100 at Burholme on the 10th with 68 still there on 20th, and 32 at Alston Reservoir on the 16th. Closer to the coast, Prescott Reservoirs recorded its highest count of the year with 55 on 22 March.

Birds dispersed to breed during April and May and, although there was a spread of records inland, the only double-figure counts in the east were 21 at Stocks Reservoir on 13 May and eleven there on 16th; 342 were on the Lune between Wenning Foot and Arkholme on 17 April.

Successful breeding was confirmed at five sites in the east and thought probable at another 15. In the north 28 pairs bred at Carnforth Slag Tips and 130 pairs on the Lune between Kirby Lonsdale and Skerton Weir. Eight pairs nested on Marshside and one on Crossens Inner Marsh. A pair nested in the middle of an in-bye field near Belmont – the first known nest on agricultural land on the West Pennine Moors. On 9 June at least two pairs with four juveniles were at the Jaguar factory roof in Halewood.

Substantial numbers of non-breeding birds remained on the coast during summer, as usual making it difficult to detect precisely the return of wintering/passage birds but the Morecambe Bay WeBS counts indicate that substantial numbers were back by mid-July.

## AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

**Recently established breeding bird, uncommon passage migrant.**

The first birds returned early with four at MMWWT on 21 Feb (increasing to ten by the 25th), six at Marshside on 26 Feb and singles at Glasson Marsh on the 27th and Pilling Water and the Eric Morecambe complex on the 28th, although the first at Hesketh Out Marsh came a month later on 27 April.

Migrants included three at Cockersand on 12 April, up to three at Conder Pool from the 22nd to 29th, three at Brockholes Wetland on the 24th (the first site record), four at Warton Marsh on the 26th and one at Freckleton Naze on 10 May with perhaps the same at Warton Marsh until the 30th.

Numbers at breeding sites increased rapidly during March and April and peaked in May with 72 at Marshside, a record 90 at MMWWT on the 15th and 36 on the Eric Morecambe complex. Forty pairs went on to breed at MMWWT, 37 at Marshside, 24 at Hesketh Out Marsh and 14 on the Eric Morecambe complex. Productivity was again low at Marshside with only nine young fledging; foxes are known to have predated at least eight nests in one night and Great Black-backed Gulls predated numerous other young. A mere ten young were hatched from five nests at the Eric Morecambe complex and only one fledged, the low success rate being attributed to predation by foxes, gulls and crows.

Most breeding birds had departed by the end of July, the last at Marshside being on 25 Aug, and only a handful of autumn migrants were seen: one at Seaforth on 4 June, two at Skippool Creek on 6 July and MMWWT on 20 Oct, one at Jenny Brown's Point and the Eric Morecambe complex on 2-4 Nov and one at Cockersand from 11 Nov to 2 Dec.

### LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

**Fairly common on passage. Scarce breeder.**

There was a simultaneous arrival on 16 March at Prescot Reservoirs, Brockholes Wetland and Alston Wetland, the next day at Seaforth and Brookside Lodges on the 19th. A small arrival then followed and four were at Prescot Reservoirs by the month's end when three were displaying at Seaforth.

Single migrants were at Marshside on 17-18 & 26 April and notable spring counts included four at Conder Pool in April and at Myerscough Quarry in May, while up to seven were at Brockholes.

Breeding was confirmed at Aldcliffe, Alston, Altham, Brockholes, Coldwell, Conder Pool, Foulridge and Stocks Reservoirs and Whitworth Quarry, Rossendale, and thought possible at another two sites in the east where at least 18 young were fledged. Single pairs bred successfully at Seaforth and MMWWT and seven pairs nested along the River Lune between Kirby Lonsdale and Skerton Weir.

In July a pair with two young were seen on the Conder Estuary on the 15th and the last of the breeding birds were seen mid-month at Seaforth and at the month's end at Prescot Reservoirs.

Return passage at Marshside consisted of two juveniles on 23 July and a further four singles until 5 Sept. In August other migrants were at Newton Marsh on the 6th, singles until the third week of August at MMWWT, Lower Foulridge Reservoir on the 11th, Conder Pool on the 21st and two juveniles at Stocks Reservoir on the 31st.

### RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

**Common passage migrant in spring, declining as a winter visitor. Scarce breeding bird.**

**International importance: 730. National importance: 330 (winter); 300 (passage).**

#### WeBS counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS	68	47	37	320	814	11	4	170	125	43	147	49
Ribble	29	18	15	218	880	44	22	5400	208	24	28	5
Alt	17	2	37	146	66	11	5	416	4	4	106	0

Numbers wintering on all three estuaries appear to be stabilising at the very low level that has persisted since the end of the last century; this is in line with national trends and thought to relate to warmer winters shifting the wintering grounds to the east and to continental Europe. Passage counts, however, are holding up. Indeed, the 5400 on the Ribble in August was the second largest

ever recorded in the county, the 814 in Morecambe Bay in May the highest count there in any season since 1992, while passage counts on the Alt were around this century's average.

The first returning breeding birds were at MMWWT on 13 Feb and Seaforth on the 15th. The few reports of breeding received included twelve pairs at the county's main site of Carnforth Slag Tips, four pairs on the Lune between Kirby Lonsdale and Skerton Weir, four pairs at MMWWT, two at Heysham and in both the Fleetwood and Liverpool Docks, and one at Seaforth. If these reports are at all representative it appears that Ringed Plovers may be heading towards extinction as a breeding species throughout much of the county.

Inland spring migrants included four at Upper Foulridge Reservoir on 11 April with seven there on 16 May, eight at Stocks Reservoir on 30 April with up to three there on several dates to 31 May, two at Alston Wetland on 26 May and a flurry of records on Lower Foulridge Reservoir, attracted by mud exposed by low water levels, on 9-31 May with a peak of five there on the 21st & 23rd. One at the trig point on Pendle Hill on 7 May was a very unusual sighting.

Continuing favourable feeding conditions produced an even more productive autumn passage on Lower Foulridge with 486 bird-days recorded there between 26 June and 12 Sept, including 31 on 12 Aug and 30 on 27 Aug and 1 Sept. Elsewhere, 14 were at Brockholes Wetland on 14 Aug, four at Prescott Reservoirs on 17 Aug and ten at MMWWT on 13 Sept.

## DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

**Uncommon, but regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn.**

The first were two at Hurstwood near Burnley on 19 April. None was seen on Pendle Hill until two males and a female on 1 May; five were there on the 5th & 7th, one on the 9-10th, two on the 12th and a female on the 13-14th.

On the south-west mosses 15 (at least seven females) were found on 5 May on Plex Moss but there were no further sightings until a local gamekeeper found 13 on 9 May briefly next to Orritt's Wood, Downholland Moss. These moved to Plex Moss the same day and subsequently showed well to a procession of admiring birders. The flock increased to 18 on the 10th.

## GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

**Abundant on passage and in winter near coasts. Scarce breeding bird.**

**International importance: 8000. National importance: 2500.**

### WeBS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS	292	892	1095	349	0	0	245	462	9	436	3835	230
Ribble	1307	5224	2780	41	0	0	65	467	995	257	5565	203

### Monthly peak counts

Marshside	2000	2000	2000	900	0	0	20	210	1500	210	3000	1500
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This species is rather poorly monitored by WeBS but the available data indicate that numbers remain more or less stable on both the main estuaries; counts of 2000 at both Glasson and Marshside were missed by the January WeBS counts.

Other notable first winter counts included 90 on a school playing field in Aigburth, south Liverpool on 5 Jan, 23 at Champion Moor Flood Pool on the 3rd, and nine on Pendle Hill Summit on the 21st. February brought further records inland including 30 east over Twiston Moor on the 1st, and nine at Altham and eleven at Alston Wetland on the 2nd, followed by 150 at Wycoller Rd, Trawden on 8 March, 30 at Bowland Knotts on the 5th, 100 at Champion Moor on the 17th and eleven on Pendle Hill on the 28th. Most had left the coast by mid-April and the latest large flock at

an inland stopover site was 140 at Trawden on 5 April. Up to 32 at Arkholme from 7 Feb to 5 March were the first records there for many years.

The only definite breeding records were of three pairs on both Wet Moss, Rossendale and at Ward's Stone, Bowland, but scattered birds were also seen over much of the Pendle Hill summit plateau in late April and May and what were thought to be breeding birds were heard on Boulsworth Hill in June and July.

The first returned to Marshside on 3 July and 160 were at Cockersand by the 8th with 245 at Cockerham Marsh on the 12th. Coastal numbers grew throughout August and reached 1500 at Marshside on 27 Sept and 2500 at Glasson on 10 Oct. Peak autumn counts inland were 120 at Pendle Hill on 8 Oct and 170 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on the 31st.

Second winter counts missed by WeBS included 1600 at Braides on 1 Dec, 1540 at Glasson on the 3rd and 1500 at Marshside. Inland cold weather movements included 30 at Rishton Reservoir on 28 Dec and 23 at Altham on the 29th.

### GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

**Abundant, but declining, passage and winter visitor to coast. Uncommon inland.**

**International importance: 2500. National importance: 530**

#### WeBS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS	728	62	459	41	144	0	31	1	664	351	97	68
Ribble	1020	472	1187	709	998	82	65	1720	4460	3442	260	337
Alt	645	596	253	1192	1731	1	0	165	953	640	495	233

Although still significantly lower than the unprecedented numbers of 1994/95 wintering numbers on the Ribble appear to be stabilising and remained of international significance up to 2008/09. They continue to be outstripped, however, by those on autumn passage and this year's September count there was the highest since 1995. There is some indication that the situation on the Ribble may to some extent be a result of a switch from the Alt, where both wintering and passage trends continued to decline, despite the largest May count there since 2005. Counts on Morecambe Bay were unspectacular in any season and both wintering and passage numbers continue to decline there.

Three at Brockholes Wetland on 16 April before flying off west was the only inland record.

### LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

**Abundant but decreasing winter visitor, passage migrant and breeder.**

**International importance: 20000. National importance: 6200**

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	4158	3169	806	206	165	915	1996	1142	2388	3265	14946	1716
Ribble WeBS	1785	12959	986	495	221	549	1427	4082	6243	1439	19517	1245
Marshside	1400	300	194	179	83	131	95	450	1900	3000	3000	1000
MMWWT	1400	1600	440	200	250	320	400	400	1400	1000	1300	1600
Alt WeBS	55	90	6	6	8	79	228	350	449	78	56	10

The Ribble remains one of just five national sites (just) of international importance for Lapwings with five-figure counts registered in February and November. Numbers also peaked in Morecambe Bay in November, producing a county total of at least 38000 or around 6% of the UK wintering population; their apparent departure in December was presumably weather-induced.

Notable site counts incorporated in the MBS WeBS included 3000 at Glasson in January with 6200 there in November, and on the Ribble 7900 at Hesketh Out Marsh in November.

The highest inland counts in the first winter period were 400 at Ightenhill Bridge on 10 Jan, 225 at Thirty Acres Farm, Edisford on the 25th and 220 at Upper Foulridge Reservoir on 15 Feb. Late winter totals included 537 at Foulridge on 14 Nov, 500 at Prescot Reservoirs on 4 Dec and 500 on roofs in the centre of Burnley before the onset of harsh weather.

The first report of displaying birds in east Lancashire was from Wycoller Rd., Trawden on 28 Feb; incubation was recorded on 31 March at Marshside.

Subsequent breeding was widespread across the county and included 49 pairs at Carnforth Slag Tips and saltmarsh (where the declining population is attributed to habitat management for the benefit of breeding Redshank), 39 on the Lune from Kirby Lonsdale to Skerton Weir, 81 at MMWWT, 78 at Marshside with a further 20 pairs on Crossens Inner Marsh, 31 on Hesketh Out Marsh and 33 at Leighton Moss and nearby RSPB sites. Inland numbers included 20 pairs at Belmont, the lowest since before 1995 and none in the fields at Crown Point for the first time in 65 years.

The first definite sign of autumn movement was 60 newly-arrived birds at Brockholes Wetland on 1 June, after which numbers quickly built up at several coastal sites. Counts at east Lancashire stopover sites included 220 at Upper Foulridge Reservoir on 7 July with more than 500 there on 23 Aug and 750 on 4 Oct; 375 were at Stocks Reservoir on 7 Oct and 288 on Champion Moor on the 16th.

## KNOT *Calidris canutus*

**Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant to coasts. Uncommon inland.**

**International importance: 4500. National importance: 2800.**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS*	4229	3862	10009	3753	793	1035	3	62	2824	50000+	8654	50605
Ribble	4020	4900	39170	45400	15800	35	20	38407	19834	11372	2960	2268
Alt	19602	/	1122	14000	10000	10883	14500	8802	11800	15250	4013	4000
Seaforth	12	11	100	65	0	12000	10000	10000	4000	1000	30	10

\* Includes supplementary counts at Heysham in October & December

All three of Lancashire's estuaries are of overwhelming national importance for Knot, between them accounting for around 15% of the flyway population. As the WeBS counts show, each estuary predominated at a different season: the Alt in the first winter period, the Ribble on spring and early autumn passage, and Morecambe Bay in late autumn and winter. The late year counts in Morecambe Bay, almost all of which roosted at Heysham, were the highest there since 2001. Numbers wintering on the Alt appear to be stabilising after a long-term decline, while those on the Ribble in April were the highest since 1998.

Large site counts away from Heysham included 16000 on Ainsdale-Birkdale shore on 28 Feb with 9925 there on 26 Nov, 10000 on Marshside shore on 15 March, 9600 at Lytham on 26 April, 7500 at Glasson on 20 Nov and 6000 at Rossall Point on 17 April.

Judging by the number of first-summer birds on the Alt in June and July, Knot must have had a good breeding season in 2008. Numbers at Seaforth rocketed from 21 on 11 June to 1000 on the 13th and 9500 on the 18th, peaking at 12000+ on 20 June to 10 July; 10000 remained on 2 Aug, 2500 on 20 Sept and 1000 on 1 Oct. These birds all roosted at Seaforth and most were feeding close to Crosby Coastguard station at Blundellsands and to a lesser extent on the saltwater pool at Seaforth.

Inland records were typically scarce. Three were at Brockholes Wetland on 16-17 May with one remaining until the 21st and another there on 19-20 Sept. Singles at Hornby on 17 April and Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 16 Aug were the only other records.

### SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

**Abundant passage migrant and common winter visitor.**

**International importance: 1200. National importance: 210 (winter); 300 (passage)**

#### WeBS counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS	200	53	57	64	112	0	0	0	0	0	245	288
Ribble	2900	1250	2500	4800	4700	0	125	1887	2444	1830	687	647
Alt	1051	430	60	1173	1833	8	282	1873	781	505	917	535

The numbers of Sanderling wintering in Britain have increased dramatically over the past few years, presumably as a result of climate change allowing many to shift from traditional southern European wintering grounds. The Ribble is by a large margin the most important national site, accounting for about 2.5% of the flyway population. The Alt is the third most important British wintering site but remains a little less than internationally important. Numbers have always been far lower in Morecambe Bay but have shown a slight increase over the past few winters although the Lancashire sectors remain slightly below the threshold for national importance.

Passage numbers have always been higher than winter's both nationally and in Lancashire. The Ribble and Alt are by far the two most important British sites. The 4800 on the Ribble in April was the largest spring count since 2005 and, although passage numbers on the Alt continued their slight decline of recent years, the two sites together now account for 5% of the flyway's passage population.

Large site counts included in the WeBS totals included 2200 at St. Anne's on 11 Jan with 1800 there on 26 April and 2400 on 10 May.

It was an exceptional year for inland records, particularly in east Lancashire. Singles were at MMWWT on 8 April and 23 May, Brockholes Wetland on 14 & 22 May and Arkholme on the Lune on 20 May. A remarkable spring passage in the east began with singles at Stocks Reservoir on 24 April and 7 & 24 May while one was at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 14 May with four there on the 21st and two on the 23rd; three flew over Alston Reservoirs on 25 May. Autumn was less productive with one at Lower Foulridge on 16 July followed by two on the 23rd and finally another on 30 Aug.

### LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

**Fairly common passage migrant. Scarce winter visitor.**

It was another unexceptional year with one at Ainsdale on 9 Jan the only definite winter record and no more than four together at any site in either passage period.

One at Marshside on 19-22 March may possibly have been a locally wintering bird and ones and twos were seen fairly regularly there during April and May with four on 1 April and a final spring record of one on 9-10 June. Singles at MMWWT on 5 April, Cockersand on 3 May, Knott End on the 8th, the Eric Morecambe complex on the 13th and Stocks Reservoir on the 18th were the only other spring records.

A meagre return passage began with an adult at Marshside on 1 Aug with one at MMWWT on the 11th and another at Southport on the 28th. September was a little more productive with singles at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 9th, Banks Marsh on the 15th & 19th, the Eric Morecambe

complex on the 13th with three there on the 19th to 21st, and Cocker's Dyke on the 17-20th and two juveniles on Heaton Marsh, Lancaster on the 21st. Finally, a juvenile was at Heysham on 1 Oct and one on Banks Marsh on 17 Nov, a date suggestive of wintering.

### PECTORAL SANDPIPER\* *Calidris melanotos*

#### **Rare passage migrant**

One was at the Eric Morecambe Complex on 7 June (R Banks *et al*) and a juvenile was on Crossens Out Marsh on 18 Oct (B McCarthy).

### CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

#### **Fairly common passage migrant**

Passage began with single(s) on the Eric Morecambe Complex on 15-24 April with two there on the 20th, and one in winter plumage at Marshside on 20-22 April with a summer-plumaged bird there from the 24th and two together on the 26th. May produced further singles at the Eric Morecambe Complex on the 8th & 13th, Seaforth on the 9th and Cockersand on the 18th.



Curlew Sandpiper, Seaforth, 5 September (Steve Young)

One at Seaforth on 20 June was presumably a non-breeding bird and the first definite returning birds were at Glasson on 7-19 Aug and Seaforth on the 14-16th.

The passage movement gained momentum during September as juveniles began to arrive in reasonable numbers. Numbers peaked at eleven at Knott End on the 2nd, six on the Eric Morecambe Complex on 18 Sept, four at Skippool Creek on the 3rd, three at Seaforth on the 30th and Banks Marsh and Marshside throughout the month, and two at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 9th and Cocker's Dyke on the 20th. Singles were also recorded that month at Lytham St. Anne's,

Braides and Rossall Point; a juvenile at Heysham on 24 Sept was an unusual record there. Numbers reduced during October with three at Banks Marsh on the 12-17th and two at Cockersand on the 13-19th the largest counts, and singles at Seaforth on the 1st & 2nd, the Eric Morecambe Complex on the 4-5th, Marshside on the 12th, Glasson on the 13th and finally at Cockersand on the 22nd the only other records.

## PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritime*

### Scarce winter visitor.

Purple Sandpipers continue to be very scarce and highly localised, being recorded this year on just the two main sites: Heysham/Morecambe and Fleetwood/Rossall Point.

Up to three were seen regularly on Heysham's wooden jetty until 22 April with one with a small flock of Turnstones there on 16 & 27 May; one at Morecambe on 7 & 9 Jan was perhaps one the Heysham birds. One returned on 2 Nov and was joined by another on the 30th on the wooden jetty, where they were seen sporadically until the end of the year.

One at Rossall Point on 26 Nov was the only other record.

## DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

### Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor. Scarce breeding bird.

**International importance: 9500 (*schinzii*); 13300 (*alpina*). National importance: 5600**

#### WeBS counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS	1547	1767	2539	112	6261	6	42	398	558	2923	3070	2140
Ribble	17350	8185	6774	28983	45662	420	1321	25150	6613	16836	8176	8073
Alt	2008	1293	1121	1854	7819	14	858	2935	2869	1208	1538	843

In common with the rest of Britain, numbers continue to fall on Lancashire's estuaries, in part at least because more now winter in the Netherlands as a result of milder continental winters. The scale of decline appears to be more marked on the west coast with combined Lancashire peak winter counts falling from around 65000 during the mid-1990s to about 23000 in the past three years. Passage numbers, however, have been little affected, having averaged around 55-58000 on the three estuaries during the same period.

The timing of spring passage is always difficult to detect from the monthly WeBS counts but it was well monitored, albeit with relatively small numbers, at Seaforth, where the first obvious wave of migrants was seen on 25 April and the largest numbers in the second week of May – a pattern of movement largely confirmed by sightings at Marshside. Return migration began in earnest in mid-July and included notable counts away from the shore of 800 at Marshside on 26 July and 750 at Seaforth on 2 Aug.

As ever, Dunlin were the commonest true 'shorebird' seen inland. Peak spring counts included seven at Prescott Reservoirs on 16 April, 16 at Stocks Reservoir on 7 May and 13 at Brockholes Wetland on the 8th. Low single figures were also recorded at MMWWT, the Lune Valley, and Alston Wetland. Autumn produced an unprecedented total of 136 bird-days and a peak of 15 on 12 Aug at Lower Foulridge, attracted by the exposed mud there. Other peak counts included ten at MMWWT on 18 Aug and six at Prescott Reservoirs on the 30th with smaller numbers in the east at Whitemoor, Jackhouse and Rishton Reservoirs, Alston Wetland, Brookside Lodges. One at Anglezarke Reservoir on 8 July was the only record all year in the Chorley area.

No records of confirmed or even possible breeding were received from east Lancashire but three were on Cowpe Moss in Rossendale on 14 June with much trilling and appearing to be on

separate territories; there was just one present in the area on 28th June. One or two birds were also present on the south Ribble marshes during summer and probably bred.

### RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

**Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare breeder.**

**International importance: 10000. National importance: 50.**

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MMWWT	42	58	44	2	1	3	11	28	15	30	50	32
Marshside/ Crossens	12	16	42	20	1	1	2	4	20	3	1	2
EMC	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Conder Est/ Glasson	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	1	1

It was an uneventful year with low numbers at the main sites and a peak count elsewhere of just three on the Ribble at Howick Cross on 4 Jan. The current decline in Lancashire reflects the national trend.

No lek was seen at Marshside or elsewhere on the Ribble marshes, although the presence of one or two at MMWWT during the breeding season perhaps gives rise to some optimism.

Early winter records of ones and occasionally twos away from the main sites came from Cocker's Dyke, Pilling Marsh, Lea Marsh and Freckleton Marsh, but one at Cockersand on 15 Nov and two at Braides on the 29th were the only late year records.

Spring migrants were seen at Stocks Reservoir on 21 April and Cockersand on the 10-12th. Autumn was little more productive: singles at Seaforth on 3 Aug with two there on the 6th, Downholland Moss on 19 Aug, and 12-13 Sept, Prescot Reservoirs on 19 Aug, Braides on 4 Sept with two there on the 9th, Knott End on 6 Sept, Hesketh Out Marsh on the 12th and Barnaby's Sands on the 20th. One was at Barnaby's Sands on 18 Oct and nine flew over Prescot Reservoirs on the 26th.

### JACK SNIFE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

**Fairly common, though overlooked, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Birds were reported from 43 sites throughout the county in the first part of the year and 41 in the second – lower totals than the 50 or so in each season in 2008 but whether this was a real decrease or simply due to lower levels of reporting is impossible to say.

Notable counts in the first winter period included five on Birkdale Green Beach on 28 March, four at Leighton Moss on 14 Jan, Cabin Hill on the 19th and on a pond near Eccleston on 14 Feb, and three at Fairhaven on 28 Jan, Swinden Reservoir on the 26th and Myerscough Quarry on 4 March. The last of spring were at Todderstaffe Hall on 7 May and Warton Marsh on the 10th.

Singles at Leighton Moss on 18 Sept and Warton Marsh and Buckshaw on the 24th were the first to return. Late year peaks included six on Cranberry Moss on the West Pennine Moors on 31 Oct, five at Seaforth on 17 Oct and Birkdale on 23 Dec, and four at Eccleston on the 1 Nov, Alston Wetland on the 10th, Cockersand on the 15th and Conder Pool on the 17th.



Jack Snipe, Crosby Coastal Park, 9 January (Steve Young)

### SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

#### **Common but declining wintering and breeding bird.**

This remains one of the most difficult wader species to monitor in winter. It remains extremely widespread and double-figure counts are made with some regularity. Nonetheless, reports received over the past few years give a strong impression of falling numbers.

Certainly, with the exception of 129 at Grove Lane Marsh on 24 Jan, 50+ at Cabin Hill until March and 49 at Heysham on 14 Feb, peak counts during the first winter period were on the low side everywhere. They included 29 at Billington on 7 March, 28 at Leighton Moss in January, 25 at Seaforth on 6 Jan, 20 at Stanah on 11 Jan, 19 at Lytham St. Anne's on 21 Feb, 18 at Fairhaven on 28 Jan, 16 at Marshside in March, 15 at Brockholes Wetland on 26 Jan and Alston Wetland on 17 March; 87 were on the Lune between Leck Beck and Arkholme on 17 Jan.

Six 'pairs' were on territory around Belmont Reservoir, with a minimum of twelve further 'drummers' recorded in in-bye fields elsewhere in the Belmont area. Drumming birds were reported from twelve sites in east Lancashire, compared with six in 2008 and ten or more sites in north Lancashire; birds were thought to have bred at both MMWWT and Marshside and were present at four sites in Rossendale during the breeding season.

The first autumn record on the coast was at Seaforth on 5 Aug but migrants did not begin to arrive in any numbers until early September. Peak counts in the second half of the year were higher almost everywhere than in the first; 73 at Edge Cote, Rossendale on 8 Nov was the highest number ever recorded there. They included 132 at Grove Lane Marsh on 11 Dec, 110 at Marshside in September, 80 at Belmont Reservoir on 17 Oct and Hesketh Out Marsh on 4 Nov, 66 at Marton Mere on 9 Nov, 57 at Aldcliffe on 18 Nov, 56 at Alston Wetland on 10 Nov, 55 at Leighton Moss on 17 Sept, 50 on Cranberry Moss on 31 Oct, 49 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 27 Nov, 40 on Longton Marsh on 30 Sept, 35 at Mythop on 15 Sept, 29 at Cockersand on 18 Nov, 27 on

Haslingden Moor on 20 Nov and 25 at Glasson on 9 Sept and Prescot Reservoirs on 13 Dec. The low water table meant numbers were extremely low on the Sefton Coast dunes at Cabin Hill and Birkdale with no more than 20 seen.

## LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

### **Vagrant**

A spectacular year with three records of four birds, two of them long-stayers, began with a juvenile at Jameson Road Landfill Site, Fleetwood on 19 Sept (I Gardner *et al*).

A different juvenile, with a noticeably shorter bill, was at Marshside on 24-25 Sept (SJ Riley *et al*). What was presumed to be the same bird reappeared with another on 5 Oct with one remaining until the following day, and presumably the same two were relocated at Banks Marsh intermittently between 12 and 22 October, both visiting Marshside again on the 21st (WC Aspin, J Wright *et al*). One reappeared at Banks Marsh on 27 & 31 Oct and reappeared in 2010.

Finally, a juvenile at Cockersand on 13-21 Oct relocated to Bank End, Cockerham on its last day (SG Piner). It was clearly different to the Jameson Road bird on account of its shorter bill and its simultaneous presence with the two at Banks Marsh/Marshside proved it to be a new bird.

## WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

### **Common winter visitor and fairly common breeder.**

Recording Woodcock in winter is always a hit and miss affair, largely dependent on accidental flushing or reports from organised shoots.

Patchy reports were received for the first winter period. The most comprehensive came from the Fylde where birds were recorded on 14 sites with a peak count of three at Marton Mere on 11 Feb. East Lancashire received eight reports in January, ten in February and two in March, while just three singles were reported in the Chorley area. Birds were seen at six sites in Merseyside and West Lancashire, including four regularly at Prescot Reservoirs until 22 March and three at MMWWT on 19 Feb. The only early year reports received from north Lancashire were of singles at Leighton Moss. In Rossendale two were at Strongstry on two dates in February and one at Grane during the same period.

The earliest roding was at Delph Reservoir on 13 March and the first nest found in the Roddlesworth Plantations on 27 March – with another there on 11 April. A minimum of eight roding males were located in the Belmont area including four in Longworth Clough. Other displaying birds were recorded at Anglezarke, Eaves Wood in Silverdale (possibly as many as eight), Leighton Moss (three), Warton Crag (three), Silverdale Moss, Yealand Redmayne, Newton, Whittington, Claughton (three broods found on 5 June), Thrushgill and Roeburndale, Moor Piece (possibly three 'pairs') and the Thursden Valley.

The first presumed migrants were back in the Fylde on 12 Oct and at Belmont on 14th, while two were flying during the day at Heysham on the 31st. Amongst the few other records received were 18 flushed by Pheasant-beaters at Belmont on 4 Nov, 13 shot at Bartle Hall on 26 Dec and seven at Thurnham Hall on 31 Dec. Up to three were recorded on a further 18 sites in the Fylde, seven in Merseyside and West Lancashire, five in Chorley and three in north Lancashire; ten reports were received in east Lancashire in December. Rossendale records were singles on Haslingden Moor on 8 Nov and Harden Moor on 5 Dec, and two at Clowbridge Reservoir on 12 Dec.

## BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

**Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare breeder.**

**International importance: 470. National importance: 150**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	173	1409	1593	1837	32	82	256	76	1211	1491	11	782
EM complex	480	885	1350	1800	320	335	440	220	620	1120	1370	320
Ribble WeBS	200	2613	3088	572	662	412	1241	1885	1216	327	5734	683
Marshside	500	500	330	574	550	224	250	475	1200	750	5682	2250
Seaforth	46	134	138	134	194	217	210	218	184	58	57	58

Nationally, numbers appear to be levelling off after the large increases of the past decade triggered by the huge expansion of the Icelandic breeding population; the situation in Lancashire reflects the national trend with all three estuaries recording further increases this year. The April count in Morecambe Bay was the highest ever for that estuary, as was the November count on the Ribble. Marshside is now amongst the most important sites for Blackwits in the country and the Eric Morecambe complex sometimes runs it close. Even Seaforth is now of national importance but the highest count received from the Lancashire sectors of the Mersey Estuary was a mere 17 at Garston on 29 June.

Up to three continental race birds, including two males, were present on Newton Marsh between 26 April and 3 May; display was seen but breeding was not attempted.

There were fairly regular inland sightings throughout most of the county. Brockholes Wetland recorded birds in every month between 14 March and 22 Aug with peaks of 25 on 10 April, 23 on 31 May and twelve on 21 July. MMWWT records spanned a similar period with peaks of 26 on 17 March, 105 on 22 April and 70 on 4 July, but with an exceptional count of 150 on 28 Nov.

Small passage movements were also noted in east Lancashire – from 7 April to 26 May in spring and 1 July to 23 July in autumn; a total of five were seen in spring at Stocks Reservoir and Alston Reservoir, while autumn brought up to 22 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir and one at Alston. Birds flew over Prescott Reservoirs on two dates in July, including 26 on the 15th, and one in December. The other record was of two at Belmont Reservoir on 5 Oct.

## BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

**Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor**

**International importance: 1200. National importance: 620**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	3	1303	151	265	5	0	4	2	18	131	2025	66
Ribble WeBS	1095	520	226	55	956	2	14	974	1116	2903	2814	2237
Alt WeBS	5438	6050	1171	625	952	1100	1250	4090	3013	5265	4178	3221
Seaforth	6	110	4	1	3	1100	350	145	246	49	7	3

Numbers of nominate *lapponica* wintering in Britain have been in sharp decline for almost a decade and Lancashire has shared this trend, the Ribble in particular suffering a more than 50% decline since the early 1990s. Numbers on the Alt and Morecambe Bay have also fallen significantly but there are signs that populations there may be stabilising, albeit at lower levels; the November count on Morecambe Bay and that on the Alt in October were the highest on these estuaries since 2003.

Significant counts missed by WeBS included, on Morecambe Bay 700 near Fluke Hall on 11 Jan and 1 March and 1500 at Glasson on 20 Jan with 1650 there on 17 Feb and 2000 on 22 Nov, and on the Ribble 3017 feeding at Ainsdale on 4 Oct.

First-summer birds began to arrive on the Alt during the second week of June. They associated closely with summering Knot, feeding at Crosby Coastguards and mostly roosting at Seaforth during June but further north in July. Numbers at Seaforth rapidly built to a peak of 1100+ on 20-26 June before becoming more sporadic in July. Where these regularly occurring summer flocks originate is not known but the timing of their arrival and their prolonged stay on the Lancashire coast while they undergo moult indicates that they may winter far to the south – perhaps suggesting they might be *taymyrensis* birds that winter in West Africa and breed in central Siberia.

Inland records were typically sparse: singles at Brockholes Wetland and Barnacre Reservoir on 26 April, Stocks Reservoir on 13-20 May and 1 Aug, and flying over Prescott Reservoirs on 14 & 21 Sept and 1 Oct. Six flying north over Stubblelee Moss, Rossendale on 19 September were exceptional.

## WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

**Common passage migrant, especially in spring.**

**International importance: 6100 (*islandicus*), 2300 (*phaeopus*). National importance: 50 (passage).**

### Evening Roost Counts

Site	April							May						
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	2	3	6	9
Brockholes	23	/	/	/	/	152	175	181	174	203	246	150	108	/
Barnacre	/	/	/	/	/	219	280	372	/	365	/	/	/	/
Formby *	58	59	74	85	55	82	80		45	55				23

\* includes birds feeding on Downholland & Plex Mosses, North Moss Lane and Cheshire Lines, plus roosts at Formby Tip & Cabin Hill.

The first of the year were at Brockholes Wetland, Plex Moss and Hambleton on the Wyre on 12 April but it was a week or so before there was any widespread arrival throughout the county. Numbers at the main roost sites of Brockholes and Barnacre Reservoir and in the Formby area were broadly in line with last year's with a peak combined count of more than 600 on 29 April. No counts were made of the roost on Longton Marsh this year but 145 on 25 April on Clifton Marsh, on the opposite bank of the Ribble indicated that significant numbers were in the area. Adding in the smaller numbers in the county that day and allowing for the turnover of birds, a total of 1500-2000 seems to be a fairly conservative estimate of the number passing through Lancashire in spring; the county remains by far the most important spring stopover site in the country.

Significant numbers remained until the end of the first week of May but dwindled rapidly after that. The last passage birds were at Brockholes on 18 May, on the Wyre on the 20th and Plex Moss on the 25th. Other notable spring counts included 20 at Cabin Hill on 20 April, 44 in the Skippool Creek area on the 23rd, 40 offshore at Heysham on the 24th, 56 on Newton Marsh and 32 at Heskin, Chorley on the 26th. Numerous smaller counts were received from a large number of coastal and inland sites.

Ones and two on the north Fylde coast during June and Brockholes on the 20th may have been non-breeding birds and autumn passage probably began with two at Lower Foulridge

Reservoir on 5 July. The return passage was typically anticlimactic with ten off Formby Point on 24 July, 18 at Fleetwood on 1 Aug and twelve at Jenny Brown's Point on the 3rd the only double-figure counts. The last was one at Fluke Hall on 21 Sept.

## CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

**Abundant winter and breeding bird.**

**International importance: 8500. National importance: 1500.**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	2868	2967	3617	2973	300	1434	1832	3147	5883	2578	2917	2129
Ribble WeBS	730	999	684	121	36	282	744	1699	1931	1072	693	312
Alt WeBS	364	32	555	1	1	179	242	351	810	571	598	148
Brockholes	0	50	109	44	5	55	0	1	25	2	/	/

After increasing nationally from the mid-1970s until the beginning of the present century, Curlew numbers have decreased year on year, a decline reflected on all three of the county's estuaries. The Lancashire sectors of Morecambe Bay no longer qualify as internationally important and the Ribble has fallen below the threshold of national importance.

Notable site counts included in WeBS totals included 1350 on Pilling Marsh on 11 Jan with 1123 there on 12 April and 1150 on 23 Aug, and 1159 on Cockerham Marsh on 21 Sept. The largest count on the Liverpool stretches of the Mersey Estuary was 108 on 25 Dec.

Movement back towards the breeding grounds began as a trickle in mid-February but became a flood by the end of the month as shown by the following sample counts. Seven at Withnell Fold on 14 Feb rose to 50 on the 22nd and 80 on 8 March, 119 were at Belmont Reservoir on 2 March rising to 179 on the 9th, 80 were at Altham on 21 Feb increasing to 200+ on 1 March while 120 on the Lune between Leck Beck and Arkholme on 19 Feb grew to an impressive 1050 on 5 March. One hundred and twenty were on Chipping Moss on 6 March.

Few systematic breeding reports were received. They included six pairs on Winter Hill, 15 pairs on Turton and Darwen Moors and 15 pairs on the Lune between Skerton Weir and Kirby Lonsdale. Possible or probable breeding was reported from 20 sites in east Lancashire, probably a significant underestimate. Breeding probably occurred at eight or nine sites in Rossendale.

Returning birds were first noted at Belmont on 14 June, although one pair still had young there on 9 Aug. Around 220 adults and juveniles on fields around Weets Hill in east Lancashire on 30 June were thought to represent a pre-return passage gathering and most birds had left from the east by the end of August with the last stragglers on 16 Oct.

## COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

**Common passage migrant, fairly common breeding bird. Scarce in winter.**

Three singles were seen in the first winter period: on the Conder Estuary until 19 March, on the River Alt near Maghull during January and on the River Douglas/Ribble confluence at Preston on 6 March. Singles at Lower Foulridge Reservoir from at least 3 Nov to 6 Dec, on the Lune at Skerton Weir on 7 Nov, on the Conder Estuary on 28 Dec and the Calder at Altham on the 30th provided near symmetry in the late year.

The first migrants were at Skerton Weir on the Lune on 3 April and at Mitton Bridge on the Ribble and Prescott Reservoirs on the 7th. There was no marked influx until 14 April when birds began to arrive at breeding sites throughout the north and east and at coastal migration sites. Small numbers continued to move through until mid-May with largest counts of eight at Stocks

Reservoir on 25 April, four at Lancaster on the 18th and Lower Foulridge Reservoir on the 24th, and three at Marton Mere on the 26th.

Breeding was widespread and there was little evidence of any change in numbers. Site counts included four pairs at Belmont Reservoir and at Delph Reservoir, two on the Calder between Altham and Martholme, one at both Springs and Grimsargh Reservoirs and 38 pairs on the Lune between Skerton Weir and Kirby Lonsdale. One or more pairs were present at Clowbridge Reservoir but were not thought to have been successful due to disturbance from walkers and dogs. Pairs were present at around six other sites in Rossendale.

Birds began leaving the breeding grounds and arriving back on the coast in late June and, as usual, passage was far heavier than in spring. Peak counts included 25 in the Shard Bridge area on 19 July, 15 on the Conder Estuary on the 7th, 13 on the Foulridge reservoirs on the 19th, eleven at Prescott Reservoirs on the 16th. Singles on the drained boating lake in Sefton Park on three dates between July and September were unusual records for central Liverpool. The last were on the Conder Pool on 23 Sept, at MMWWT on the 27th and the Eric Morecambe complex on 5 Oct.

## GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

### **Fairly common on passage, especially autumn. Scarce winter visitor.**

There were records at 16 sites involving 21 individuals during the first winter period and six records involving 13 birds in the second. Most records came from 'traditional' wintering sites: at Ballam, Rawcliffe Hall, Great Eccleston, Ream Hills, Carr House Green Common, Little Singleton, Salwick and Demming in the Fylde; Arkholme and Aldcliffe Marsh in the north; Jumbles in the east; Syd Brook, Eccleston in Chorley and Mere Sands Wood, Rufford, Churchtown and Banks Marsh in West Lancashire. All were singles with the exception of three on the Lune at Arkholme on 6 Jan to 29 Feb with six there on 12 Nov and two on 1 Dec, three at Great Eccleston on 13 Dec, and two at Ream Hills on 18 Jan and Aldcliffe Marsh from 12 Jan to 5 March.

One or two wintering birds remained into April and, as usual, it was difficult to pinpoint the start of spring passage but a few turned up on non-wintering sites in the first week of the month and a small movement continued until the end of April. Surprisingly, none was seen in May.

The onset of the autumn return was probably marked by singles at MMWWT on 5 - 8 June and Aldcliffe on the 17th. Probably more than 100 were recorded in autumn until the passage began to dry up in late August/early September and ended during October. Most records were of singles with occasional twos and larger counts included six at Aldcliffe in August, five at Mythop on 29 July and Banks Marsh on 22 Aug, four at MMWWT in late June and early July and Leighton Moss on 25 - 29 Aug, three at Marshside on 6 Aug, Brockholes Wetland on the 28th and flying over Eccleston, Chorley on 16 Oct.

Away from the coast and the coastal plain birds were much scarcer. Seven or so were recorded in autumn in east Lancashire at Jackhouse and Lower Foulridge Reservoirs and Ightenhill Bridge, and singles on the West Pennine Moors at Delph Reservoir on 29 June and Belmont Reservoir on 2 Aug.

## SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

**Fairly common passage migrant.**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EM Complex	1	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	8	6	3	3
Conder Est & Glasson	2	2	4	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

Other early wintering records were singles in the Morecambe/Heysham area from January, increasing to two in early March with the last on 27 April, at Marshside and Crossens on five dates in January and February, Arkholme from 29 Jan to 19 March, Aldcliffe Marsh from 14 Feb to 19 March and Barnaby's Sands on 22 Feb. Singles at Morecambe on 19 Nov and Jenny Brown's Point on 4 Dec were the only definite additional records at the other end of the year, although two on Banks Marsh and singles at Cockersand and Barnaby's Sands in mid to late October may have wintered.

All spring migrants seen away from the main sites were singles: at Newton Marsh on 8 & 18 April and 28 April to 4 May, MMWWT on 11 April, Marshside on 20-24 April and 5 May, Morecambe on 13 May and Arkholme on the following day.

Autumn migrants were even scarcer. One was at MMWWT on 5-8 June with four there on the 28th then three to four regular from 10 July to 7 Aug with the last on 20 Nov. One was at Marshside on 7 June, and one at Stocks Reservoir on 15 June was a good record for east Lancashire; one was on Hesketh Out Marsh on 1-16 Sept.

## GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

**Fairly common on passage, especially in autumn. Scarce in winter.**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EM Complex	2	2	2	1	3	5	17	32	23	7	4	3
Conder Est & Glasson	2	3	3	2		2	8	15	8	2	3	2
Hesketh OM	5	0	0	0	0	0	11	18	14	1	0	0

The only other wintering birds were one at Arkholme on 17-23 Jan with two there on 19 Feb, one on Warton Marsh on 3 Jan and one at Bank End, Cockerham on 31 Dec.

Unusually, a large proportion of spring migrants were in east Lancashire: singles at Stocks Reservoir on 14 April and 24-28 April, Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 14 May and Alston Wetland on the 25th. Other singles were at Prescott Reservoirs on 20 April, Arkholme on the 22nd, Skippool Creek on the 25th, Warton Marsh on 4 May and Claughton on the 18th; three flew north offshore at Formby Point on 23 May.

Autumn passage was as usual a more lively affair. It began with one at Little Singleton on 15 June, two on the Eric Morecambe complex on the 21st and one at MMWWT the next day. Migrants were then recorded from a further 17 sites throughout the county with the last at Belmont on 14 Sept. East Lancashire continued its productive year with records of nine birds at Lower Foulridge and Stocks Reservoirs and at Altham. Most records were in low single figures, exceptions being peaks of 13 in the Skippool Creek area of the Wyre on 6 July, and on the Ribble 20 at Freckleton Naze on 17 Aug and 42 on the River Douglas confluence on 17 Aug. One was at Clowbridge Reservoir on 19 Sept.

## WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

### Uncommon passage migrant.

The first of five spring records at Mythop on 26 April was followed by four on Newton Marsh on 3 May, and singles at Mythop on the 6-11th and MMWWT on 17 & 25-27 May.

Autumn passage was typically highly concentrated with a dozen or so singles, most if not all juveniles, reported from late June to early September: at the Eric Morecambe complex from 27 June to 6 July, Aldcliffe on 28 June, 26 July and 10 Aug, Mythop on 30 June to 2 July and 9 Aug, MMWWT between 31 July and 9 Aug, Marshside on 7-13 Aug, Seaforth on 18 Aug, the Conder Pool on 21 Aug to 4 Sept and Glasson on 25 Aug.

## REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

### Abundant passage and winter visitor. Fairly common breeding bird.

**International importance: 2800. National importance: 1200**

#### Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	2060	4987	4536	3430	112	188	1380	1763	4098	2555	2672	1850
EM complex	360	390	670	720	20	45	230	175	420	620	230	330
Ribble WeBS	453	1208	2660	302	159	279	377	421	2219	4186	1340	611
Alt WeBS	465	184	467	45	2	80	127	617	382	379	505	155
Seaforth	395	246	325	293	45	80	475	360	300	214	395	320

National numbers have been in decline for several years in winter but are holding steady on passage. The situation in Lancashire is rather different. The Alt has been in decline since the late 1990s while the Ribble has experienced a moderate decline in winter but a slight increase during the autumn passage – to the extent that it is close to becoming of international importance. Numbers using Morecambe Bay, however, have shown a more or less steady increase in both wintering and passage birds over the past 20 years and it remains Britain's second most important site for this species.

Notable site counts probably captured by WeBS included 1000 at Glasson on 27 July, 930 in the Skippool Creek area on 15 Aug, 1150 on Barnaby's Sands on 18 Oct and 1200 between Warton Marsh and Jenny Brown's Point on 31 Oct. Around 200 at Garston on 11 Oct was the largest count on the Liverpool section of the Mersey Estuary.

The very recent trend for a handful of birds to remain far from the coast over winter was repeated this year when at least five were present in east Lancashire during the first winter period and three in the second, while eleven were on the Lune at Arkholme on 6 Jan with 18 there on 1 Dec.

Birds began to return to the breeding grounds in early March – a pair was displaying at Alston Wetland on the 7th – and most were probably back by the end of April.

Breeding records were, as usual, incomplete. They included six pairs at MMWWT, 23 pairs at Marshside with six more on Crossens Inner and at least 40 on Marshside and Crossens Out Marshes, and 34 pairs on Hesketh Out Marsh. There were four pairs at Belmont Reservoir with a further three on surrounding in-bye land, and two pairs at Alston Wetland. Two pairs held territory on the Calder at Altham to Martholme and one at Pendle Hall, and birds were recorded in the breeding season at another 15 east Lancashire sites. The Wenning Foot to Leck Beck section of the Lune held 43 pairs. There were no records in Rossendale this year.

The timing of the post-breeding dispersal was difficult to pinpoint but the first was back at Seaforth on 17 June and the last at Belmont on 13 Aug. Three in Sefton Park on 29 Dec was an unusual record for central Liverpool.

## TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

### Common passage migrant and winter visitor

International importance: 1500. National importance: 500

#### Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	204	524	513	582	171	3	23	426	411	418	501	531
Fleetwood	100	285	230	265	103	0	0	168	220	275	385	335
Ribble WeBS	33	42	42	204	94	0	0	110	141	192	74	21
Alt WeBS	48	53	66	2	3	43	6	64	1	0	48	1

In line with the national trend, numbers on Morecambe Bay appear to be stabilising after a more than 50% decline since the mid-1990s and the Lancashire sections remain (just) nationally important. The Ribble has never been of great importance for Turnstones but numbers there continue to decline: the internationally important roost at Seaforth on the Alt has long since disappeared.

Notable counts not included in the table included 265 at Heysham on 24 April, 132 at Lytham, which experienced a poor year, on 27 Jan with 137 there on 14 April and 106 on the Alt outfall on 12 April.

Inland records comprised at least five birds at Stocks Reservoir between 25 April and 31 May, one at Brockholes Wetland on 13 May and one at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 1 Aug.

## WILSON'S PHALAROPE *Phalaropus tricolor*

### Vagrant

An adult female was at MMWWT on 21-23 Aug (G Taylor *et al*) before moving to Marshside and Crossens on the 24th to 26th. It then returned to MMWWT on the 27th and remained there the next day.

The record has been accepted by the BBRC and becomes the ninth Lancashire record. Given the species' rarity it is possible that this was the same bird as the first-summer that was seen in June 2008 at Seaforth, although that was tentatively sexed as a male at the time.

## RED-NECKED PHALAROPE\* *Phalaropus lobatus*

### Rare passage migrant.

The run of records of recent years at MMWWT continued with a male on 13 June and a juvenile on 17-18 Sept (finders unknown).

## GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

### Scarce passage migrant.

One was flushed by Canada Geese from a small pool at Greta Foot on the Lune on 1 Dec and was not seen subsequently.

Three autumn records on the Mersey began with two offshore on 5 Sept followed by a juvenile on the freshwater pool briefly on 26 Nov before moving to Crosby Marine Lake where it remained until the 28th. One flew south-west off Rossall Point on 22 Sept.



Grey Phalarope, Crosby Coastal Park, 28 November (Steve Young)

## POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

**Uncommon double passage migrant. Rare in winter.**

### Spring

Feedback from those familiar with the behaviour and flock size of skuas at Bowness-on-Solway suggests that a flock of 23 (at least some light morph, the rest indeterminate) seen on 16 May off Morecambe Stone Jetty, swirling around high in the sky before flying 'over' Barrow towards the open sea, was most likely to have been Pomarines. This sighting coincided with one of the largest movements of Pomarine Skuas recorded in the Irish Sea and with records of definite individuals off Morecambe, Heysham and Jenny Brown's Point the same day.

Single light morph adults flew into the bay at Heysham on 5 & 7 May and at least two, probably three, light morph adults were seen off Heysham and Jenny Brown's Point on the 8th. On 16 May an afternoon seawatch off Morecambe in ideal conditions produced two single light morph adults, followed by the above-mentioned flock of 23 and later by single light morphs off Heysham and Jenny Brown's Point. On 19 May four light morph adults were sat on the sea off Heysham before gaining height and flying in the direction of Black Combe; a light morph sub-adult or adult with broken tail streamers was off Morecambe on the 18th.

### Autumn

A third-calendar-year bird was off Formby Point on 20 Aug with a juvenile there on 3 Oct and what was described as a 'pale juvenile' on 7 Nov; a juvenile was seen off Ainsdale on 4 Oct. An adult was off Seaforth and Blundellsands on 29 Aug, an adult on the Mersey on 3 Sept with perhaps the same juvenile as at Formby on 3 Oct. An adult north off Rossall School on 28 Sept was the only record away from the Sefton Coast.

## ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

**Fairly common passage migrant, more numerous in autumn. Rare in winter.**

### Spring

The passage movement was difficult to quantify in Morecambe Bay this year due to unsettled weather with poor visibility inland delaying overland migration. For example, there may have been as many as 20 on 4 May but a more conservative estimate would be a minimum of ten. Erring on the side of caution, 87 were recorded between 7 April and 24 May from various coastal sites between Cockersand and Jenny Brown's Point with the majority from Heysham north harbour wall. Thirty-seven recorded during the same period off the north Fylde coast included at least 21 which may have been additional to those in Morecambe Bay. As usual, dark morphs predominated by about 3:1 (some unspecified), but a cautionary tale involved a flock of six light morphs [a typical Pomarine Skua scenario] seen very well as they flew inland over the observer's head at Jenny Brown's Point on 9 May.

Further south, records were predictably few with just four, all from Formby Point – singles on 7 April and 23 May and two on 27 May.

### Autumn

Late summer records of one off Seaforth and two off Blackpool on 18 July, with another off Formby on 24 July were perhaps non-breeders.

The vast majority of autumn records came from the south of the county with 31 off Formby between 17 Aug and 6 Sept including twelve south on 2 Sept, but numbers in the Mersey Mouth were poor with just three lingerers on 4-5 Sept and singles on 29 Aug and 3 Oct. Eighteen were seen off the Fylde coast from 11 Aug to 25 Nov with a peak of seven on 3 Oct, and just seven in Morecambe Bay between 17 Aug and 23 Nov with two of these probably also seen at Rossall on 3 Oct.

## LONG-TAILED SKUA\* *Stercorarius longicaudus*

**Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring.**

An adult flying south off Formby Point on 2 Sept (B McCarthy) was the only record received.

## GREAT SKUA (BONXIE) *Stercorarius skua*

**Fairly common on passage, mostly in autumn gales. Rare in winter.**

### Spring

A typical series of records in Morecambe Bay comprised singles off Heysham on 7 & 8 April and 2, 5 & 7 May, with two off Jenny Brown's Point on 18 April. One flew north off Blackpool on 22 May.

### Autumn

This was the best autumn for quite some time, especially in Morecambe Bay and off the Fylde coast. Early records comprised singles on six dates on 16-28 Aug in Morecambe Bay and off the Fylde coast, and one off Formby on the 17th. Sightings on six dates from the north Fylde coast and Heysham between 25 Nov and 6 Dec probably referred to the same wandering individual.

A gale-blown influx saw four together off Jenny Brown's Point on 3 Sept, with two in the outer bay at the same time, and up to three lingering on 4-5 Sept. Possibly some of these birds then moved to the Mersey with a single on 3 Sept and six on 4 Sept.

Similarly, at least seven individuals were seen off north Fylde and in Morecambe Bay on 3 Oct, with at least three presumed lingerers the next day. Singles off Formby on 2 Oct and Crosby on the 3rd were the only reflection of this influx in the south of the region.

## SKUA SPECIES

A flock of five Arctic or Pomarine flew south off Morecambe on 16 May and four Arctic or Pomarine were off Cleveleys on 22 May. A distant dark juvenile off Heysham on 3 Nov was probably an Arctic, while a dark bird off Rossall Point on 25 Nov was either Arctic or Pomarine.

### SABINE'S GULL\* *Xema sabini*

#### Uncommon passage migrant.

There were two records of this much sought after species in the first week of September, both on the Sefton Coast. Two adults were seen on the River Mersey from Seaforth on the 4th (T Vaughan *et al*) and a juvenile flew south past Formby Point on the 5th (B McCarthy).

### KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

#### Common passage migrant on coasts, fairly common in winter. Scarce inland.

##### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Formby Point	3	3	4	6	124	34	8	6	13	0	11	4
Rossall Point	1	0	36	1	0	0	5	4	17	35	101	1
Blackpool	3	1	3	23	5	10	114	2	6	4	9	0
Heysham	7	11	30	146	12	2	0	1	1	2	215	1

Once again it was a poor year as the table above indicates. In the early part of the year up to seven were lingering off Heysham and small numbers were recorded along the coast. The first double-figure counts came from Heysham with eleven on 26 Feb and 30 on 8 March when Seaforth recorded its first birds of the year. On 22 March 30 were off Rossall Point and the following day 22 off Glasson; 30 were 'a long way out' from Jenny Brown's Point on 30 March.

April brought some larger numbers with 146 at Heysham on the 8th, 36 flying high inland there on the 11th and 23 at Blackpool on the 21st, but the base level of sightings was still rather low. During May the larger numbers switched to the Merseyside coast with 124 from the Alt WeBS count and 66 on the 9th at Formby Point.

Summer records were again sporadic and in single figures apart from 114 past Blackpool on 2 July and 34 past Formby Point on 5 June. The colony in the Liverpool docks could not be censused this year due to construction work nearby but casual records suggested that around 40-50 pairs attempted to breed.

Inland records were typically scarce but most occurred in the spring and summer months. One was at Brockholes Wetland on 15 April, adults were at Stocks Reservoir on 11 May and Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 27 Aug and one was at MMWWT on 25 Nov.

The pattern continued through the autumn with small numbers until early November, including 80 at Knott End on the 3rd and 101 at Rossall the following day. Also on 3 Nov there was significant to-ing and fro-ing around Morecambe Bay with 215 'out' past Heysham, 81 'in' and 55 behind ferries; later in the month 40 flew out of the bay on the 26th.

## BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

**Locally abundant breeding bird. Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant.**

**International importance: 20000. National importance: 19000**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>WeBS</b>												
Alt	1204	1440	1070	158	23	80	248	672	1174	1568	880	517
MBS	1119	1385	2014	580	261	1639	3939	5544	2024	1603	1038	1788
Southport ML	260	420	0	1	3	6	81	0	63	137	75	315
Ribble	1570	2635	5542	1178	6331	63	1220	632	434	494	983	860
<b>Monthly peak counts</b>												
Seaforth	3000	800	2000	300	120	60	/	/	2000	10000	4000	/
Marshside	1221	995	4400	1000	157	28	200	71	92	220	628	625
Delph Res	1500	400	150	/	/	/	/	600	1000	700	1200	1200
Lower Rivington Res	4000	6000	5000	4	/	/	/	40	800	/	1000	6000

In the early part of the year the roost at Lower Rivington Reservoir regularly held up to 6000 with numbers dropping in mid-March as the breeding colonies were occupied. There were around 2500 roosting at Fishmoor Reservoir on 1 Jan, 3500 at Stocks Reservoir on the 13th and 3000 at Preesall Sands on the 14th.

Numbers built up to 2000 at MMWWT by 17 Feb, rising to 3500 on the 22nd and 7600 by 6 March before reducing again as birds presumably left for breeding sites. Similarly at Arkholme numbers increased in early spring to a peak of 1200 by 31 March.

The first birds returned to the Belmont Reservoir colony on 22 Feb with numbers increasing to 1800 by 1 March, 5000 on the 7th and over 10000 on the 31st. Following the recent declines in two Scottish colonies, this site is thought to be the largest inland colony in Britain with a censused population of 5300 pairs on 10 May. The overspill pairs nested on the drawdown areas but a lot of these were flooded as water levels rose in mid-May although a few Kittiwake-like nests on vertical peat cliffs were successful. The first chicks hatched early on 27 April and the first of over 5000 juveniles fledged on 11 June. There was no formal census at Stocks Reservoir but numbers were similar to previous years and the first chicks appeared on 10 May.

No details were received on the breeding success of the 5000 or more pairs that nested on the southern Ribble NNR marshes, but the eight pairs that attempted to nest at Marshside were all predated. Two first-summer birds built a nest at Seaforth but nothing came of it.

At Heysham, record numbers of second-years spent late April around the outfalls, peaking at 500 on the 26th. The post-breeding build-up there came earlier than usual with around 1500 present in early June. A leucistic bird was noted at Marshside on 27 June.

Post-breeding numbers built up at various locations around the county during July and August; 1500 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 30 July and 1500 at MMWWT on 24 Aug were some of the larger numbers reported.

During the second winter period some large congregations were reported from several sites. Around 50000 small gulls were estimated between Formby Point and Southport Pier on 26 Nov, thought to be evenly split between Black-headed and Common. Around 10000 had been at Seaforth on 1 Oct decreasing to 4000 by 14 Nov. The roost at Lower Rivington Reservoir held 1000 on 20 Nov but increased steadily to 6000 by 22 Dec. Other large counts included 3000 at Wrampool Bridge, Pilling on 5 Dec, 1800 at Clowbridge Reservoir on the 13th, 1500 feeding on fields at Withgill, Bashall on the 16th and 1500 at Rishton Reservoir on the 23rd.

An interesting behavioural note was of 30 birds perched on electricity cables near Longton on 8 Nov.

### LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

**Fairly common gale-blown winter visitor. Common on spring passage, concentrated at Seaforth and Crosby Marine Park. Small numbers of first-years in summer.**

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	22	2
Seaforth	0	0	70	73	19	2	1	1	2	2	1	0

At Seaforth, there were two over the reserve on 8 March and 70 offshore the following day but the first significant arrivals on the reserve were 14 on 23 March, followed by 20 on 2 April and 52 (briefly) on the 5th. The first significant Chironomid hatch was on 16 April and the following day 73 were on the freshwater pool, including seven first-summer; there were 32 on 28 April but numbers then fell to 19 on 1 May and up to five first-summer in the second week of May – making it the worst spring on record. Up the coast from Seaforth there were 53 at Cabin Hill NNR on 25 April and peak counts at Formby Point of 34 on 10 March and 42 on 7 April. Single adults were at Prescott Reservoirs on 8 April and 30 June.

On the Fylde, there was a similar dearth of records but 130 past Rossall Point on 27 March stood out. Other than that, there were ten and 20 past Blackpool on 6 & 7 April respectively and ten off Rossall on the 20th.

It was a similar story at Heysham, with just three birds in January and a small passage in spring of seven on 8 & 18 April, 16 on the 19th and then occasional single figures up to the 29th. Elsewhere, there were two at Marshside on 20 March and one at MMWWT on 3 May.

In contrast, the movement through east Lancashire was outstanding. Two adults were at Stocks Reservoir on 16 April, four on the 17th, 15 on the 18th and a first-summer on the 30th; May saw at least eight on the 5th and singles on the 6th and 8th. Similarly at Brockholes Wetland, after a single on 24 March there were nine on 16 April that departed in a south-westerly direction and one on the 17th. There then followed a series of records at Lower Foulridge Reservoir with first-summer seen on five days between 11 May and 19 July and an adult on 26-29 July. Second-year birds (the same as previously perhaps) were seen from 30 July to 4 Aug and again on the 14-16th.

There were very few summer records at coastal locations with ones or twos seen occasionally, apart from twelve on the beach at Cabin Hill on 29 July, and virtually none throughout September apart from a couple on the River Mersey. It wasn't until early October that more were recorded, starting with a first-winter inland at Rishton Reservoir on the 3rd. Late November gales brought some into Morecambe Bay with at least 21 at Heysham on the 25th and 16 on the 26th. Thirteen flew south past Formby Point on 7 Nov and there were a scattering of December records.

### LAUGHING GULL *Larus atricilla*

#### Vagrant

An adult was coming to bread at Marton Mere on 25 May (T Sharples), evoking memories of the county's first twitchable bird in 2006 – also at Marton Mere and probably the same individual. This has been accepted by the BBRC and becomes Lancashire's fourth record of this splendid north American gull.

## MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

**Fairly common all year. Most numerous on southern coasts but increasing inland. Recently established rare breeder.**

### Minimum number of individuals

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seaforth	4	7	5	2	3	5	9	10	13	12	5	4
Heysham	2	5	3	4	2	5	10	12	10	3	3	3
Preesall Sands	7	3	0	0	0	3	5	4	3	2	2	4

As usual, masses of records were supplied by observers for this species that, even though it is becoming seen quite commonly, remains rather special when encountered. The table above attempts to summarise the number of birds involved at coastal sites where the species is most common.

Most of the birds in the table were adults with occasional immature birds popping up from time to time. The late summer post-breeding influx was fairly typical with juveniles turning up from late July not only at the above sites but elsewhere in the county.

Away from the main sites, in the early part of the year the vast majority of records concerned adults and were seen in ones and two from nineteen sites on the Fylde, several places on the south-west mosslands, Prescott Reservoirs, the Southport shoreline and inland reservoirs. Six adults on Downholland Moss on 14 Feb and at least nine different birds at the Stocks Reservoir roost in the month were notable records. March brought an increase in records from around the county as birds moved towards the breeding colonies, including six at Marton Mere on the 27th.

The first bird was back at the Belmont colony on 7 March and 18 were present by 8 April. At least 36 different individuals were present during the breeding season including a count of 29 on 29 April. Thirteen nests were confirmed with a further two possible and, although the rise in vegetation hampered the monitoring, at least eight juveniles fledged. At least nine birds, including four juveniles, were still present on 12 July and a colour-ringed bird present on 28 June had fledged from the colony in 2007.

Numbers at Stocks Reservoir increased to a maximum of 17 by the beginning of April, when major disturbance on four consecutive evenings caused all the gulls to abandon the island. Numbers then increased slowly and eventually five pairs bred, though with low productivity of 1.2 young per pair. The last sighting was of an adult and a juvenile on 13 July. At least three pairs nested on the south Ribble marshes.

It is hard to determine how many birds were involved in the post-breeding period in the county as a whole but what was clear was that there was a preponderance of adults with relatively few juveniles reported. During October adults appeared in Sefton Park, Liverpool and in fields near Caton. Up to two adults were regularly at Prescott Reservoirs and one at Fishmoor Reservoir to the end of the year. Adults were also recorded at Alston Reservoirs on 5 Dec and Lower Rivington Reservoir on the 13th & 17th.

## COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

**Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant.**

**International importance: 16000. National importance: 9000**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ribble WeBS	527	1,428	1,778	26	30	0	0	241	166	381	211	48
Alt WeBS	508	972	1090	384	17	0	160	290	765	791	606	205
Seaforth	3000	1200	1500	80	100	30	/	/	200	500	2500	/
MBS WeBS	24	110	75	48	21	58	83	94	25	86	56	70

In the first winter period the largest numbers were recorded at the Stocks Reservoir roost with 7000 on 13 Jan. Numbers at Lower Rivington Reservoir reached 800 on 9 Jan and 200 were at Fishmoor Reservoir on the 1st. Numbers peaked at Seaforth at 3000 in January whilst a little further up the coast those on Ainsdale beach increased from 1500 on 14 Feb to around 5000 on the 27th before falling back to 1400 by 13 March. This movement was noted at Seaforth, Prescot Reservoirs (peak of 700 on 1 March) and even in Wavertree in central Liverpool (90 on 23 Feb) and involved mostly adult birds. At Arkholme there were 500 on 17 Jan increasing to 2000 on 27 Feb then decreasing to 800 by the end of March.

Typically, a noticeable later spring passage involved mostly second-calendar-year birds at Heysham with highs of 115 on the 15 April, 171 on 4 June and 226 on the 6th. MMWWT recorded what was described as an exceptional count of 72 on 27 April. Peak numbers on the Fylde during the first half of the year were 200 at Stalmine on 12 Jan and 200 at Thurnham on 4-22 Feb but otherwise there were only double figure counts. There were 500 at Stocks Reservoir in mid-April after which numbers declined significantly, and over 200 at Downholland Moss on the 25th.

Returning birds started to arrive in numbers with 175 at Stocks Reservoir on 11 Aug and there was a pronounced passage off Formby Point during October. There were good numbers from the regular Alt WeBS counts up to November by which time larger numbers were recorded elsewhere in the county. Numbers at Prescot Reservoirs peaked at 450 in mid-October.

Low-tide counts along the Sefton shoreline from Formby Point to Southport Pier on 14 Nov estimated that an internationally significant 25-30000 Common Gulls were present. At Seaforth there were 2500 on 14 Nov that included 1000 first-year birds and around 3000 were at Stocks Reservoir on the 10th. Over 500 were on Preesall Sands on 24 Nov and during December there were peak counts of 200 at Lower Rivington Reservoir on the 22nd, 200 at Clowbridge Reservoir on the 13th, 1500 at Withgill on the 16th. Other site highs included 264 at Marton Mere on 4 Dec, 50 at Rishton Reservoir on the 23rd, 35 at Delph Reservoir on the 24th and 50 over Sefton Park, Liverpool on the 29th.

## RING-BILLED GULL \* *Larus delawarensis*

**Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, mainly in spring.**

After a rather quiet year for this species in 2008, it was a return to form with a series of records from Seaforth and a smattering of others. All records were of adults.

At Seaforth singles were seen on 6 Jan, 23 Feb, 8 March (P Kinsella), 29 March (P Kinsella *et al*), 31 March (AJ Conway *et al*) and 1-5 April (P Kinsella). Careful observation of their features determined that at least three individuals were involved. Presumably one of these was at Crosby Marine Lake and shore on 7 Oct (P Kinsella, E McCann *et al*).



Ring-billed Gull, Seaforth 2 April (Steve Young)

Another adult was coming to breed regularly on playing fields in Netherton in north Liverpool from 15 Nov to 31 Dec and into 2010 (E McCann). This bird was first seen in 2005 and it has come to light that it has returned annually ever since. An adult was at Prescott Reservoirs between 25 Sept and 26 Nov (S Tomlinson).

Away from the Merseyside hot-spot, an adult was seen at Skippool Creek on 5 Oct (P Slade).

#### LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

**Abundant breeder especially in Bowland and on the Ribble. Abundant spring and autumn migrant. Smaller winter population.**

**International importance: 4500. National importance: 500**

##### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alt WeBS	316	703	362	450	140	205	113	423	2106	873	433	107
Seaforth	200	450	100	390	120	180	/	600	200	500	500	/
Ribble WeBS	102	10	1958	19	6044	15	6074	268	807	339	301	238
MBS WeBS	23	87	252	259	314	429	295	428	219	137	111	79
Skipool Creek	31	32	88	86	42	72	105	140	200	104	40	29

As the tables above show, this species can be encountered all year round and although there is still a noticeable influx in spring, the difference is becoming less obvious. Away from the areas summarised above numbers reached a maximum of 60 at Lower Rivington Reservoir in the early part of the year and on 27 Feb 130 were at Stocks Reservoir and 50 at Rishton Reservoir. Larger numbers were reported more widely from March onwards with numbers at Stocks Reservoir growing to 3000 by the 22nd and an obvious northerly passage noted at Heysham on the 27th.

On the large breeding colonies on the Bowland fells above Tarnbrook, a total of 3096 pairs bred, a further decrease from the peaks of earlier in the decade. However, most of these were

outside the core areas set aside to maintain a population of this size. A survey of Langden Head-Hawthornthwaite Fell indicated that the area occupied by nesting gulls has increased and that there are in the region of 3000 active nests in the colony, more than double that of 2007 despite some walk-through nest removal carried out by the shooting tenants. One pair attempted to breed at Belmont but was unsuccessful.

There were many instances of roof-nesting. At Heysham 29 pairs nested on the old Fisher's building and 17 pairs on the west harbour buildings. The gulls were actively discouraged from nesting on the power station and the former nest site on the old Pontins buildings has been demolished.

In Liverpool birds were regularly seen during the breeding season at Wavertree, Halewood, Speke, Speke retail park, Hunts Cross retail park, Aigburth, Dingle, Toxteth and city centre areas. They were observed nest building at the Royal Courts building in the city centre and fledged young were seen at Spofforth Road gasometer, Wavertree, Church Street, Liverpool and Speke. Over 260 birds were put up off the roofs of the Jaguar factory, Halewood on 22 June.

Fifteen pairs nested on the BICC factory at Prescot and fifteen pairs were on roofs on the Knowsley Industrial Estate.

During the late summer, many colour-ringed birds were seen on the River Calder near Great Harwood and at Stocks Reservoir. Birds regularly dropped in at Alston Reservoirs on their way from their feeding site to the breeding grounds with a maximum of 350 on 27 Aug.



Juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Liverpool, 27 June (Steve White)

Towards the middle of October numbers peaked at over 500 at Prescot Reservoirs and 500 roosted at Stocks Reservoir on the 12th; 400 was a very good count for Rishton Reservoir on 6 Nov (where 40 remained at the year's end) whilst numbers at Lower Rivington peaked at 120 on the 20th. Up to 5000 were along the shore between Formby Point and Southport Pier on 26 Nov.

## HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

**Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant. Common breeding bird, mainly on the Ribble.**

**International importance: 13000. National importance: 4500**

### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alt WeBS	1317	3076	2966	1475	120	362	275	834	5848	6514	1195	870
Seaforth	600	1200	2000	1500	800	250	/	/	1050	800	300	/
Ribble WeBS	9230	3552	18164	48	2212	113	3221	550	699	589	1273	728
Marshside	1926	37	1124	8	22	8	2	3	2	7	109	195
MBS WeBS	496	247	499	218	503	710	1376	1547	1373	750	1849	1846
Preesall Sands 1500	/	/	/	/	/	/	600	300	300	500	18	1800

The table indicates just how common this species is around the county, especially in the winter months, but a count of 29000 along the north Sefton coast on 26 Nov really puts things into perspective. The same day over 2000 were at Rossall Point.

At inland reservoir sites there were comparatively few in the early part of the year with just 600 at Fishmoor on 16 Jan and 300 at Rishton on 27 Feb. Numbers at Lower Rivington were in the region of a few hundred in January and February apart from over 2000 on 7 Jan. Later in the year, 1100 at Rishton Reservoir was the largest count and 800 were at Lower Rivington Reservoir on 19 Dec.

At Prescot Reservoirs numbers peaked at 600 in the early part of the year but in December large numbers were reported with a peak of 5000 on the 20th. Numbers at the Jameson Road landfill site, Fleetwood peaked at 1500 on 22 Nov.

Breeding records came from Heysham where 17 pairs nested, Bowland where around 50 pairs were in amongst the Lesser Black-backs and many sites in Liverpool city centre, Dingle and Halewood. Five pairs nested on the BICC factory at Prescot and five on the Knowsley Industrial Estate.

*Argentatus* birds were reported from Marshside on 15 March, Rishton Reservoir on 6 Nov and Cabin Hill on the 14th & 29th. This race was also reported from Preesall Sands on 6 & 15 Jan, 12 & 20 Oct and 24 Nov and at Seaforth throughout the winter months.

## YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahelis*

**Uncommon but increasing all year. Most numerous in late summer and on southern coasts.**

### Estimated minimum number of individuals

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seaforth	5	8	5	2	2	2	3	8	6	5	5	3

Once again, the well watched gull flocks at Seaforth provided the bulk of the records of this species and most of the records were of adults. At least three adults, a third-winter and a first-winter were present during January yet this was surpassed by four adults and four sub-adult birds between 15th and 23 Feb indicating a large 'spring' movement, surpassing the previous highest total from February 2002. Birds were seen on six dates in March and then sightings dropped off until the August to September influx period which consisted of mainly adults and only one juvenile.

One or two, mainly adults, were recorded at Prescott Reservoirs throughout the year but mainly in the winter periods. Numbers peaked at four on 3 Jan and 18 Oct.

On the Fylde, there were sightings of an adult at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 21 March, an adult Skippool Creek on 22 April, a juvenile at Cocker's Dyke on 20 Aug and an adult at Rossall Point on 26 Nov. A third-summer at Glasson on 31 March and 9 April reappeared between Cocker's Dyke, Cockersand and Glasson between 26 June and 19 Aug with a different third-summer at Glasson between 3 & 31 Aug. Around Morecambe, a third-summer was at Hest Bank on 9 May and a second-summer off Bubbles groyne on 16 June.

Adults were at Cabin Hill NNR on 31 July and 14 Nov, Ainsdale Beach from 4-8 Sept and Birkdale on 5 Dec.

Finally, in the east of the county, a second-summer was at Stocks Reservoir on 13-18 July and an adult was at Whinney Hill Tip, Accrington on 27 Nov.

## CASPIAN GULL\* *Larus cachinnans*

### Vagrant

#### 2001

An adult at Seaforth from 6-20 Oct 2001 has been accepted as the first for Lancashire. (M Garner *et al*). The bird attracted a great deal of attention at the time and most observers felt that it was a very good candidate. However, the status of Caspian Gulls in Britain had not yet been fully resolved and it was thought that the pattern of the outer primaries was a critical identification feature – a feature that was not evident on this individual as it was in wing moult and its outer primaries were missing. In the light of current knowledge the record has been reviewed and found to be fully acceptable.

#### 2009

Caspian Gulls remain one of the most difficult species to confirm and the county records committee has reviewed the criteria required for acceptance – see notes at the end of this report.

There was only one fully documented record this year – an adult roosting at Fishmoor Reservoir on 2 Jan (P Morris). A first-winter at Seaforth on 29 March was felt not to be quite sufficiently documented for complete certainty. There were several other reports but none were submitted with the required level of detail for this problematic species.

## ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

### Uncommon winter visitor and spring passage migrant, mainly January to April. Occasional influxes.

Nearly all records involved first-year birds. One was at Whinney Hill Tip on 1 Jan and in the Fishmoor Reservoir roost on the 22nd & 24th. At least three different birds were at Prescott Reservoirs on twelve dates between 3 Jan and 28 April and singles were recorded at Jameson Road landfill site, Fleetwood on 1 Feb and Ainsdale Sands Lake on 5 March.

At Seaforth there was a remarkable run of records with single juveniles seen on 10, 19, 27 & 31 March, 11 & 18 April and 8, 11 & 26 May. It is not clear just how many different individuals were involved in this sequence; a second-summer bird was also present on 27 March.

A juvenile was seen at Rossall Point and Fleetwood on 9 April and at Bispham the following day.

The only record in the second winter period was a juvenile at Lower Rivington Reservoir on 4 Dec.

## GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

**Uncommon visitor, mostly winter. Usually more numerous and more coastal than Iceland Gull.**

Separate first-winter birds on 19 March and 2 April were the first records at Seaforth since 2005. A second-winter was in the vicinity of Stanley Park, Blackpool between 31 Jan and 14 Feb. Also during the first winter period, juveniles were seen at Lower Rivington Reservoir on 15 & 16 Feb and Marshside on 15 Feb and a second-summer at Birkdale on 27 March.

A first-winter roosted at Fishmoor Reservoir on 22 Jan and later in the year another first-winter was there on 28 & 29 Dec.

A second-year bird flew north-west out of the harbour at Heysham on 2 May and an adult was at Rossall Point on 26 Nov.

## GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

**Common winter visitor and passage migrant on coasts. Rare breeder.**

**International importance: 4800. National importance: 400**

### WeBS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alt	75	81	101	57	29	27	66	49	225	244	154	74
MBS	85	93	86	34	37	230	125	146	139	285	213	112
Ribble	159	45	72	13	23	17	33	45	136	341	57	39

This species is an all-year-round fixture at several sites, generally in small numbers but some larger congregations occur. It is commoner in winter, especially in the second winter period as the data in the tables above indicate, but non-breeders remain throughout the summer.

Peak counts other than those detailed above included 150 at Lower Rivington Reservoir on 7 Jan with 110 there on 26 Dec, 180 at Fishmoor Reservoir in the early part of the year, 30 at Rishton Reservoir on 27 Feb and 80 there on 23 Dec.

A pair nested again on the old Fisher's roof at Heysham and fledged a single juvenile whilst at Marshside a pair built two nests but took matters no further – other than to help predate the local population of young Avocets.

On 26 Nov, a count of gulls from Formby Point to Southport Pier resulted in an estimate of 1700 Great Black-backs.

## LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

**Fairly common passage migrant on coasts, rare inland.**

Singles at Seaforth on 15 April and Rossall Point on the 17th and four past Formby Point on the 25th were the first. There were subsequent spring singles off Morecambe on 8 May and Formby Point on the 3rd & 9th with seven there on the 23rd.

Ones and twos were at Seaforth on eight dates during summer; one of these on 26 June appeared to have a grey rump and uppertail but unfortunately was not heard to call. Singles at Formby Point on 7 July and Seaforth on the 10th may have been early returning birds but more likely were one at Formby on 24 July, eight there on 5 Aug and two on the 20th. There was a brief flurry of records in the first week of September: singles off Formby on 2 Sept, Rossall on the 3rd, Ainsdale and Knott End on the 4th and at Granny's Bay, Fairhaven on the 5th, with two at Rossall on the 4th. The last was at Rossall on 3 Oct.

There were two inland records: singles at Prescott Reservoirs on 4 June and at Stocks Reservoir on the 21st.

**BLACK TERN** *Chlidonias niger*

**Uncommon spring and autumn migrant. Usually more numerous and more coastal in autumn. Most northern records in spring.**

An uninspiring spring began with three at Stocks Reservoir, two off Rossall Point and one at Leighton Moss on 25 April. No more were seen until 12 May when one was at Brockholes Wetland, increasing to nine on the 14th with one until the 16th – the last of the spring passage. Other records of ones and twos during this period came from MMWWT, Seaforth/Crosby Coastal Park, Marton Mere, Heysham, Carnforth, Borwick Waters and Hare Appletree Fell, with larger counts of four at Leighton Moss on the 13th, six on the Heysham outfalls on the 14th and seven on Alston Reservoirs on the 15th. One was at Clowbridge Reservoir on 21 May.

As in spring, autumn passage began with an adult at Stocks Reservoir on 1 Aug followed by singles at Heysham on the 3rd and St. Anne's on the 12th, and the first juvenile at Rishton Reservoir on the 15th. The main movement began a week later when four juveniles were at Leighton Moss, followed by singles at Heysham on the 27th and Eccleston Mere on the 29th when five were also at Seaforth/Crosby.

September records were singles at MMWWT on the 3rd, Seaforth on the 4th, Heysham on the 5th, Anglezarke Reservoir on the 9th and Blackpool on the 13th; three juveniles were seen off Knott End and Rossall Point on 3 Sept. The last straggler flew past Rossall on 3 Oct.

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

**Common spring and autumn migrant on coasts, rare inland.**

**Morecambe Bay**

Heysham seawatches produced a total of 744 bird-days between 29 March and 26 May with notable peaks of 206 on 18 April, 157 on 28 April and 140 on 29 April. The few seen elsewhere in spring included three at Cockersand on 12 April, one on the Eric Morecambe complex on 22-25 May and five off Morecambe on 24 May.

Matters were reversed in autumn with very few seen in the north of the bay – a peak count of just two at Heysham – but reasonable numbers on the north Fylde coast at Preesall Sands, including 180 on 25 Aug, 172 the next day and 180 on the 25th. The last was at Knott End on 8 Sept.

**Liverpool Bay**

The first arrived off Rossall Point on 21 March but few were seen until the first week of April. The largest spring counts included 54 off Blackpool on 17 April with 212 there on the 19th, 60 off Rossall Point on the 18th and 52 roosting at Formby Point on the 24th; 84 on 25 April was a record spring roost at Seaforth.

Moderate numbers were present throughout the summer, making it difficult to detect the beginning of passage but the first juvenile was at Seaforth on 13 July a week or so after a small influx of adults. Some large roosts assembled on both the south Fylde and Sefton coasts, notably 400 at Blackpool on 5 Aug, 573 at St. Anne's on the 10th, 150 at Ainsdale on the 16th and 238 at Rossall on 1 Sept; seawatching totals included 660 off Formby Point on 20 Aug with 110 there on 6 Sept. Late records included two off Formby on 1 Oct, three off Blackpool on the 4th and two off Rossall on 4 Nov.

**Inland**

There were four records, all during April: single(s) at Brockholes Wetland and Stocks Reservoir on the 10th, two on the Mersey in south Liverpool on the 20th and two on Lower Foulridge Reservoir on the 24th.

## COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

**Abundant spring and autumn migrant. Scarce breeder on Ribble, Lune and at Seaforth. Regular cross-Pennine migrant.**

### Morecambe Bay

Probably the worst year on record. Systematic seawatching at Heysham produced just five spring bird-days during 9-26 May and similarly dismal numbers in autumn with the last on 2 Oct. A pair was on the Lune marshes on 11 June but there was no evidence of breeding there, while up to three were seen in the Glasson/Conder area during summer.

### Liverpool Bay

Although records continue to decline on the south Fylde coast they are not as scarce as in Morecambe Bay, presumably as a result of birds wandering from the south Ribble colony. The first off Blackpool on 23 April was followed by 15 at Lytham on 30 April with 75 there on 1 May. Sixteen off Blackpool on 6 Aug with 30 there on the 8th were the only other sizeable counts in the north of the bay, while one there on 4 Oct was the last.

It is a very different story south of the Ribble. The earliest were at Seaforth on 4 April and numbers returning to the colony built up from mid-April to reach 250 by mid-May. Then there was a massive influx from 25 May as the huge colony on the Welsh Dee at Shotton deserted and mostly decamped to Seaforth. Record early summer numbers ensued with 860 on 30 May and more than 1500 from the second week of June. Although this brought some good news for birders (see Roseate Tern account) it was near disaster for Seaforth's breeding birds as competition for nest space on the rafts resulted in huge losses of eggs, resulting in only about 30 young fledging from 184 pairs. This breeding failure led, unusually, to fewer birds being present from late July with a peak count of 1140 on the 22nd, although 832 remained on 20 Aug and 76 on 9 Sept and the last on 3 Oct.

The Banks Marsh colony was not fully censused this year but 111 pairs were estimated during the atlas survey. In addition, at least 34 pairs nested on Longton Marsh, a site which has not been surveyed for many years, and one pair was seen regularly on Hesketh Out Marsh in May and June but did not breed.

Large counts off Formby Point, presumably of birds from both the Seaforth and Ribble colonies, included 170 on 3 May, 117 on the 6th, 270 on the 23rd, 216 on 22 July, 155 on 17 Aug and 240 on the 20th. Five-hundred-and-thirty were on the beach at Cabin Hill on 28-31 July and 320 roosted by the Formby Channel on 5 Aug when 1094 were also present at Seaforth.

### Inland

The inland breeding habit continues to spread, albeit slowly. Two pairs nested successfully at Delph Reservoir in 2008 but only one in 2009. Two new sites were colonised this year. One (a colour-ringed bird from Doffcocker Lodge, Bolton) arrived at Preston Docks on 1 June and up to six adults were seen there on the 27th, one pair hatching two young with one still present on 12 Aug. In Chorley a pair arrived at Birkacre in the Yarrow Valley Park on 2 June, quickly took up residence on the newly-installed raft and ultimately fledged two young.

Passage records were frequent with St. Helens taking the lion's share: 38 bird-days at Prescot Reservoirs between 30 April and 21 Sept and a peak of six on 9 July; regular sightings at Carr Mill Dam from 5 April to 26 July and up to four on three dates in Ecclestone. East Lancashire's first birds arrived at Stocks and Lower Foulridge Reservoirs on 16 April and low single figures were seen at these two sites on a further seven dates in May and June and eight dates in August and September with a peak of eight at Stocks on 1 Aug and the last at Foulridge on 18 Sept. Records elsewhere included 13 bird-days, mostly in autumn, at Brockholes Wetland between 13 May and 5 Sept,

eleven on Wayoh Reservoir on 30 July with a late bird there on 8 Oct, seven on Lower Rivington Reservoir on 23 Aug with eleven there on the 27th, five at MMWWT on 23 July, singles over Great Altcar on three dates in summer, seven over Charnock Richard on 20 Aug and one at Clowbridge Reservoir on 29 Aug.

## ROSEATE TERN\* *Sterna dougallii*

### **Scarce summer visitor.**

Seaforth enjoyed a series of records that were completely unprecedented in modern times in Lancashire. A minimum of 23 individuals were seen between 8 May and 6 Aug – individually identified on the basis of differences in primary moult, streamer length and underparts and bare part colour. Multiple counts included four on 4 July, seven on the 15th and five on the 23rd.

Unfortunately, although most carried 'Roseate-rings' in addition to standard BTO ones, only one was read (on 13 June) – this proved to have been a third-summer bird, ringed on Coquet island, Northumberland. Perhaps surprisingly in the light of the number of Coquet Common Terns recovered at Seaforth, this is the first evidence for the occurrence of an east coast Roseate Tern in the county, although the bird seen on 8 May was seen to fly off high north-east. With the exception of this latter bird which appeared to be a full adult, plumage features suggested that most, if not all, the others were sub-adults.

An unringed female arrived on 3 June and was paired with a third-summer Common Tern by the following week. Together they took over a deserted Coot's nest next to the main hide but, despite mating on several occasions, no eggs were laid. The Roseate was last seen on 13 July.

There were three other records on the Sefton Coast, presumably involving some of the Seaforth Birds: two off Formby Point on 24 July (B McCarthy) and one on the shore at Cabin Hill on the 29th (T Vaughan).

## ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

### **Common on spring passage, especially in Morecambe Bay; less numerous in autumn. Rare breeder.**

#### **Morecambe Bay**

Spring passage off Heysham was poor by recent standards. Records from elsewhere in the country suggested that, while the late April passage at Heysham was par for the course and on schedule, the strong westerlies in early May appeared to divert most of the remaining passage away from the Irish Sea. A total of 981 passed Heysham during 12-28 April with peaks of 182 on the 18th (when 79 were seen off Jenny Brown's Point), 114 on the 2nd and 518 on the 28th. Then only 141 were recorded in similar daily coverage between 29 April and 15 May, with 47 of these during north-easterly winds on 14 May. There was a late movement of 101 during calm conditions on 24 May, when 95 were also recorded at Cockersand. Unusually, this flock headed back out of the bay.

A few lingered on the Heysham outfalls during late May with the last on the 28th. One June record on the 13th was followed by sightings there during onshore winds of one or two juveniles between 28 Aug and juvenile 3 Oct. The last was a juvenile off Knott End on 20 Oct.

#### **Liverpool Bay**

The first off Cleveleys on 15 April were quickly followed by notable counts of 103 off Rossall Point on the 18th and 111 off Blackpool on the 21st. May peaks included 73 off Formby Point on the 9th and 27 off Blackpool on the 14th.

One or two were seen on the Sefton coast during June, perhaps originating from the south Ribble marshes ternery which was not censused this year, although one on Hesketh Out Marsh on

22 June was suggestive. For the second consecutive year a pair occupied a nest site at Seaforth from mid to late May – again without success.

Low single figures were seen off the Fylde coast in autumn, with peaks of twelve off Blackpool on 7 Aug and 13 there on 6 Sept, before the last off Rossall on 3 Oct. It was a similar story at Seaforth where six on 13-24 July was the largest count. However, once again there was some disagreement about the numbers passing Formby Point with one observer reporting regular counts of up to 20 between 20 July and 5 Sept with peaks of 93 on 17 Aug, 43 on the 20th and 76 on the 21st, while two others reported just single definite sightings. The last was one at Marshside on 25 Oct.

### **Inland**

Two at Stocks Reservoir on 15 April were followed by singles on several days to the end of the month and seven records in May, including 18 on the 13th. One was at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 21 April with four there on 26 May. Autumn produced two at Foulridge on 25 Aug and a late single at Stocks on 10 Oct.

Elsewhere, four were at Brockholes Wetland on 15 April with two there on 16 May and one on 9 Sept, one on Wayoh Reservoir on 30 July, and one on Prescott Reservoirs on 11 June with eight there on 15 Aug.

## **GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge***

### **Common passage migrant; uncommon winter visitor.**

It was another poor year with only four double-figure counts recorded and records particularly sparse in the second winter period.

Low single figures were seen off Formby, Blackpool and Heysham in the early year with eight at Formby on 9 Feb and six at Blackpool on the 19th the largest counts.

A trickle of passage birds began to appear in early April with 18 off Formby on the 7th, twelve off Rossall Point on the 18th and up to eleven off Heysham on the 24-26th. A few lingered off the Sefton Coast during summer but none was seen elsewhere.

Five off Formby on 23 Sept and eight off Rossall on 3 Oct were the only 'notable' autumn records amongst a thin scattering from all the main seawatching sites, and by late November just ones and twos remained in both Morecambe and Liverpool Bays.

## **RAZORBILL *Alca torda***

### **Common passage migrant; uncommon winter visitor.**

True to form, Razorbills were again far more numerous than Guillemots, especially during passage periods.

The first winter period produced a handful of records in Liverpool Bay, including eight off Blackpool on 14 Jan and 19 off Formby Point on 9 Feb. None were reported in Morecambe Bay during either winter period or in Liverpool Bay in the late year.

Spring passage began with 30 off Blackpool on 4 & 5 April with 70 there the following day, 78 were also seen off Formby on the 7th and up to 37 off Heysham. Few were seen thereafter with four off Formby on 23 May and three off Blackpool the next day the last of spring.

Autumn was less impressive. The first possible passage bird was off Blackpool on 4 July but the next was on the Mersey on 29 Aug, followed by low single-figure counts the length of the coast with a peak of five at Heysham on 3 Nov and singles off Blackpool on the 13 Nov, Rossall Point on 23 Nov and 29 Dec the last of the year.

One on the Wyre at Barnaby's Sands on 30 Aug and at Skippool Creek on 22 Sept was the only 'inland' record.

## UNIDENTIFIED LARGE AUKS

Given the relative frequency of the two species in Lancashire it seems likely that most records referred to Razorbills: seven off Blackpool on 14 Jan with 17 there on 9 Feb, six off Rossall Point on 22 March, twelve off Cleveleys on 19 May, 550 off Formby Point on 7 April, 100 off Rossall on the 18th and 26 off Blackpool on the 19th.

## BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cephus grylle*

**Scarce passage migrant; rare winter visitor. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern)**

**2008** A juvenile flew north past Rossall School on 7 September.

**2009** Four were seen on seawatches: singles off Rossall Point on 18 April, Blackpool on 12 June, Cleveleys on 6 July and Formby Point on 1 Oct.

Prospecting birds were at Heysham Harbour during the breeding season for the third successive year. An adult male made a brief visit on 21 March, followed by short early-morning visits from at least 1-11 April, with more lengthy presence thereafter. A different bird, still in partial winter plumage and therefore presumably a second-calendar-year, flew south out of the bay on 8 April. Two were reported by the wooden jetty on 9 May and a presumed adult female was seen receiving attention from the male on 7-8 June but it was not seen thereafter; the male was last seen on 18 June. Whether this was a failed breeding attempt remains open to speculation.

## LITTLE AUK\* *Alle alle*

**Scarce passage migrant.**

Two flying south together on 4 Dec (B McCarthy) was the only record.

## PUFFIN\* *Fratercula arctica*

**Scarce passage migrant.**

The only reports for which descriptions were received were singles off Formby on 9 May and 8 July (both B McCarthy)

## FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*

**Abundant and widely-distributed breeding resident.**

Many observers and site reports simply ignore this often-scruffy scavenger; almost all of this year's reports came from the coastal west. The Lancaster & District January survey located 1445, all but 95 of them in urban SD46; early-year peak counts in the Fylde included 265 at Singleton on 2 Jan, 265 in central Blackpool plus another 230 at North Shore on 1 Feb, and 210 on Lytham Moss on 22 March. In south Liverpool there were 120 at Garston on 21 Jan and 225+ in Sefton Park on the 31st; several counts of over 100 were reported from the Liverpool area during spring and summer.

Sixty-plus in a ploughed field at Jackhouse on 19 June was the highest count in east Lancashire all year. Late-year peaks in the Fylde included 450 in Blackpool on 14 Oct, 64 at Bone Hill, Pilling on 3 Nov and 350 at Singleton on the 9th. In south Liverpool there were 220 in Sefton Park on 28 Sept and 130+ on cereal fields near Belle Vale on 26 Oct; 133 were at Prescott Trade

Centre, St Helens on 30 Oct and about 50 at Clitheroe Cement Works on 17 Dec. In Rossendale there were 105 on the roof of Waterbarn Church, Stacksteads on 6 Sept and about 80 were on a school roof at Waterfoot on the 27th.

### STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

**Fairly common breeding resident; local flocks in winter. Amber List (important breeding population).**

About 50 near Belmont on 15 April was the highest count reported in the early year. Peaks in the Fylde included 16 at Copthorne on 31 Jan and 34 at Todderstaffe Hall on 7 Feb, with 43 there next day. There were an exceptional 20 records from 16 locations in east Lancashire during February; in the south-west the highest totals were of 30 in Southport Crematorium Woods on 11 Jan, 25 at Rosemary Lane, Halsall on the 31st and 20 on Plex Moss on 18 April.

The pattern of breeding-season reports was broadly similar to last year's. In the Pilling-Preesall-Out Rawcliffe area, Over Wyre, 53 pairs laid 239 eggs in 116 nests and fledged 146 young, a mean of 1.3 per nest, all in nest-boxes. Breeding territories were located at ten sites in south Liverpool, including six in Sefton Park; elsewhere in the south-west six pairs bred at MMWWT, one pair on Freshfield Dune Heath and one in a pipe at Seaforth. In east Lancashire seven territorial pairs were located in the Altham-Read-Huntroyde area, and a newly-hatched chick was in a nest at New Laithe Farm, Newton on 17 Feb. Scattered breeding pairs were reported from north Lancashire, including five in nest-boxes at Arkholme, one up on 2008's total; pairs were recorded in up to ten locations in Rossendale.

Widespread double-figure flocks were reported from the coastal west from mid-August, including 20+ at Freckleton Naze on 10 Aug and 60 at MMWWT on the 23rd; 18 flew north at Prescott Reservoirs on 11 Nov, and 100, the year's largest flock by far, were at The Heads, Stalmine on the 22nd. There were 42 on Hesketh Out Marsh on 17 Dec, 33 at Bone Hill, Pilling next day and 26 on Halsall Moss on the 27th.

### WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

**Abundant breeding resident; widespread winter flocks.**

Substantial influxes into the Fylde and the south-west in late 2008 left some significant flocks in both regions well into 2009. Up to 4000 were on Rawcliffe Moss throughout January and early February, dwindling to 600 by 6 March and a mere 21 by the 10th. Over 10000 were in the MMWWT area on 3 Jan and 5000 on 13 Feb; an estimated 17500 left a roost at Scarisbrick Hall on the morning of 6 Feb. These enormous flocks seem to have been quite localised, however, as elsewhere in the Fylde and south-west none of the early-year counts exceeded 600 birds. In north Lancashire the January 10km square survey located 403 Woodpigeons across all squares, a similar total to those of the previous three years; very few were recorded in inland or upland squares. Two hundred and fifty roosting in Belmont Plantations on 21 Feb was the highest count reported at any distance inland.

Only two noteworthy items of breeding data were received: 88 nests were monitored in Sefton Park, south Liverpool, with the last young fledging in early October, while 13 pairs bred on Freshfield Dune Heath but the species was described as an extremely common breeder in several regions. Over 160 were present in the Belmont area in early July, feeding on moorland whinberries; there were 250 at Marton Mere on the 20th.

Autumn was relatively quiet, as in 2008, until early October when about 20000 arrived at MMWWT, remaining until the 18th. There was a movement of 4140 over Oglet, south Liverpool in

35 minutes on the morning of 12 Oct; 414, the largest flock in the ELOC region all year, fed on beech-mast at Whalley Nab on the 18th, 908 passed over Fairhaven on the 29th and there were 1000 at Eagland Hill, Pilling next day. Further arrivals and movements in November produced counts of up to 3000 in the Pilling area during the 9-15th, 'several thousand' went to roost on Mawdesley Moss, Chorley on 14 Nov, there were 3000 on Rawcliffe Moss on the 21st, while 3200 on Plex Moss next day had increased to 6900 by the 27th; 239 flew south over Seaforth on the 28th. In the north of the county movements seem to have been quite localised: 196 over Heysham NR on 16 Nov was that site's peak count; while a total of 5285 were counted over Crag Bank watchpoint between 26 Oct and 21 Nov, with a peak of 2189 on 15 Nov, but at the Caton Moor watchpoint, some 12km to the south-east, only 26 migrant Woodpigeons were recorded all autumn.

The very large flocks seem to have dwindled significantly by the beginning of December; there were 800 on Rawcliffe Moss on 8 Dec, 529 flew south over Seaforth on the 12th, and there were 600+ in the Speke area of south Liverpool on the 26th.

### COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

#### **Common breeding resident, more local in the east; some coastal passage.**

Peak counts at both ends of the year were the highest for several years. The L&DBWS January census recorded a total of 207 across all squares, very similar to 2008's total, but very few were located in inland squares. In the Fylde there were 50 at Willowgrove, Preesall on 4 Jan, 57 at Little Tongues on the 17th and 102 in Fleetwood Memorial Park on the 24th. No noteworthy counts were received from the south-west; in east Lancashire there were 21 at Allsprings, Great Harwood on 8 Jan and 15 at Rishton Reservoir on 2 March. Two passage birds flew north over Heysham NR on 20 March and 1 April, and a total of seven passed north-east over Crag Bank watchpoint between 24 April and 12 May.

Breeding data were negligible this year; at least one pair bred on British Energy land at Heysham and nesting was confirmed at a site in Burnley. There were few reports of autumn movements: a total of 15 passed at Heysham between 10 Sept and 13 Oct, and on the latter date eight flew over the old Garden Festival site in south Liverpool.

An early autumn flock of 36 was at Lightfoot Green, Fylde on 30 July; subsequent counts in the region included 32 at Pilling Lane on 15 Sept and 48 at Newton-with-Scales on 5 Dec, while 290 at Hy-Fly Game Hatcheries, Pilling Lane on 10 Oct was the highest count of Collared Doves in Lancashire since the early 1990s; 66 birds were there on 20 Nov. In south Liverpool 33 feeding on stubbles near Belle Vale on 14 Sept had increased to over a hundred by the 21st; at Mere Sands Wood the year's peak count of 28 was recorded in December. Inland, up to 23 were regular in a Belmont garden during October-November, whilst the ELOC recorded 14 at Allsprings on 16 Aug and 22 at Clowbridge on 10 Dec.

### TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

#### **Scarce passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).**

One flew north over the old Sand Plant compound at Marshside on 14 May; the only other record was of a first-winter bird photographed in a Crosby garden on 25 Oct.

Sightings are now so scarce that Turtle Dove should perhaps be added to the list of 'description species'.

**RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*****Rare feral breeder; fairly frequent escape.**

Most birders' attention seems to have focused on the small breeding colony in the grounds of Lytham Crematorium, where birds were recorded in all months except August and November, with up to six present on several dates; birds were seen on the nest on 13 April and 10 July.

A second cluster of records came from the south-west, where up to three birds were present at Lathom, near Burscough in February, April, September and October; singles were in Skelmersdale on 17 Feb and on Downholland Moss on 10 Sept, and there were three in Ormskirk on 13 Sept. The only other reports were of singles in Halewood, south Liverpool on 2 Feb and in Oswaldtwistle on three dates between mid-March and late April.

**CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*****Uncommon breeding bird and double passage migrant, more numerous in spring. Red List (breeding decline).**

The first calling male at Yealand, near Silverdale on 12 April was followed by singles at Blundellsands on the 16th and on Darwen Moor the next day. The first Cuckoo reached Stocks Reservoir on 18 April and one or two calling males were recorded intermittently there until 23 June. The first of five April birds in the Fylde was at Fluke Hall, Pilling on 25 April, the same day that the Chorley region recorded its first arrival at White Coppice.

The usual scatter of May records came mainly from upland areas. In the north there were multiple reports of calling males from Hindburndale and Roeburndale and Cuckoos were recorded at seven other locations. In east Lancashire birds were present at five Bowland sites away from Stocks Reservoir and also at Clayton-le-Moors and Foulridge Reservoir. In Chorley DNHS region there were regular reports from the Healey Nab-White Coppice area and calling males were at six sites around Belmont, including a displaying pair on 25 May. Cuckoos were reported from a total of ten locations in the Fylde and south-west during May; successful breeding was confirmed on the Ainsdale dunes. One calling at Grane on 9 May was the only spring record in Rossendale.

The few 'new' records in June included two in the Fylde and a juvenile at Prescott Reservoirs from 25 June to 6 July. The only other juveniles recorded were at Helmshore, Rossendale on 10 July and at Foulridge from 31 July to 6 Aug, the last Cuckoo of the year.

**BARN OWL *Tyto alba*****Uncommon breeding resident, most numerous in the south-west and the Fylde. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern)**

The recent expansion of the Barn Owl's breeding range in upland areas was at least maintained during 2009. Nesting was confirmed at four confidential sites in east Lancashire, all in or around the Hodder Valley; birds were also seen at Samlesbury, Champion Moor and Clayton-le-Moors in the early year and at Stocks Reservoir in November. In the Chorley region the regular pair at Ulnes Walton fledged three young, seven pairs bred in the Belmont-Roddlesworth area, and there were sight records from Coppull, Buckshaw, Bretherton, Lostock Hall and Mossfield. Two pairs were reported to have bred successfully in the Lune Valley and there were widespread sightings in north Lancashire throughout the year; breeding was recorded at one site in Rossendale, with three juveniles fledged.

Barn Owls were recorded in all months throughout the Fylde. In the Pilling-Preesall-Stalmine-Hambleton area 16 pairs laid 66 eggs in nest-boxes, of which 42 hatched and 22 young

fledged; birds were present at six further sites Over Wyre, but did not breed. In the south-west, although numerous reports of sightings were received there were only five breeding reports: three pairs nested at Tarbock, south Liverpool, and one in Knowsley Park, and a pair that nested in the Harrier Hide at MMWWT fledged three chicks on 12 June.

### LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

#### **Fairly common and widespread breeding resident.**

As usual there were many reports of apparently territorial birds or pairs from all regions of the county, but relatively few records of proven breeding. In the Fylde, where the FBC website recorded sightings throughout the region, 20 pairs bred in nest-boxes in the Pilling-Preesall area, laying 59 eggs of which 38 hatched and 24 young fledged, 1.2 per nest; this was a considerable improvement on last year's success-rate. In the south-west a pair bred at Red Gate Farm, Ormskirk and another probably nested at Seaforth; there were widespread sightings of singles or pairs during the breeding season, including at Mere Sands Wood, Low Meadows near Rufford, Tarbock, Halsall and Hundred End.

In the Chorley region pairs were present at three sites on the West Pennine Moors near Belmont and a pair at Belmont Reservoir fledged two young; there were breeding-season reports from Ulnes Walton, Leyland, Croston Finney and Rivington. Birds were present at seven sites in Rossendale during the breeding season. ELOC reported 87 records from 20 different locations, over all months of the year; at least three pairs bred successfully in the area around Blacko Tower. There were also many breeding-season records in north Lancashire but, apart from a pair at Gressingham in the Lune Valley, no confirmation of breeding.

### TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

#### **Common and widespread breeding resident.**

In north Lancashire birds breeding in nest-boxes at Arkholme were exceptionally late, with small clutches and few broods; breeding success was also poor in the Silverdale area, suggesting a poor vole year in the region. One pair nested on Heysham Head and calling birds were reported from many sites. In the Fylde calling and sight records in spring were also widespread; in the Pilling-Preesall area 14 pairs laid 27 eggs in nest-boxes, 23 hatched and 20 young fledged, 1.4 per pair, as in 2008. Scattered records from the south-west included two pairs each at MMWWT and Downholland Moss and one at Gorse Hill, near Ormskirk; nesting was considered probable on Freshfield Dune Heath.

There were 79 records of Tawny Owls in east Lancashire, from all parts of the region. Although the only proof of breeding came from the Jackhouse area, indications of the species' true status in the region were the total of seven calling males in Gisburn Forest on 19 Feb and the three males and two females calling simultaneously in Wycoller Valley on 14 Nov. In Chorley region the species was regularly present in all the Rivington woodlands, with successful breeding by two pairs; six pairs successfully fledged young in the Belmont area, one pair bred in Cuerden Valley Park, and birds were present in the breeding season at Eccleston, High Bullough, Euxton, Lower Burgh Meadow, Heskin and White Coppice. In Rossendale Tawny Owls bred at two locations and breeding season presence was recorded at up to five other sites.

## LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

**Scarce breeding resident; uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.**

A survey of the coastal south-west mosslands from Plex Moss south to the line Hightown-Lunt-Maghull located five pairs with young and breeding-season presence at five other sites; it was estimated that there was a minimum of 15 pairs on the mosses as a whole.



Long-eared Owl, Marton Mere, 15 March (Steve Young)

In east Lancashire breeding was confirmed near Burnley, where two pairs each reared two young; there were several sightings of single birds in early year, at Sunnyhurst Hey Reservoir, Darwen, Cross of Greet and Feniscowles, near Blackburn. In Chorley region a pair held territory, and probably bred, on the West Pennine Moors near Belmont; there was no proof of breeding in the north this year, although a male was calling on Leck Fell in early spring.

The regular winter roost at Marton Mere held up to nine birds in January, eight in February, four in March and one in April, with the last recorded on the 17th. Two had returned by 24 Sept, increasing to three by 12 Oct and four by 8 Dec. Another, smaller roost on Aldcliffe Marsh contained a single bird from 22 Feb, with two on the 28th and again from 30 March to the last report on 6 April. One was again present there on the very early dates of 1, 8 & 12 August. Apart from this possible migrant, there were no reports of passage birds in 2009; one in Southport on 11 Oct is more likely to have wandered from the nearby mossland population.

## SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

**Scarce upland breeding bird; uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern)**

There were numerous records in Over Wyre during the first winter period, with peak counts of six at Scronkey in January and three there in February-March, three at Bradshaw Lane Head in

January and one or two on Pilling Moss; the last record in the area was on 10 April. Further south in the Fylde one was on Warton Marsh during January-February.

One was on Marshside-Crossens saltings in January and up to four during February-March, with the last two on 11 April, and one was on Aldcliffe Marsh in north Lancashire between 22 Feb and 13 March. In east Lancashire up to five were hunting Bowland Knotts in the early year and two were at Sunnyhurst Hey Reservoir, Darwen during 1-4 Jan; one was at Belmont, Chorley on the 31st and a bird was at Deeply Vale, Rossendale on 13 Feb.

The usual trickle of spring migrants was reported from coastal and mossland sites: singles were at Altcar Rifle Ranges on 10 April, Jack Scout, Silverdale on the 18th, Aldcliffe Marsh on 22 April and 15 May, Warton Marsh on 27 April, Pilling Moss on 2 May and Bank End on the 10th; two were at MMWWT on 4 & 8 May.

An apparent slump in the Short-tailed Vole population led to a very poor breeding season on the United Utilities Bowland estate; eleven territories were occupied but there were only three nesting attempts, compared with 23 and eleven respectively in 2008. Elsewhere in the ELOC region a pair bred at Hurstwood, south-east of Burnley. In Chorley region two pairs held territory on the West Pennine Moors near Belmont, with a third possible nearby; one was hunting Anglezarke Moor in June and July. One at Musbury on 23 May was the only breeding-season report from Rossendale.

The first coastal migrant was at Marshside on 23 Aug, followed by singles at Pilling and Warton Marshes on 17 Sept, Aldcliffe Marsh on the 19th, Rossall Point on 7 Oct, Hesketh Out Marsh on 18 Oct and 14 Nov and at Crossens on 3 Nov. In the uplands four were hunting over Champion Moor in autumn.

Very low numbers were reported at the year's end, with the exception of Marshside-Crossens where birds were present from 12 Dec with up to nine on the 31st; singles were on Hesketh Out Marsh on 20 Dec and on Lytham Moss on the 24th. One on Darwen Moor on 31 Dec was the only report from upland areas.

### NIGHTJAR\* *Caprimulgus europaeus*

#### **Rare passage migrant and summer visitor, probably extinct as a breeding species.**

Two autumn migrants were recorded in 2009, only a few kilometres and a little over a week apart. An injured bird was found in Silverdale on 10 Sept and taken to Leighton Moss (J Webb *et al*); it was subsequently put down due to the extent of its injuries. On 19 Sept one spent several hours on a grit tray at Leighton Moss, admired by many birders (finder unknown). The most recent Lancashire record was of one at Gait Barrows, also in the Silverdale area, on 1 June 2004.

### SWIFT *Apus apus*

#### **Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Amber List (breeding decline).**

The first spring arrival was over Haslingden, Rossendale on 14 April, followed by singles at Prescott Reservoirs on 17 April and at Marshside on the 20th, and five over Burnley next day. Small numbers were widespread by 25 April and there were 30+ over Marton Mere on the 26th.

For the third successive year movements and arrivals in May were again quite light: peak counts included 250+ over Marshside on 12 May, 200+ at Brockholes Wetland on the 14th, 300 at Seaforth on the 17th and 100 over Stanley Park, Blackpool the following day. Inland flocks were generally smaller, with 70-80 moving at Arkholme on 13 May and 300+ over Ewood Bridge Sewage Works, Rossendale on the 17th the largest gatherings reported. Movements continued intermittently into the first half of June, including our only four-figure count, 1100 over Crosby

Marine Park on the 7th; other noteworthy flocks included 200+ at Prescott Reservoirs on 3 June and 50 at White Coppice, Chorley next day.

Breeding data, as usual for this species, were very sparse. There were 40-45 pairs in two colonies at Freehold, Lancaster and birds were present at breeding sites in Colne and Holden in east Lancashire and east Speke in south Liverpool.

Post-breeding flocks and movements were exceedingly light this year. In east Lancashire 100+ were over Clowbridge Reservoir on 19 July and Whitemoor Reservoir, Colne on the 26th; there were 123 at Dow Brook, Fylde on 12 July, 60 on the 16th was Heysham's peak count all year, and 400+ over Prescott Reservoirs next day was the only decent-sized flock reported anywhere. After counts of 50 over Lytham St. Anne's NR on 2 Aug and 32 over Seaforth on the 4th numbers dwindled to single figures virtually overnight; ten at Ightenhill Bridge in the ELOC region on 19 Aug was the largest inland flock reported. The majority of regions and well-watched sites reported their last Swifts of 2009 between 4 and 8 Sept; the last stragglers were single birds over Hesketh Out Marsh on 11 Sept and MMWWT on the 29th.

## PALLID SWIFT *Apus pallidus*

### Vagrant

Lancashire's first Pallid Swift arrived over Seaforth and Crosby Coastal Park with a handful of Common Swifts on 30 April (C Sharratt, P Kinsella). It was watched every day until 10 May by a stream of visiting birders before disappearing, only to return on 13 May to be seen daily until the 27th. The record has been accepted by the BBRC (see separate article).

## ALPINE SWIFT\* *Tachymarptis melba*

### Vagrant.

One was over Pilling Marsh for only a few minutes on the afternoon of 15 April before flying off to the north (F Bird, A Hinchliffe). A report of one the following day at Heysham presumably related to the same individual (C & B Ashby). This was the fifth county record; the most recent was at Claughton in the Lune Valley on 25 May 1992.

## KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

### **Uncommon but widely-distributed breeding bird, mainly in the east; post-breeding dispersal westwards. Amber List (Species of European conservation Concern)**

Although the Lancaster & District 10km square January survey located only eight individuals in four squares, compared with 14 in 2008, elsewhere Kingfishers seem to have been well-distributed and in the usual numbers in the coastal lowlands during the first winter period. In north Lancashire up to 15 pairs bred along the Rivers Lune, Wyre and Conder; the Lune itself held nine territories, including three on the 10km stretch between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot.

A slight fall in the number of records was reported in east Lancashire, 92 compared with 114 in 2008, but Kingfishers were widely distributed on waters throughout the region; although breeding was not confirmed it was thought probable at a number of sites. There was a marked increase in the number of sightings in the Belmont area, with up to two regularly at each of six locations; elsewhere in Chorley region two pairs nested in Cuerden Valley Park and an adult was feeding two young on the edge of Lower Rivington Reservoir on 19 Aug.

The long-predicted advance of the breeding range into the lowland west seems to have taken a modest step forward this year. In the Fylde Bird Club area pairs bred at Wesham and in Savick

Park, on the western edge of Preston. In the south-west a pair at Mere Sands Wood fledged two young and a pair bred at Mere Beck Fly Fishery near Holmeswood, although a nesting attempt at MMWWT failed. One or two Kingfishers were present at Carr Mill Dam, St Helens on numerous dates from January to July, although breeding was not confirmed.

Post-breeding dispersal, presumably by juvenile birds, was underway by late June. Singles were at Sands Lake, Ainsdale on 2 July, Low Meadows, Rufford on the 4th and Brockholes Wetland on the 12th; a juvenile was trapped on Middleton Industrial Estate, Heysham on the 25th. By mid-September ones or twos were widespread at waters in the coastal north, the Fylde and the south-west; as usual, many visits were brief as birds moved from site to site at the approach of winter.

### HOOPOE\* *Upupa epops*

#### **Rare passage migrant.**

One flew over Seaforth, harassed by Magpies, on 11 April (MA Small *et al*). The only previous record of this species here was in April 1997.

### GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

#### **Fairly common though local breeding bird, mainly in the north and east. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern).**

In north Lancashire breeding by two pairs was confirmed at both Claughton and Warton Crag and four along the River Lune between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot; breeding-season presence was also reported from Hindburndale, Roeburndale, Birk Bank, Littledale and Wrayton, and from several sites in the Silverdale area. There was an exceptional series of autumn records at Heysham NR: singles on 11 & 13 Aug, on 5, 11 & 23 Oct, and on 29 Nov; there were two juveniles on Middleton Industrial Estate on 19 Sept. One flew over Caton Moor watchpoint on 27 Sept.

In east Lancashire there were 117 records from all parts of the region (111 in 2008) and birds were heard calling in all months. Breeding was confirmed at Hesbert Hall and Siddows and thought likely at Moor Isles, near Padiham, and a few other locations.

In Chorley DNHS region two pairs held territory near Belmont during the breeding season; vocal birds were noted from mid-February to late April in the Rivington and Anglezarke woodlands and there were further breeding-season records from White Coppice, Grey Heights Woods and Cuerden Valley Park.

Further west and south birds were present on twelve dates at Brockholes Wetland between late April and 1 Aug, with four on 4 July and three on the 19th. There were several records of ones or twos at Prescott Reservoirs between January and May and one was at Clock Face Colliery on 14 Feb. In the Fylde a juvenile female was on Poulton Industrial Estate on 15 & 21 Aug; one was at Ansdell on 30 Sept, and one was in Lytham Crematorium Woods on 14 Oct and 30 Nov. In another interesting series of records, on the south-west mosslands, single birds were at Mere Sands Wood in July, at Lathom Park, between Burscough and Skelmersdale on 28 July and at MMWWT on 7 Sept.

### GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

#### **Common and widespread breeding resident.**

East Lancashire's flourishing population was reflected in 190 records from 81 different sites across the region; the six confirmed breeding records were, presumably, only a very small sample of the

true total. A similar situation no doubt obtains elsewhere in the county; in north Lancashire the species was reported throughout the year from many woodlands and gardens although the only confirmed breeding records were of ten pairs along the Lune between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot, four pairs at Claughton, and one on Warton Crag.

In Chorley region around 20 territories were located in the Rivington-Anglezarke woodlands, a similar total to last year's; elsewhere breeding pairs were reported from all the usual sites, including Cuerden Valley Park (six pairs), Duxbury Woods, Withnell Fold and Yarrow Valley Park. In the Fylde the FBC website lists very numerous records from all parts, many of which refer to breeding pairs. In the south-west up to four pairs nested at Mere Sands Wood and single pairs on Hesketh Golf Course, Marshside, MMWWT and Freshfield Dune Heath; nests with young were located at five sites in south Liverpool, where three pairs bred in Sefton Park.

A slight mid-autumn passage movement was evident at coastal sites in the south-west, but not further north: single birds passed at Seaforth on 14 & 16 Sept, 7, 17 & 28 Oct and 9 Nov; at Marshside three moved south along the Marine Drive embankment on 16 Oct and one was on Oglet Shore on the 12th.

### LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor*

#### **Scarce and local breeding resident. Red List (breeding decline).**

After years of steady decline the situation of this, the most elusive and most prized of our resident breeding birds, may finally have reached crisis-point in 2009. Not a single record was received, for the first time in this writer's experience. Another species that surely must soon be added to the county's 'description species' list.

### RED-BACKED SHRIKE\* *Lanius collurio*

#### **Vagrant**

The only record of the year, and Lancashire's 17th of modern times, was of an adult male singing at Pope Lane Fields near Brockholes Wetland on the afternoon and evening of 20 June and very briefly the following morning (N. Green). The bird had missing tail feathers and appeared to be holding territory but was not seen subsequently.

### GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

#### **Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

One seen near Lower Lea along the Tarnbrook road in Bowland on 29 March was the only record of the year.

### WOODCHAT SHRIKE\* *Lanius senator*

#### **Vagrant**

A female graced the area around Tower Lodge, Marshaw on the morning and afternoon of 29th May (J Butcher). It covered a wide area in that time and was not seen subsequently. This was only the sixth Lancashire record of this species, the previous being at Marshside in May 2007.

## MAGPIE *Pica pica*

### **Abundant resident**

A similar sort of picture to last year. Magpies remain a common sight around the county, only declining in the more rural, kept areas. Early year roost counts included 40 at Princes Park, Liverpool on 29 Jan, 40 at Royal Lytham Golf Course on the 30th and up to 43 at Willowgrove, Preesall during January to March. The annual January survey of the Lancaster district recorded 301. In the east of the county, a peak of 33 was recorded at Shuttleworth Mead-Altham area in early March and a roost at Jackhouse Reservoir held 24 on 26 Feb. The largest count in St. Helens was 31 at Clock Face Colliery,.

Few breeding data were received. Three pairs on Warton Crag was typical and nine pairs on BE properties at Heysham was towards the higher end of the range. In south Liverpool there was a large early summer gathering of over 26 at Gateacre Sewage Works on 13 June and over 20 were seen between Belle Vale and the M62 during the summer months.

Gamekeepers at Belmont reported shooting or trapping 45 Magpies during 2009.

Roost and other counts in the latter part of the year included 50 at Regency Gardens, Blackpool, up to 27 at Preesall, 30 at Formby Point and up to 32 at Seaforth in October. There were 40 at Princes Park on 10 Dec but the largest counts by far were of 265 at Egerton on 28 Dec and 297 at Blackpool Zoo in late December.

## JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

### **Common resident. Occasional irruptions, some winter dispersal.**

This mostly resident species was reported widely in small numbers from all corners of the region. Indeed it is more and more regularly reported from town centre parks and gardens than ever before. Jays are more thinly distributed towards the coast but still increasing with reports from 75 locations across the Fylde with larger counts nearer to Preston. There were regular records from Pilling and Preesall and Ravenmeols further south.

Migratory movements in September and October included a remarkable 26 on Downholland Moss on 1 Oct and singles at Seaforth on 17 & 22 Sept with nine flying south on 5 Oct. On 4 Oct three were seen high over Belmont and 15 headed north over Oakenclough in two hours, including five at a considerable height. Two were on Hesketh Golf Course on 18 Oct.

A Tawny Owl was observed attempting to take a roosting Jay in Belmont Plantations on 27 Sept.

## JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

### **Common breeding resident, some autumn movement.**

Although not generally as numerous as in 2008, Jackdaws were again present in large numbers during the early part of the year. There were 450 at Eagland Hill on 3 Jan, 500 roosted at Upper Rivington Reservoir on 17 Jan and 250 were on Plex Moss the same day. Large numbers were at Moss House Farm, Out Rawcliffe during the early part of the year, peaking at 807 on 12 Feb. Large roosts were reported from Nether Kellet, Bolton-le-Sands and Storrs Hall, Arkholme, and there were counts of 50-100 from several sites in the Clitheroe area in the early part of the year and 150 at Colne on 2 Feb. Approximately 150 were feeding with Rooks at Roby Mill on 18 Feb.

A flock in excess of 400 was seen in the Ewood Bridge area of Rossendale during February and early March; 350 were at the same site in November and this may be the main roosting site for Jackdaws in the Irwell catchment.

In east Lancashire a pair was prospecting a Little Owl nest box at Brownsills on 28 Feb and the maximum count in the breeding season was over 300 at Cowden Farm on 21 July. In the Pilling-Preesall area 30 nests were monitored and 130 eggs were laid from which 58 hatched and 43 young fledged. Over 150 adults and juveniles were in Withnell Quarry on 22 June and at least 240 were at Warton Crag on the 27th. The species is spreading into new areas of south Liverpool such as Sefton Park.

Autumn passage was poor at Heysham with just one 'big day' of 70 on 16 Oct. However, at Seaforth there were counts of 60 south on 12 Oct, 168 on the 16th, 750 on the 17th and 50 on the 18th. Migrants were also noted over the old Garden Festival site in Liverpool with a total of 400 going north-west on 13 Oct. At least 575 were in the vicinity of Coney Lane Sewage Works in south Liverpool before departing towards Gateacre on 26 Oct. Also in October there were counts of 250 at Higherford on the 1st, 120 at Brungerley Park on the 11th and 200 leaving a roost at Clitheroe on the 22nd. There were 350 at Hackensall, Preesall on 17 Oct, 145 at Crook o' Lune on 1 Nov and 100 at Fluke Hall, Pilling on the 21st.

Second winter period counts were significant in some areas; in November 1200 roosted at Upper Rivington and 300 were at MMWWT whilst during December over 600 were roosting at Cuerden Valley Park and over 1000 at Formby Point.

## ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

### **Abundant resident.**

Once again, numbers at rookeries were slightly down on the previous year. There were 320 nests in the ten regularly censused rookeries in the Chorley area, the largest being 78 at Croston, and 48 nests in two rookeries in Turton/Edgworth (down from 61). The annual sample count of rookeries in the coastal area from the River Kent to Bolton-le-Sands and inland to Over Kellet and Milnthorpe (mostly in Lancashire but some in Cumbria) revealed 328 nests in 20 rookeries, a further reduction.

A new rookery in Slaidburn village had 13 nests compared to just one last year. Rookeries were also active at Mitton Hall (eight nests), Greenfields Reservoir, Laneshaw Bridge and Pendleton Hall (23 nests, down from 31). At Roby Mill, the Bank Brow rookery had between 63 and 67 nests and there were thirteen counted at Knott End Library. Two small 'new' rookeries were discovered in the Fazakerley area of north Liverpool, the only ones known in the city. The rookery at Rosemary Wood, Downholland Moss reduced from 37 pairs to four due to attacks by Buzzards. It is interesting to note that the recent rapid spread of Buzzards in Ireland has been largely attributed to their predation on Rooks.

In the winter periods, up to 300 roosted at Upper Rivington and a regular feeding flock of 50 around Belmont was significant as the species has been quite rare in that area in previous years. About 150 were along Lafford Lane, Roby Mill in February, over 100 at Great Mitton in January and February and over 100 were recorded at Prescott Reservoirs in March. The January survey of the Lancaster area resulted in 1222 birds, a similar figure to 2008. Larger counts on the Fylde included 138 at Cockerham Moss on 21 Feb and 165 around Great Plumpton on the 8th.

There was a very small movement of birds over Heysham in late September/early October whilst over 200 were counted at Clock Face Colliery on 29 Sept and 85-95 were at Crook o' Lune in October.

## CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

### **Abundant breeding bird. Some southward movement in October.**

Eight pairs were monitored in the Pilling-Preesall area, laying 35 eggs of which 20 hatched and 19 young fledged. Three pairs at Warton Crag RSPB was an average showing; there were nine pairs at Arkholme, three pairs at Jackhouse, two at Lomeshaye Marsh and singles from many other locations.

The records of the gamekeepers at Belmont showed that 143 were shot or trapped during 2009 and counts at the roosts around Winter Hill included 500 at the Delph Plantations on 4 Jan, 200 at Upper Rivington on the 17th and over 200 at Roddlesworth Plantations on the 23rd. Over 150 roosted in Delph Plantations on 21 Oct rising to 350 on 8 Nov and 400 on 18 Dec and 150 roosted at Upper Rivington on 15 Nov rising to 400 by 30 Dec.

In the Lancaster area 532 were counted in the January survey, another reduction on previous year's counts. Ninety-five were on Plex Moss on 1 Feb and over 80 were at Prescot Reservoirs on 22 Dec. A large post-breeding gathering was of 142 at Alston Wetland on 13 Aug whilst 46 were together at Billington on 6 Sept. Due to public feeding the crows in Sefton Park, Liverpool have become quite tame and numbers peaked at 147 on 24 Oct. Very little migratory movement was noted. On the Fylde, the largest counts were of 80 at Rawcliffe Moss and 150 at Nateby in mid October.

White birds in east Lancashire continued to provoke comment. A pure white bird was present at Shuttleworth Mead in the early part of the year up to April and other true albinos were seen at Alston and Todber, near Gisburn in February.

## HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix*

### **Scarce winter visitor or early spring passage migrant; has bred with Carrion Crow.**

Single birds were reported from four locations during the year. The first report was of one near to the M6 on Quernmore Road, Lancaster on 22-23 Jan. A bird was on Plex Moss on 24 April and the following day one was seen at Rossall Point. Finally, a bird was present at Downholland Moss on 20 June.

## RAVEN *Corvus corax*

### **Scarce breeding bird.**

These days Ravens may be encountered almost anywhere in Lancashire. On the Fylde, for example, ones and twos were reported from 41 sites with a peak of nine flying over Singleton on 23 May. In east Lancashire, peak counts were of eight on Waddington Fell on 12 June and eleven on Beatrix Fell on 2 Aug. Five were commuting between a gasometer and the cathedral in Blackburn during January. Strangely, though, having established a breeding toehold in Liverpool a few years ago none is known to have nested for several years.

Several confirmed breeding records included three young fledged at Heysham Moss, four fledged on Bamber Bridge Mill and four fledged at Worston. Other pairs bred at Penwortham, Chorley, Parbold, Great Altcar, Horrocksford, Bloe Greet and Trough of Bowland whilst family parties were noted at Rivington, White Coppice and Whittle. Three pairs nested in quarries on the West Pennine Moors, four in the Silverdale area and two in the Lune Valley. Though frequently encountered on the south-west mosslands, there were no reports of breeding there. There were records in every month of the year on the Fylde but no reports of breeding.

### GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

**Common breeding bird, especially in the east. Common double passage migrant and winter visitor in variable numbers.**

Reporting rates for this widespread resident are always fairly low and hard data are often hard to come by – a situation which is in the process of being rectified by the atlas surveys. However, there was some evidence that the hard winter of 2008/09 may have had a significant impact on numbers, at least in the north and east of the county. The Lancaster & District January survey recorded a mere 18 birds compared with 69 in 2008 and 56 in 2007, while a total of 148 records were reported throughout the year in east Lancashire compared with 229 in 2008 and 161 in 2006. No significant numbers were reported from any site elsewhere. One on 13 Sept was the only record all year at Cuerden Valley Park.

Whether this apparent downturn in winter numbers was due entirely to increased mortality or perhaps involved some dispersal is unclear, but Seaforth's first ever midwinter record on 27 Jan seems likely to have been in the latter category.

Spring passage began in the first week of March and low single-figure counts were reported from a number of sites, including six at Stanley Park, Blackpool on 14 March, five at Preesall Flashes on the 16th and ten at Marshside on the 20th. A below average total of 45 was ringed at Heysham in spring.

Breeding was confirmed at a dozen or more sites, including all the large parks, in south Liverpool, at MMWWT and at various eastern sites including Moor Piece and Jackhouse.

Autumn passage was described as 'almost non-existent' at Heysham where only six were ringed compared with an average of 55 in 2000-2008, and the ringing total of 22 at Leighton Moss was also lower than the decade's average. It seems to have been a similar story elsewhere with no migrants seen at Marshside and just one at Seaforth. A flock of five near Belmont on 5 Sept and five at Wayoh Reservoir on 26 Nov may have been locally bred birds.

### FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus*

**Uncommon passage migrant, scarce in winter.**

There were just three records, all of singles: at Stanley Park, Blackpool on 1-29 March, Myerscough College on 17 March and in a garden in Woolton, south Liverpool on 22 April.

### BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

**Abundant breeding bird. Marked autumn passage.**

Although the number of nesting pairs seemed to be down further, nearly everywhere reported good productivity. In the Pilling-Preesall area 50 pairs were monitored laying 418 eggs of which 317 hatched and 301 young fledged – an average of over six per pair. Five pairs used nest boxes at Heysham NR, just nine pairs on Warton Crag RSPB and just two pairs on the United Utilities estates in Bowland, compared to 16 in 2008 – although each fledged eight young. At Claughton 24 out of 25 pairs were successful with brood size averaging 8.3; eleven pairs nested at Trowbarrow Quarry and three at Arkholme with similar success but there was only 16% occupancy at the latter site.

However, 48 boxes were occupied at Mere Sands Wood and four pairs nested at Brockholes Wetland. Late broods were noted at a couple of sites in east Lancashire including one at Jackhouse where the young fledged on 7 July.

There was little autumn movement with just 51 trapped at Heysham NR and a peak of eleven at Seaforth in September. However, two large flocks totalling 35 birds were at Belmont on 28 Oct.

## GREAT TIT *Parus major*

### **Abundant breeding bird, less common on autumn passage than Blue Tit.**

The situation regarding Great Tits was very similar to that of Blue Tits in that overall numbers were down but breeding success was up. In the Pilling-Preesall area 31 monitored pairs were laid 210 eggs of which 160 hatched and 122 young fledged. There were eight pairs at Heysham, three at Brockholes, 26 at Mere Sands Wood, 54 in the Lancaster nest box study area and 15 on the United Utilities estate (down from 24 in 2008).

Seven out of eight broods were successful at Claughton and all six at Arkholme but just three out of eight at Trowbarrow Quarry.

There was no passage to speak of with only 28 trapped at Heysham between late August and early November.

In east Lancashire birds were singing from 31 Jan and again on 13 Sept. A bird with a beak three times the normal length was photographed visiting a feeder at Barrow on 22 Dec.

## COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

### **Common breeding bird. Some irruptive movements in autumn.**

Coal Tits still seem to be doing well with numbers holding up over the past few years. The January survey in the Lancaster district recorded 233 and breeding records in the area were typical.

Large numbers were seen at two feeding sites in the upland areas of the county most of the year: numbers at Moor Piece reached over 50 on 13 Nov whilst at Stocks Reservoir, up to fifteen birds were seen at any one time.

At Mere Sands Wood ten were counted in the first winter period and five were singing in May. On the Fylde the species was recorded in single figures from 70 sites, the largest numbers occurring at Ellel Grange.

The one unprecedented event of note occurred at Heysham on 17 March when at least 23 were recorded moving north (14 of which were trapped). One of the captured birds showed characteristics of the continental form. The autumn passage was unremarkable with only 15 birds passing through. A flock of over ten was at Belmont on 5 Sept.

## WILLOW TIT *Poecile montana*

### **Scarce breeder in the birch copses of the south-west. Very rare elsewhere.**

Very few records were received this year from St. Helens, almost certainly exaggerating what is, however, an increasingly bleak picture in the county 'stronghold'. Up to two were seen at Carr Mill Dam between 3 Jan and 15 March but none was reported after that, and at least two pairs were present at Stanley Bank Wood all year, regularly coming to feeders at the Sankey Valley Park visitor centre during the winter months.

However, atlas fieldwork continues to turn up encouraging records outside of this area, including two at Gorse Hill NR, Ormskirk between 15 April and 9 May.

More remarkably, a bird was seen in suitable breeding habitat at Belmont on 30 April and two were close by on 20 Oct, raising the possibility that they still survive in the area. Add to that the first records from the Chorley area for a while – singles at Yarrow Valley Park on 20 April and

Hic Bibi on 22 July, and at least one in a mixed tit flock at Lower Healey on 24 Oct – and perhaps there is a little to be optimistic about.

Another very interesting record came from Cottam Brickworks near Preston, where a first-winter bird was present from 22 Nov into 2010. This is not the first time this site has turned up a wintering Willow Tit – there were recent records in both 2004 and 2006. Singles not far away at Preston Junction LNR in January and during the breeding season added weight to the possibility that a small population also persists in this area.

### MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

**Fairly common breeder in the north of the county. Virtually absent south of the Ribble and in the Fylde.**

Lancaster's January survey demonstrated the highly localised nature of this species with five registered in SD47 and three in SD66. The Warton Crag RSPB census recorded five pairs and it continues to be regular elsewhere in the Leighton Moss/Silverdale area with, for example, four pairs at Trowbarrow Quarry.

Breeding season records in the Lune Valley came from Crook o' Lune, Wray and Roeburndale. Three pairs occupied nest-boxes in the Arnside-Silverdale area and one in Roeburndale. Winter records away from the main areas consisted of birds at Botton Mill in Hindburndale, Docker, Wray and Freehold in Lancaster.

There were just five records from five locations in east Lancashire, none of which were at what could be deemed the 'usual' places. An adult and juvenile were at Langden Intake on 7 Aug and singles were at Whitendale on 13 Feb, Moor Piece on 10 March, Brookside Lodges, Oswaldtwistle on 15-17 Sept and Chipping on 16 Dec..

### BEARDED TIT *Panurus biarmicus*

**Resident at Leighton Moss. Rare elsewhere.**

The long term colour-ringing programme of this elusive species continued at Leighton Moss where an estimated 26 pairs bred, an increase of eight from 2008. The ringing study identified 27 adult males and 18 adult females. Productivity was the best since 2000 with 103 flying young ringed compared with only 52 in 2008.

No irruptive behaviour was recorded.

### SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

**Abundant breeding bird and passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).**

Coastal flocks in the first winter period were very modest; in the Fylde 69 were at Singleton on 23 Jan and there were 64 at Cockerham on 21 Feb, while Marshside's peak count was of 100 on 8 Jan. The Lancaster & District January survey recorded only 16 Skylarks, in two coastal squares.

Inland, the first returning bird in east Lancashire was at Jackhouse on 12 Feb; two were at Grove Lane Marsh next day and males were back on territory at Crown Point on the 25th. In Chorley region the first Skylarks were in song at Belmont on 1 March.

Spring passage appears to have been negligible this year, or else it was concealed among late wintering flocks, such as the 50 birds at Sand Villa, near Cockerham, on 21 Feb. Heysham NR's only migrants, six birds, flew north on the early date of 17 Feb.

The outstanding feature of this year's breeding picture was the very robust population on the south Ribble marshes and mosslands: an estimated 61 pairs bred at MMWWT, 42 nested on

Marshside RSPB Reserve plus another 15 on Crossens Inner Marsh, while 74 pairs bred on Hesketh Out Marsh. In the north there were 30 singing males on the 10km stretch of the River Lune between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot, an increase of ten on 2008's total. Elsewhere, breeding data were less dramatic: there were seven singing males in May and eight in June on a 1km BTO-BBS square on Darwen Moor, a slight decrease on last year. Small numbers of territorial males were recorded at numerous sites in the Tarbock-Halewood area of south Liverpool, three pairs bred on Freshfield Dune Heath and Brockholes Wetland, and two singing males were holding territory on at Middleton Industrial Estate, Heysham.

Although a few small movements were recorded in early autumn, such as a flock of 20 near Belmont on 15 Aug and 120 at MMWWT on 7 Sept, as usual, significant passage did not begin until mid to late September, reaching a peak in October. A systematic programme of observations of Skylark movements over Downholland Moss recorded 3225 in September, with a peak of 433 on the 30th, and 8134 in October, peaking at 1054 on the 5th, when widespread movements also saw 258 birds moving south at Seaforth, and in the Fylde, 93 over Fairhaven and 150 on Rawcliffe Moss. A second pulse of migration during 12-16 Oct saw 115 move south over Seaforth and 68 over Fairhaven on the 12th; 492 flew over Downholland Moss and there were 66 at Singleton, Fylde next day, and 120 were at Marshside on the 16th. There were another 218 on Rawcliffe Moss on 22 Oct and passage continued intermittently until mid-November; 2901 were recorded over Downholland Moss in that month, with a peak count of 385 on the 7th. By contrast, autumn movements in north Lancashire were very light, with totals of only 47 passage Skylarks at Heysham and 59 over Caton Moor. The last records in east Lancashire were of four birds at Jackhouse on 25 Oct.

At the year's end some very large gatherings were recorded on the south Ribble marshes and mosslands, including 700 at Marshside on 15 Nov with 800 there on 6 Dec, 285 on Downholland Moss on 23 Dec, 750 on Hesketh Out Marsh next day and 850 on Halsall Moss on the 27th. Smaller flocks in the Fylde included 120 at Bradshaw Lane, Pilling on 28 Nov and 46 on Rawcliffe Moss on 20 Dec.

### SHORE LARK\* *Eremophila alpestris*

#### **Scarce and irregular winter visitor and passage migrant.**

Our first Shore Lark since 2005 was found on Birkdale Shore on 7 Nov (R Jones). Although sometimes flighty it remained on the stretch of beach between Birkdale and Southport Pier until 2 Dec, providing close views and excellent photographic opportunities to many visiting birders.

### SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

#### **Common but local breeding bird, mainly in the east; common double passage migrant. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern).**

The first of spring was at Brockholes Wetland on 13 March; next day there were twos at Leighton Moss and at Whalley and Calder Foot in east Lancashire, while Marshside recorded its first four Sand Martins on the 15th. There were widespread arrivals, albeit in rather low numbers, during the rest of March including 24 at Preesall Flashes on 18 March and 27 at Prescott Reservoirs on the 22nd; by the 31st 600 were roosting at Leighton Moss.

A major influx on 1 April saw totals of 2000 at Leighton Moss, 250 at Brockholes, 180 at Claughton in the Lune Valley and 50+ over the Ribble at Great Mitton. Subsequent movements were on a smaller scale, including 100 at Whittingham and 60 at Upper Foulridge Reservoir on 8 April and 1000 at Leighton Moss on the 10th & 13th. Sixty-two passed Crag Bank watchpoint near

Carnforth on 26 April and 56 migrants were recorded at Heysham NR during the month; 120 over Rishton Reservoir on 1 May was the last significant count reported.

Breeding colonies seem to have had a good year on the whole. On the River Lune a survey located a total of 1311 nests; 430 of these were at Arkholme and, despite two floods, they had a productive season. On the Altham-Martholme stretch of the River Calder in east Lancashire four colonies contained 15, 23, 37 & 104 nests respectively; the total of 179 was a notable improvement on the 50+ counted in 2008. Elsewhere in the region breeding was recorded at Clitheroe and Mitton on the River Ribble and at Dunnaw on the Hodder. In Chorley region there were two small colonies on the River Yarrow west of the town. At Lightfoot Green on the northern edge of Preston 189 active nest-holes were counted on 29 May and 166 on 7 June; 40 pairs bred nearby at Brockholes Wetland.

An early southbound movement of 200 south over the Ribble Estuary in 1.5 hours on 22 June was probably the source of the 17 birds recorded that day at Seaforth. Seventy-nine passed at Seaforth on 1 July and 150 at Marshside on the 28th. Up to 250 birds were roosting at Leighton Moss by mid-July, the roost there peaking at around 1500 at the end of the month. August counts included 450 at Leighton Moss on the 7th and 100 at Ightenhill Bridge near Burnley on the 19th; 16 at Heysham on 3 Aug was the autumn peak there. There were 25 over Hesketh Out Marsh on 15 Aug and 30 were still present at Arkholme on the 19th. Although 250 roosted at Leighton Moss on 4 Sept counts there and elsewhere dwindled very rapidly thereafter. There were four September records in the Fylde with the last bird at Knott End on the 19th; Prescott Reservoirs, Marshside and Seaforth recorded their last Sand Martins on 5, 7 & 15 Sept respectively. There were two at Arkholme and one at Grove Lane Marsh, Padiham on 23 Sept; one at Heysham NR the next day was the last of 2009.

## SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

### **Abundant breeding bird and double passage migrant. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern).**

The first spring migrants arrived at Marshside and Leighton Moss on 15 March, followed quickly by singles at Darwen and Ainsdale next day and Grimsargh, near Preston, on the 18th. A very thin trickle of arrivals during the remainder of March included east Lancashire's first four at Whalley on the 20th, 16 records in the Fylde following its first bird at Myerscough College on the 24th, and singles at Chorley, Brinscall and Belmont on the 29th.

Passage during April was steady rather than spectacular; 53 over Rossall Point on 19 April was the highest Fylde count, on the same date as the peak in east Lancashire of 100+ over Upper Foulridge Reservoir. A total of 587 passed at Heysham during the month, peaking at 92 on the 24th; 50 moved over Seaforth on 25 & 30 April. Noteworthy counts in May included 200+ at Marshside on 12 May, 370 at Seaforth on the 15th and 100+ over Prescott Reservoirs next day. In the north a peak of 144 passed Crag Bank on 2 May; a total of 178 was recorded at Heysham, with 49 on the 11th the highest day-count.

Data from regularly-monitored breeding sites included 52 nests in the Pilling-Preesall area where 245 eggs were laid of which 204 hatched, and 184 young were fledged. There was a major increase in the colony in stables beside Freshfield Dune Heath, 59 pairs compared with 22 in 2008. In north Lancashire ten pairs bred at Lower Broomfield Farm, Arkholme, two fewer than last year, six pairs in Warton Village and two at Heysham. Swallows nested at a number of widespread sites in east Lancashire, with a new brood of two being fed at Marl Hill, north-west of Clitheroe, on 26 Aug. In the south-west at least five pairs bred in Churchtown Village and seven at MMWWT.

Post-breeding flocks and movements were evident from mid-July, with 75+ over Rawcliffe Moss, Fylde on 11 July and 91 at nearby Singleton on the 30th. In the south-west 158 passed at Marshside on 28 July and 160 at MMWWT on the 30th. August peaks included 300 at Pilling Lane Ends on 9 Aug, 110 at Great Harwood on the 13th, 214 over Caton Moor on the 24th and 400+ at Nateby, Fylde next day. A moderate passage continued through September: there were 370 over Alston Reservoirs, Longridge and 100+ over Belmont Reservoir on 6 Sept, 500 over Rawcliffe Moss on the 8th, 104 moved south at Seaforth on the 16th and there were 200 at Stalmine, Fylde on the 20th. A total of 318 Swallows passed at Heysham during September, peaking at 104 on the 19th.

There were 16 records in the Fylde during the first half of October; noteworthy flocks during the month included 33 at Arkholme, 17 at Prescott Reservoirs and 21 at MMWWT, all on the 7th. Thirty-one passed at Heysham with the last two on 13 Oct, and Chorley's last three were near Belmont on the 17th. There were rather fewer November stragglers than usual: singles were at Cockersand and at Ridge Farm, Pilling on 15 Nov and a bird was seen from Lillian's Hide at Leighton Moss during 26-28th. The last Swallow of the year was on the Ribble at Ribchester from 27 Nov to 5 Dec, a new latest date for the ELOC region, the previous being 20 Nov in 2003.

## HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

**Common and widespread breeding bird; abundant passage migrant. Amber List (breeding decline).**

For the first time since 2006 there were several March arrivals this year, the first at Calder Foot on 22 March, east Lancashire's earliest ever; singles were over Crosby Marine Lake on the 27th and Leighton Moss on the 30th. One at Marton Mere on 5 April was the first in the Fylde and the first birds to reach Chorley region were over Coppull and Eccleston on the 10th. Apart from 100+ over Dean Clough Reservoir, Great Harwood on 8 April and 127 at Marshside on the 10th all movements reported during April were in low double figures. There was a slight increase in passage volumes in May, with 200+ at Prescott Reservoirs and 50+ at Marton Mere on 6 May, another 50+ at Marton Mere on the 16th and 100+ moving north at Arkholme on the 20th, although a total of only 16 migrants was recorded at Heysham NR during the month.

Breeding reports were more plentiful and more detailed than usual this year. In Chorley region there were twelve active nests in Belmont Village, the second-lowest total since recording began; the observer noted that anecdotal evidence from elsewhere suggests a decline throughout the region. In east Lancashire nesting was confirmed in Barley, Clitheroe, Rishton, Pendleton, and at Foot Holme in the Dunsop Valley. In the Fylde there were widespread reports of breeding, most notably from the Pilling area, Lightfoot Green, Mowbreck Hall and Knott End. Ten small colonies were reported from north Lancashire, including twelve nests in Tunstall, eleven in Warton and five in Wrayton; up to six pairs nested on Middleton Industrial Estate, Heysham. In the south-west there were several small colonies in the housing estate beside Marshside RSPB, with up to 150 birds over the reserve on summer days; House Martins nested in Garston and in Aigburth, south Liverpool.

Birds were on the move by late July, with 80 at Marshside on 28 July, 70+ at Allsprings, Great Harwood on the 30th and 206 west over Claughton in the Lune Valley next day. Autumn movements were very widespread, but seem to have been generally on a moderate scale; August peaks included 100+ at Prescott Reservoirs on 1 & 15 Aug, 50+ over Wycoller, east of Colne on the 20th and 40 at Mythop, Fylde on the 27th. In September 60+ were over Belmont Reservoir on the 6th; counts of around 50 came from four locations in the Fylde and from Towneley Park and Cliviger Gorge, Burnley. There were 200+ over White Coppice, Chorley on 13 Sept and 300+ over

Prescot Reservoirs on the 22nd; a total of 66 House Martins passed at Heysham during the month, with a peak of 32 on 13 Sept and the last of the year there on the 26th.

The usual scatter of October records included 21 south-west over Towneley Park, Burnley on 2 Oct; three over Whalley Nab on the 10th was the last record in east Lancashire. In the Fylde three passed at Fairhaven Lake on 5 Oct; there were two over Prescot Reservoirs on the 7th and the last straggler in the north was at Leighton Moss on the 9th. The south-west recorded both of our latest House Martins of 2009, singles over Marshside on 22 Oct and a very late bird at Southport on 11 Nov.

## CETTI'S WARBLER\* *Cettia cetti*

### **Vagrant.**

With multiple records at both Leighton Moss and Marton Mere throughout the second winter period, hopes were raised that breeding might take place for the first time in the county in 2010.

At least four were at Leighton Moss. The first on 5 Oct was followed by others on 29 Oct and 12 Nov all were caught either near to the Causeway or at the Spring. By mid-November at least two were calling or singing from sites on the Causeway and another at the Spring, while a fourth was singing close to the Griesdale Hide – all remained into the new year.

Marton Mere also recorded at least four birds. One was heard on many dates from 15 Oct with two heard from the Dam on 31 Oct and another near the SW hide. One was in full song by the NW wood platform on 8 & 11 Dec with two others on the Dam and near the FBC hide on 11th. At least two remained into 2010.

## LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

### **Common breeding resident. Some irruptive movement in autumn.**

Year-round reports indicate that Long-tailed Tits continue to thrive in all parts of the county.

Double-figure counts in the first winter period included 20 near Preston and 20 at Mere Sands Wood, Towneley Woods and Cliviger Gorge and 17 at Waddow Hall. Six were in the Crutchender Fell plantation in east Lancashire at 360m altitude on 1 Jan. Second winter counts included more than 100 in five flocks near Belmont on 27-31 Dec, 26 at Cock Bridge in east Lancashire and 14 at Hollows Bridge, Newton-le-Willows – but many other large parties undoubtedly went unreported.

There was no discernable passage movement and breeding preparations got underway by mid-March with the first young fledging by mid-May. Successful breeding was reported throughout the county and it now appears that every suitable patch of habitat, including in urban areas, was occupied. Ringing totals in the north suggested good productivity with a total of 57 trapped at Leighton Moss compared with totals of 27-99 during 2000-2008, and 104 at Heysham NR compared with totals of 15-104 from 2000-2008; 80 transient birds were also trapped in a Knott End garden between 1 Oct and 12 Nov.

Post-breeding flocks included 20 at Brownhill Reservoir on 16 May, 25 at Whalley on 14 June, 30 at Whin Scar Clough on 6 Aug, 20 at Cliviger Fishponds on 11 Sept, 25 at Moor Piece on 4 Oct, 21 at Fairhaven on the 15th, 23 at Black Moss Reservoir on the 18th, 25 moving through a garden at Marl Hill on the 22nd, 20 at Brockholes Wetland on the 31st and 31 at Stadt Moers Park, Huyton on 7 Nov.

All records throughout the year were on or close to known breeding areas and there was no sign of anything other than very local movement in autumn. Late winter counts included 26 at Cock bridge on 13 Dec and 25 at Moor Piece on the 27th

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

**Uncommon breeder in east and central areas; uncommon passage migrant, mostly in spring.**

Three were singing at Claughton in north Lancashire on 21 April but were not seen or heard subsequently. The next were single migrant males at Mere Sands Wood and Cottam on 25 April and Barley on the 29th, followed by others in a large garden in Clitheroe on 2 May, Formby Point National Trust on the 7th at Stanley Park, Blackpool on the 9-11th and at Sykes/Brown Nab on the 12th; two were in Rufford Park on 7 May.

The first arrived back on traditional breeding grounds on 3 May at Roddlesworth, where two pairs probably bred and six young were ringed during June, and at Heather Lea Woods in Brinscall, where no further evidence of breeding was gathered. The first was reported in Roeburndale on 27 May and three pairs bred there subsequently with another pair in nearby Hindburndale. Three at Moor Piece on 19 July perhaps indicated probable breeding there.

The only autumn bird was one trapped at Leighton Moss on 13 Aug.

**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

**Common breeder and passage migrant. Uncommon but increasing in winter.**

Rather few were reported in the first winter period but whether this reflected a genuine decrease in wintering birds or simply lower rates of reporting is uncertain. None was seen in either east or north Lancashire and the only records were of singles in January and February at Fazakerley, Poulton-le-Fylde, Heron's Reach Golf course and Anchorsholme – in stark contrast to the twelve seen during the same period in 2008. December was more productive and more in line with recent years, with singles at Childwall, Knott End, Ellel Grange, Heysham, Middleton Industrial Estate, Arkholme and Silverdale, with two in a garden at Wilpshire on the 6th.

The first spring migrants were at Prescott Reservoirs, Blackburn and Heysham on 13 March and seven were at Marton on the 22nd with six at Greyfriars (Fylde) on the 31st. Birds flooded back throughout April, mostly in ones and twos but with higher counts of twelve males at Prescott reservoirs on the 12th, nine at Ingol on the 10th, and five at Marshside on the 11th and Carr Lane, Prescott on the 24th. Twelve were ringed on passage at Heysham.

Breeding was widespread with no indication of any change in range or numbers. More than 60 pairs bred at 34 sites in south Liverpool & south Knowsley, right up to the edge of the conurbation, including seven at Halewood Triangle. Site counts elsewhere included an above-average five pairs at Warton Crag RSPB, and also five at Longridge Fell and Boilton Wood, Preston, with probably similar numbers at Marton Mere. Ringing returns at both Heysham and Leighton Moss (41 and 85 birds caught respectively) suggested average productivity.

The first definite migrant was a juvenile at Seaforth on 23 June but passage only really got underway in September when the largest counts included six at Stocks Reservoir on the 6th, 18 at Heysham on the 17th, ten at Seaforth on the 18th, 14 in the Hightown & Blundellsands Dunes and ten at Fleetwood on the 19th, and ten at Prescott Reservoirs on the 29th. Ones and twos were regular during October and late migrants included singles at Cabin Hill on 8 Nov, Heysham on the 18th, Ellel Grange on the 23rd and Marton Mere on the 28th.

## WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

### **Abundant breeding bird and double passage migrant.**

The first arrived on Merseyside at Seaforth and Marshside on 31 March, at Heysham and the Fylde at Fluke Hall on 1 April and in Chorley and east Lancashire the following day. Returning migrants then flooded in throughout April with a few stragglers arriving in early May. Peak spring counts of passage birds included six at Seaforth on 10 April, 13 at Marshside the next day, 30 at Heysham on the 14th 40 in the Hightown & Blundellsands Dunes on the 15th and 19 at Foulridge Reservoirs on the 25th; 16 arrived in the Belmont area on 10 April, increasing to 50 on the 19th before moving on by the end of the month. A relatively low total of 30 were ringed at Heysham, 22 of them on 14 April.

Despite remaining our commonest and most widespread warbler, there are a few indications that numbers may be falling in line with the national trend. Warton Crag, for example, supported just 28 pairs, the second lowest total there in 20 years. Forty eight singing males were located between Leck Beck on and Wenning Foot on the Lune on 13 May. Other breeding totals came from two recently created woodlands in Tarbock, Knowsley – 28 males at Tarbock Hall Farm and 13 at the Woodland Trust's New Pale Wood – and in east Lancashire 40 birds at Halsteads Farm on 3 May, 68 at Bottoms Beck on the 11th and 22 at Hesbert Hall on the 24th. In contrast, the highest May totals in the Fylde were five singing males at Carr House Green Common on 10 May and seven at Heron's Reach Golf Course on the 23rd.

Ringing totals at Heysham were low with 17 locally-bred juveniles caught up to late July and 16 in autumn; 145 trapped at Leighton Moss between June and September was also below average. Post-breeding aggregations included 15 on Rawcliffe Moss on 11 July and 50 at Stocks Reservoir on 4 Aug.

The onset of passage is difficult to detect for such a widespread breeding species but was perhaps marked by one at Seaforth, where Willow Warblers do not breed, on 13 July. No large falls were recorded during autumn and passage movements fell off quickly in mid-August; late records were at Longridge Fell and Marshside on 20 Sept, Seaforth on 1 Oct, Downholland Moss on the 5th, Rawcliffe Moss on the 7th and Middleton Industrial Estate on the 12th.

## BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

### **Common breeding bird and passage migrant; fairly common winter visitor at coastal locations.**

A total of 39 was reported during the first winter period, twelve of them in north Lancashire, eight in the Fylde, eight in Merseyside and West Lancashire, four in Chorley, three in east Lancashire and one in Rossendale. Most were in gardens and of 25 whose sex was specified 15 were males. Smaller numbers were seen during November and December – a total of 25, again fairly even split between males and females, of which 17 were in the north of the county, five in the east, two in Merseyside and one in Chorley.

Singing birds in Crosby on 28 Feb and 6 March and at three other sites during early to mid-March were presumably wintering birds while the first probable migrants were at Greyfriars on 31 March and three other sites on 1 April; certainly, migrants began to appear throughout the county in the first week of April. Peak counts in early spring included ten males at Marton Mere on 11 April, 20 in the Downham area on the 19th and 15 at the Scorton Picnic Area on the 22nd.

Breeding was widespread throughout the county and it seems likely that the population continues to increase – the atlas results will give us a clearer picture. One indication of just how common Blackcaps now are came from south Liverpool and south Knowsley where more than 100

pairs were recorded on around 50 sites including close to the city centre. Seventeen pairs bred on Warton Crag RSPB compared with an average of eight during 1989-2008. Other site counts included 22 pairs on the Lune between Arkholme and Wenning Foot, eight at Mere Sands Wood, seven at Bashall Eaves, six at Brockholes Wetland, five at Marton Mere and Heysham, four at Jackhouse and three at Marshside and Cuerden Valley Park.

Ringling efforts at Heysham and Leighton Moss, however, suggested poor local breeding success, with only seven caught at Heysham in late summer and 21 at Leighton, compared with 47 at the latter in 2008 and 78 in 2007.

As usual, autumn passage went largely unnoticed with, for example, just seven trapped at Heysham from September to November. Other coastal migration watchpoints reported only occasional ones and twos through to the end of October.

## GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

### **Common breeding bird and double passage migrant.**

The first of the year at the E-shaped Pond, Bretherton and Scorton Picnic Area on 22 April were followed by singles at Marshside, Anglezarke, Billington (east Lancs) and Stocks Reservoir on the 25th, Cuerden Valley Park on the 27th, Prescott Reservoirs the next day and Heron's Reach, Blackpool on the 29th. There was a further widespread arrival in breeding areas during May, including at Belmont on the 2nd, Brockholes Wetland on the 10th, the Eric Morecambe Complex on the 17th and at a further 29 sites in east Lancashire during the month. The only other coastal migrants were at Marshside on 10 May, the Hightown & Blundellsands Dunes on the 10-16th and Heysham on the 11th and 14th, but two at Stadt Moers Park, Huyton on 3 May and one at King's Moss, Rainford on the 3rd & 31st may also have been passing through. Birds were recorded from six sites in the Fylde during May, including three at Thurnham Hall on the 10th, where it seems likely they went on to breed.

Nine pairs bred on Warton Crag RSPB, the lowest total since census work began in 1989, compared with an average of 18.5 during 1989-2008. It is thought that the maturing scrub cover there is making the site favour Blackcaps over Garden Warblers, for which it used to be a regionally, if not nationally, notable site. Eight males were in the Lune woodlands between Wenning Foot and Leck Beck in mid-May. Three pairs bred at Brockholes, two at Cuerden and probably one at Duke's Clough, Whiston and Prescott Reservoirs. Breeding was probably widespread in east Lancashire – where peak counts of males were nine at Bottoms Beck on 11 May, four at Stocks Reservoir on the 12th and at Braddup Farm on 4 June – and in the Anglezarke/Rivington and Bowland fringe woodlands. Four were at Myerscough Quarry on 14 June.

One at MMWWT on 23 June may have been an early dispersing bird but autumn records were few and far between. There was only one report between 18 July and 23 Aug in the east – at Jackhouse on 12 Aug – while in late summer/early autumn birds were reported feeding on blackberries and elderberries at Allsprings, Great Harwood, and on elderberries at Siddows, Clitheroe; the last one was at Siddows on 9 Sept.

Coastal migrants included singles at Seaforth on 13 Aug and 2 Sept, Hightown & Blundellsands Dunes on 19 Sept and Middleton Industrial Estate on 11 Aug and 20 Sept.

## LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

### **Fairly common breeding bird and double passage migrant.**

The first spring arrivals were three at Aldcliffe and Myerscough Quarry on 14 April. Passage continued at Carleton on the 16th, Marton Mere the next day and Heysham, Fleetwood and Great Plumpton on the 18th, and by the end of the month birds had been recorded throughout the county.

Typically, breeding was very sparse in Merseyside with just a handful of pairs at best in St. Helens and Knowsley, while only two were reported in Chorley – at Bretherton on 28 April and Hic Bibi on 15 June. Birds were most common in the Fylde where ones and twos were reported during spring and early summer from 60 or more sites. Six pairs bred at Heysham with another two at Middleton Industrial Estate, and other likely northern breeding sites included Aldcliffe, Jenny Brown's Point, Sunderland Point, the Eric Morecambe complex, Leighton Moss, Heald Brow, Warton Crag and Silverdale. Singles, mostly males, were reported from just ten sites in east Lancashire with the last seen on 14 June.

Productivity appears to have been good in the north, judged by the above-average 22 ringed at Heysham between mid-June and early September.

Late records were singles at Bradshaw Lane Head and Rawcliffe Moss on 19 Aug and Heysham on 9 Sept.

## WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

### **Common breeder, mostly in the west. Common double passage migrant.**

The earliest arrivals in the south-west and central Lancashire were at Prescott Reservoirs on 12 April, Marton Mere on the 11th and Seaforth on the 17th, in the north at Heysham on the 18th and in the east at Oswaldtwistle on the 21st. With the exception of eleven at Fazakerley in north Liverpool on 25 April, the largest spring counts were on the Sefton and Fylde coasts, including 30 on the Hightown & Blundellsands Dunes on 10 May, eight at Formby Point National Trust on 25 April, Fluke Hall on 26 April and Cabin Hill on 10 May and seven at Heron's Reach Golf Course on 24 April.

Breeding was pretty much ubiquitous in suitable habitat throughout Merseyside, West Lancashire and the Fylde, except in the most heavily built-up areas, and several observers reported better than usual numbers. Birds were also widespread in Chorley but less common in east Lancashire and relatively thinly spread in the Lancaster area; four or five pairs bred in Rossendale. Site counts included 14 pairs at Marshside with another eight on Crossens Inner, 17 at Oglet and Garston Shore, 14 at Tarbock Hall Farm and Freshfield Dune Heath, twelve at Marton Mere and at least this number on Rawcliffe Moss, eight at Heysham and six at Brockholes Wetland. For the second year running, no singing males were recorded on the Warton Crag RSPB census (compared with 3-9 in the period 1988-2007).

The last were at Galgate on 17 Sept, Belmont on the 18th and Jackhouse and Crosby Coastal Park on the 20th.

## GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

### **Uncommon breeding bird and passage migrant. Scarce on autumn passage.**

The first males were reeling at Middleton, Marton Mere and Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 11 April and Blundellsands the following day. A very widespread arrival followed in the next ten days.

As usual, firm evidence of breeding was extremely hard to come by and was confirmed only on the Blundellsands-Hightown dunes, where seven males were reeling from late April, and Middleton Industrial Estate where four pairs were thought to have bred and six adults and eleven juveniles ringed. Males were reported during the breeding season from an additional twelve sites on Merseyside and in east Lancashire, at least eight in the Fylde, Chorley and the West Pennine Moors and five in north Lancashire. Elsewhere up to three males were heard at Brockholes Wetland and one at Roby Mill; seven males were heard on five sites in Rossendale.

The last records were of singles at Clowbridge Reservoir on 4 Aug, Leighton Moss on the 22nd and Belmont on the 24th; one at Marshside on 20 Sept was the only definite autumn migrant.

### SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

#### **Common breeding bird in the west and double passage migrant.**

Returning birds arrived at Preesall Flashes, Marton Mere, Staining and Heysham on 11 April, and at Leighton Moss and Marshside the following day. However, numbers failed to build up significantly at any site until the first week of May.

Few definite passage migrants were reported with most birds apparently heading straight for breeding sites. No census was carried out at Leighton Moss but ringing activities indicated a slightly disappointing year with 272 ringed compared with an average of 383 ringed annually between 2000-2008. In contrast, there was a massive increase to 40 pairs at Brockholes Wetland. Elsewhere, 35 pairs bred at MMWWT, 16 at Marshside with an additional ten on Crossens Inner, 18 on the Lune between Wenning Foot and Leck Beck, eleven at Middleton Industrial Estate, five at Heysham and four at Mere Sands Wood. At least 15 males were singing at Marton Mere, 15 on the Blundellsands-Hightown Dunes and twelve at Preesall Flashes during May.

Probable breeding birds were reported from a large number of other sites mostly in Merseyside and the Fylde but, as usual, they were much scarcer in east Lancashire, where breeding was suspected at fewer than ten sites, and in Rossendale where the only record was of two singing males at Haslingden Grane in May and June.

Twenty-eight were ringed at Heysham and Middleton in autumn, presumably mostly local birds and definite passage birds were few and far between. Late records were on Pendle Hill on 7 Sept, Lee Green Reservoir on the 12th, Downholland Moss on the 13th, Marton Mere on the 16th and Brookside Lodges, Oswaldtwistle on the 18th.

### REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

#### **Fairly common breeder in suitable habitat in the west, most numerous at Leighton Moss and Marton Mere. Uncommon passage migrant elsewhere.**

The first back were at Marton Mere on 10 April, Leighton Moss, Fleetwood Marsh and Preesall Flashes the next day and Marshside on the 12th. All usual breeding sites were occupied by the end of April and numbers continued to build up during May when nesting was well underway. No spring passage birds were reported away from known or probable breeding sites.

Despite damage to reedbeds at Leighton Moss by roosting Starlings the estimated breeding population of 375 pairs (based on ringing returns) was slightly up on 2008. A total of 784 (166 adults and 618 juveniles) was trapped, compared with 466-1088 during 1997-2008. Other breeding records in north Lancashire were 15 singing at Haweswater in early May, five each at Silverdale Moss and Barrow Scout, one at Heysham NR, four at Middleton Industrial Estate and singles at Pine Lake and Freeman's Pools, Aldcliffe.

Peak counts of singing males at Marton Mere were 20 on 2 May and 25 on 13 June, and elsewhere in the Fylde eleven at the Preesall Flashes, two at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, Pilling Lane Ends and the Conder Pool. Seven pairs fledged 18 young at Sand Villa, Cockerham.

Only two sites reported birds in central Lancashire – Brockholes Wetland where 23 pairs nested and Croston Moss where the first arrived on 26 April – and three in West Lancashire, where 42 pairs bred at MMWWT and ten at Mere Sands Wood with seven males on Downholland Moss.

Twelve territories were established at Marshside and Hesketh Golf Course, while up to five birds were at Seaforth and seven at Sutton Manor in St. Helens during the breeding season; possible breeding at Stadt Moers Park in Huyton and proven breeding at Garston Shore together with singles at Prescott Reservoirs on 8-9 June and 12 Aug were the only other Merseyside records. A male at Lee Green Res on 12-23 June at Lee Green Reservoir was the only record in east Lancashire.

Birds were still feeding young at Marton Mere in late August and the last was seen on 27 Sept; other final records were at Marshside on 8 Aug, Seaforth on the 27th, Leighton Moss on 28 Sept and Fleetwood Marsh on 5 Oct.

## WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

### **Fairly common but irregular winter visitor.**

Although many remained from last year's major irruption, few penetrated as far west as the Fylde or south into Merseyside where three at Pilling on 12 Feb and twelve in Southport on 14-15 March respectively were the only records. The vast majority of records came in March and were presumably birds making their way back from the south. None was seen in the second half of the year.

Numbers were also small in the north of the county, where one or two were in Lancaster from 5 Jan to 26 March with six there on 7-10 March, one at Warton on 9-11 Feb, twelve at Heysham on 5 March, where one remained the next day, and singles at a couple of other sites.

Birds were reported throughout east Lancashire in the first winter period. The first were two in Colne on 11 Jan, five were near central Clitheroe on 24 Jan and stayed in the area until 10 Feb, 80 were at Low Moor, Clitheroe with 30 still there on 15th. Ten were at High Moor Park at the other end of Clitheroe on 13 Feb, making a minimum of 90 birds in the town that day. The next report from High Moor Park was of 54 on 7 March and birds were present in this area until the 12th. Meanwhile, eight were in Padiham on 23 Feb, increasing to 55 by 2 March with the last 48 there on the 4th. Other noteworthy sightings were ten in Longridge on 3 March, increasing to 50 on the 29th and c.80 near the former Blackburn Royal Infirmary on 3 March. The last were c.50 near Heys Lane, Darwen on 6-7 April.

In Rossendale, up to 38 were at Ewood Bridge on 3-8 Jan and 44 at Helmshore on 2 April.

The largest flocks, however, were to be found in the Preston area. Seven were in Hesketh Bank on 8 Jan but no more were seen until 20 appeared on 23 Feb in south-central Preston, where up to 48 were present until 20 March. The other focus of attention was Fulwood where up to 80 were present from 4-26 March. At least 120 were in Ribbleton on 13-15 March and nine flew east over Boilton Wood, Brockholes on the 14th.

Three were in an Euxton garden on 7 Jan and five in Chorley from 23 Feb to 1 March with a larger flock of up to 34 there from 9-22 April.

## NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

### **Fairly common and increasing breeding resident.**

Though Nuthatches are now found widely across the county, there are still gaps in the distribution to fill. The evidence suggests that this is still happening as more sites report their first sightings. Site regulars commented on their first records at Upper Foulridge Reservoir, Wycoller and Victoria Road, Freshfield for example, whilst there were third and fourth site records for MMWWT on 19 June and 11 Nov. Birds were seen regularly at Ravenmeols, Prescott and Mere Sands Wood, where two pairs bred using nest boxes.

In the parks and gardens of the region the number of pairs seems to be on the rise. Birds were calling from at least five sites in Sefton Park as well as 17 other sites in suburban south Liverpool with several providing evidence of successful breeding. Several were calling at the same time around Lever Park, Rivington. Three pairs successfully raised broods in nest boxes in the Roddlesworth Plantations and a pair bred again at Cuerden Valley Park. The species was widely reported in the east and north of the county with confirmed breeding records from six sites in the Ribble and Calder valleys. Four pairs nested on the Lune at Arkholme and four pairs at Claughton.

There was a better showing from the Fylde where the species is still scarce, with records from 28 sites including regular sightings at Stanley Park, Blackpool, Singleton, Myerscough College and Ellel Grange.

## TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

### **Common breeding resident.**

There were again fewer records of this species in 2009 but there is no evidence that this secretive species is on the decline. A total of 21 was recorded in the Lancaster January survey. In spring and early summer birds were seen at 15 sites around south Liverpool, and the species was present in several woods at Knowsley Park.

There were records from 23 sites on the Fylde but only regularly from Stanley Park, Blackpool.

There were plenty of ad hoc records of ones and twos from other parts of the county with evidence of breeding at Cuerden Valley Park, Downham, Higher Hodder Bridge, Jackhouse Reservoir, Rivington, Dean Wood and Strongstry, Rossendale.

## WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

### **Abundant breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

One hundred and twenty-five Wrens were recorded during the Lancaster & District January survey, down on the 194 located in 2008, but breeding data received do not suggest any decline in the region: sixteen pairs bred on Warton Crag RSPB (mean of ten during 1989-2008), the population of British Energy land at Heysham increased by two pairs to 29, and there were 45 singing males in the Lune Valley between Leck Beck and Hornby, as in 2008. Breeding productivity seems to have been poor, however, with very few juveniles ringed at Heysham and only 57 ringed at Leighton Moss (mean of 70 during 2000-2008).

Fewer records were received in east Lancashire this year – 195 compared with 327 in 2008, but there was no evidence of a reduction in either breeding or wintering numbers. Peak counts in the Fylde included 50 at Swillbrook on 24 April, 34 at Lightfoot Green on 31 May and 33 at Ribby on 21 Nov; there were 21 singing males on Heron's Reach Golf Course near Marton Mere on 24 April. In the south-west 22 pairs nested on Freshfield Dune Heath (25 in 2008) and 14 on the edges

of Marshside-Crossens marshes (one down on last year); there were up to 34 singing males at Mere Sands Wood in early May, compared with 50 in 2008.

A very small autumn passage was recorded at Heysham with 15 trapped during 5-18 Oct, out of a year's total of 33.

### STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

**Abundant breeding bird, double passage migrant and winter visitor. Red List (breeding decline).**

The Leighton Moss roost was estimated to hold between 20-30000 birds at the start of the year, dropping to around 10000 by the end of February. Other large congregations during this period included 6000 at Cockerham Moss on 5 Jan, 3000 at Eagland Hill on the 2nd, 3000 at Jameson Road Landfill Site, Fleetwood on 12 Feb, 1700 at Altcar Withins on 24 Jan and 2000 at Altcar Moss on 4 March. Many flocks numbering a few hundred individuals were reported from eighteen other sites on the Fylde and ten in east Lancashire. The largest by far in the latter area was 1000 at Champion Moor Flood Pool on 22 March.

The results of a good breeding season were evident throughout the county. In the Pilling-Preesall area, 20 monitored pairs laid 96 eggs of which 81 hatched and 79 young fledged. In south Liverpool, fledged juveniles started to appear from mid-May and around 1000 including many juveniles were at Seaforth on 24 May. In the east of the county, the first fledglings were seen in Burnley on 19 May and second broods appeared at Marl Hill on 30 June. Larger post-breeding flocks included 850 at Marshside on 12 July and 700 at Norbreck, Blackpool in June and July and 500 at Stocks Reservoir on 10 June.

During early autumn, over 500 were on the Hightown Dunes on 8 Aug, 600 in St. Helens town centre on 19 Sept and 3000 at Wyreside Fisheries in September. No great movements were noted at migration watchpoints and it was not until late October that the first large flocks started to appear around the county. Four hundred were at Stocks Reservoir on 12 Oct, 326 were counted over Heysham on the 14th, 2500 at MMWWT on the 15th, 400 at Belmont on the 21st and 758 south at Seaforth on the 22nd. There was a large movement on 28 Oct with 2000 at Marshside, 10000 at MMWWT and 320 over Formby Point. This was followed by 2000 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 30 Oct, 1000 at Chipping and 275 at Heysham on the 31st.

Roost numbers had started to build up considerably by mid-October. On the 14th there were 10000 in the Marton Mere roost where numbers grew very quickly to over 62000 by the 26th but then dropped back down to 5000 by mid-November. Ten thousand were roosting at Leighton Moss in early October and numbers there increased to 80-100000 by late November before falling away during December. Over 25000 were seen at Oakenclough on 8 Nov, a figure way in excess of anything seen previously at this site. On 24 Nov MMWWT recorded its peak of 30000 and 8000 were at Eagland Hill. The Belmont roost numbered 1100 on 21 Nov and flocks in the region of 1-2000 were seen at four locations in east Lancashire whilst 3000 were at Clowbridge on 17 Nov.

During December there were 10000 at Higherford, 9000 in Fleetwood, 5000 in the Liverpool docks and 500 at Heysham Harbour.

### ROSE-COLOURED STARLING\* *Pastor roseus*

**Vagrant.**

2008. The Fylde record of 10-29 June (MD Campbell & B Dwire) was in St. Anne's and not Lytham.

**DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus***Uncommon breeder, mainly in the east.**

Dippers were recorded in all months in east Lancashire; birds were in song in January at Newton, Barrow Lodge, Lomeshaye Marsh and Shuttleworth Mead, near Padiham, and a male sang and displayed at Cliviger Fish Ponds, Burnley on 28 Dec.

Successful breeding was reported from many traditional sites. In the north a survey of the River Lune located three pairs, and there was breeding season presence at Abbeystead, Scorton, Roeburndale, Hindburndale and Leck Beck.

There were also widespread records in Chorley region. In May-June pairs were on territory at Limbrick, White Coppice, Brinscall and Yarrow Valley Park, three pairs bred near Belmont, and a pair was feeding two young at Hoghton Bottoms on 31 May. On the downside there was no nesting in Cuerden Valley Park for the first time in at least ten years.

On the western edge of the breeding range pairs bred on the River Wyre at Churchtown and in the Brock Valley just to the east of the M6; Dippers were present in the breeding season on the River Conder at Galgate. No reports were received from the south-west.

**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus***Scarce and local breeding bird on the hills; uncommon double passage migrant. Red List (Breeding decline).**

A male at Sunnyhurst Hey Reservoir, Darwen on 19 March was the first spring migrant to arrive; there were two males at Croasdale and one in Hindburndale on the 29th, and three birds on Pendle Hill on 3 April. A male was at Musbury Tor, Rossendale on 31 March; the first in Chorley region was a male at White Coppice on 6 April, followed by two at Belmont on the 19th and another there on 1 May. A very light coastal passage began with a male at Marshside on 20 March, followed by further males at Rossall School and Hesketh Out Marsh on 20 April and on Plex Moss on 8 May.

No reports of confirmed successful breeding were received in 2009, although eleven territories were located on the United Utilities Bowland estate, the same number as in 2008.

An extremely light autumn passage was confined to inland areas: singles at Nick of Pendle on 18 Sept and Belmont Reservoir on 7 Oct, two at Sunnyhurst Hey Reservoir on the 10th, and the last Ring Ouzel reported in the ELOC region at Shedden Clough on the 13th. One on Caton Moor on 31 Oct was the year's last. All in all, a dismal showing.

**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula***Abundant breeding resident and winter visitor; common double passage migrant, more evident in autumn.**

A high total of 1143 Blackbirds was recorded in the Lancaster January survey across all 10km squares (978 in 2008, 749 in 2007). Early-year counts in the Fylde area included 44 at Great Marton on 1 Jan, 36 at Out Rawcliffe on 17 Feb and 38 at Lightfoot Green on the 22nd. There were 25 at MMWWT on 10 Jan and 17 at Moor Piece on the 27th was the highest count reported in the east. Five continental birds at Heysham on 15 March and another there on the 19th were the only spring migrants recorded.

Breeding reports were, as usual, both plentiful and widespread. In the north 27 pairs nested on Warton Crag RSPB (mean 22.7 during 1989-2008) and 21 on British Energy land at Heysham; there were 56 singing males along 6km of the River Lune between Arkholme and Wenning Foot.

Breeding was confirmed at 15 sites in east Lancashire, and there was an interesting note in the Chorley NHS report of several pairs now breeding annually on moorland above the treeline on Darwen Moor – formerly Ring Ouzel habitat. Over Wyre seven monitored pairs in the Pilling-Preesall area laid 24 eggs of which 19 hatched and 13 young were fledged; other breeding season counts in the Fylde included 77 at Swillbrook on 22 April and 61 on Great Marton Moss on 3 May. In the south-west 15 pairs bred on Freshfield Dune Heath, there were 23 singing males at Mere Sands Wood, and widespread nesting was reported across south Liverpool.

Early autumn counts in east Lancashire included 25 at Clitheroe Sewage Works on 17 Sept and 22 at Jackhouse on the 28th. A light passage was reported from early October, with five migrants each at Belmont Reservoir on 7 Oct and at Heysham on the 12th. Subsequent counts at the latter site included c.70 on 14 Oct, 40 on the 24th and 32 on the 31st; 80+ there on 18 Nov was the peak count of the season. Ringing totals at Heysham were the lowest ever, with only 17 migrants trapped between late August and mid-November. In the Fylde there were 30 Blackbirds at Marton Mere on 14 Oct and 46 at Stake Pool, Pilling on the 23rd; in east Lancashire 35 were at Jackhouse Reservoir on 27 Nov.

At the year's end there were 46 at Greenhalgh, Fylde on 6 Dec and 48 at Forton on the 8th; 25 were at Grove Lane Plantation, Padiham, on 20 Dec. Hard weather at the end of the month saw birds moving into gardens in unusual numbers all across the county, including 18 in a garden at Belmont and ten at Roby Mill.

## FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

### **Common to abundant winter visitor and passage migrant.**

Flocks in the low triple figures were widespread during the early year. The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 669, the lowest total for several years; there were about 200 at Arkholme on 23 Jan and at Black Hill Farm, Pilling next day, and 258 at Slaidburn on the 26th. February peaks included 280 near Alston Reservoirs, Longridge on 4 Feb, 200 at Halton-on-Lune on the 6th, 350 on Heysham Moss on the 8th and 219 on Downholland Moss on the 13th. Two hundred and fifty at Kenibus in east Lancashire on 24 March and 150 at Dukes Clough, St. Helens on the 27th were that month's highest counts. Movements continued well into April: 150 flew north over White Coppice on 2 April and similar numbers were at Stocks Reservoir on the 5th; ninety over Belmont on 21 April was the last in Chorley region and four at Black Hill, Sabden on the 23rd closed out the first winter period.

The first Fieldfares of autumn were late this year, small parties at Formby Point, Mitton, Belmont and Rawcliffe Moss, all on 13 Oct. Passage was initially slow: there were 120 over Belmont, 222 on Downholland Moss, 57 over Seaforth and 58 over Preesall Flashes on 17 Oct. Eight hundred flew south over Cabin Hill, Formby on the 27th, presaging a massive and sudden influx on 28-29 Oct. On the 28th 4446 flew south over Seaforth and large flocks were reported from several parts of east Lancashire. Next day another 3996 passed at Seaforth, 3884 flew over Fairhaven Lake, 2033 flew south over Billinge Hill, St. Helens in 1.5 hours and 1000+ moved east over Speke Hall, south Liverpool; counts in the low hundreds were recorded at many other sites. Most of the large flocks seem to have passed right through the county, as counts on subsequent days were much smaller: there were 346 over Caton Moor on 30 Oct, 110 flew over Prescott Reservoirs and 50 were at Croston, Chorley on the 31st, and MMWWT recorded 500 on 1 Nov.

Counts during the remainder of the year were on the low side, with 290 at Jackhouse on the 11th the highest November count in east Lancashire and 95 on Rawcliffe Moss on the 28th the peak for the Fylde; 120 flew south at Seaforth on 6 Nov but none was recorded at Heysham all month. December peaks included 150 at Lee Green Reservoir, Burnley on 4 Dec, 156 on Downholland

Moss on the 15th, 600 on Hesketh Out Marsh mid-month, and 330 on an oilseed rape field near Speke on the 27th.

## SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

### **Common breeding resident. Red List (breeding decline).**

Reports of this familiar species were much reduced this year. The only noteworthy early-year record received was of a total of 78 during the Lancaster & District 10km January survey – mainly in three coastal squares – 64 were recorded in 2008. There were no reports of spring passage.

Singing males were reported from all parts of the Chorley region during the breeding season, and two pairs nested in Cuerden Valley Park. Breeding was confirmed at six sites in east Lancashire and considered probable at 15 others, and widespread breeding was reported across south Liverpool. There were eleven singing males at Mere Sands Wood, five pairs bred at MMWWT and two on Freshfield Dune Heath. In north Lancashire 13 pairs nested on Warton Crag RSPB (mean 8.8 during 1989-2008) and nine pairs on British Energy land at Heysham, where productivity was judged to have been poor for the third successive season. Eleven singing males were recorded along the River Lune between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot.

Autumn movements, mostly on a small scale, began in mid-September: there were six presumed migrants at Belmont on 17 Sept and ten fed on berries at Allsprings, Great Harwood on the 21st; a total of 121 Song Thrushes passed through at Heysham between 26 Sept and 18 Nov. October peaks included eleven at Belmont on 7 Oct, 15 at Heysham on the 9th, twelve at Marton Mere on the 17th and an autumn peak of 48 at Heysham on the 24th; nine passed over Fairhaven Lake on the 29th. Nine at Heysham on 18 Nov was the last movement reported. Small hard-weather influxes were recorded in late December, including nine on Downholland Moss on 20 Dec and six on Hesketh Out Marsh on the following day.

## REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

### **Abundant double passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Five widespread three-figure flocks were reported in January, the largest of 200+ at Whittle, Chorley on 27 Jan and 150 at Arkholme on the 29th; the Lancaster & District January survey located a total of 688 Redwings. In February smaller flocks were the norm, the only sizeable gathering being 250 at Moor Piece on the 23rd; March peaks included 100 still at Moor Piece on 1 March, 116 at Martholme on the 7th and 50 near Belmont on the 12th. There were four records of single stragglers in the first week of April with five at Leighton Moss on the 4th; a very tardy male was singing on Hesketh Golf Course, Marshside on 4 May.

Eight at Carr Mill Dam, St. Helens on 27 Sept was the first autumn arrival; the next were five in Fleetwood Cemetery on 5 Oct and three at Belmont on the 7th. Heavy movements got underway almost immediately, with 656 over the old Garden Festival site in south Liverpool on the morning of 11 Oct, a season's peak of 1206 over Heysham on the 14th and 450 over Caton Moor next day. A widespread influx on 17 Oct brought 5424 north-east over Seaforth, 260 over Brockholes Wetland, 377 north over Preesall, Fylde, 322 on Downholland Moss and 350 over Know Hill, Silverdale; 511 passed over Prescot Reservoirs next day. After a brief lull movements peaked again at the end of October: on the 28th 1500 were over Accrington, 254 flew south at Seaforth and there were 139 at Prescot Trade Centre, St Helens; 444 passed over nearby Billinge Hill next day. Movements in the Silverdale area on 31 Oct included counts of 1600 over Leighton Moss, 500 at Jack Scout and 563 at Know Hill.

Numbers declined dramatically from early November and 135 at Low Moor, Clitheroe on the 3rd was the only three-figure count reported for the rest of the year. Widespread flocks of up to 60 birds were recorded in December, including 50 in one Chorley garden in hard weather during the last days of the year.

## MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

### **Common breeding resident; some autumn dispersal/passage.**

Ninety-eight were recorded by the Lancaster January survey, mostly in coastal squares (89 in 2008). No significant flocks were reported in the first winter period; an early singing male was at Clitheroe Castle on 30 Jan.

Breeding data were sparse. In the north, single pairs nested on Warton Crag and on British Energy land at Heysham; in the Lune Valley three territories were located between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot and another three at Claughton. Mistle Thrushes appear to be widespread breeders across Liverpool; a pair nested on Freshfield Dune Heath and up to three at Mere Sands Wood. In Chorley region two pairs nested in Cuerden Valley Park.

The first post-breeding flock reported was of 45 over Bowland Wild Boar Park on 19 July; there were 13 in Sefton Park, south Liverpool on the 22nd and 16 at Marl Hill on the 24th. Widespread small to medium-sized flocks were on the move during August, including 75 on Downholland Moss on 16 Aug, 42 at Higher Stonyhurst Park on the 27th and 30 at Rivington Reservoir on the 31st. September peaks included 31 at Bispham, Fylde on the 7th, 31 at Prescot Reservoirs on the 17th and 28 in Sefton Park on the 21st; 60 passed over Stacksteads, Rossendale on the 23rd. There were two flocks totalling 57 birds around Belmont in early October and 19 were at Seaforth on the 17th. Four high-flying migrants passed over Heysham on 7 Oct and seven on the 31st; six flew over Caton Moor on the 30th.

No noteworthy reports were received for November, but there were 16 at Marton Mere on 6 Dec. A male singing in Clitheroe on 16 Dec was surely jumping the gun, in the light of what lay ahead!

## SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

### **Fairly common breeding bird and double passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).**

The dramatic decline in this popular species' fortunes has focused birders' attention in all regions of the county, providing very detailed passage and breeding data.

Arrivals in 2009 were unusually late, with a bird on Anglezarke Moor on 13 May the first record. A flurry of coastal migrants quickly followed: one on Churchtown Moss and two at Rossall Beach on 14 May, four at Blundellsands and two at Heysham on the 15th and at least twelve birds at Fluke Hall, Pilling next day – quite like the old days. Eight more were recorded along the coast before the end of May, and one at Heysham on 4 June was the last coastal migrant reported.

The first to arrive in east Lancashire was one at Slaidburn on 17 May but by the end of the month only seven had been recorded at six sites, compared with 22 at 20 sites in 2008 and 17 at 14 in 2007. The number and distribution of June and July records, however, were similar to those of the previous two years. Breeding was confirmed at Wycoller (four pairs), Halsteads, Burn House Farm and New Laithe Farm, Newton.

In the Chorley region Spotted Flycatchers were present at White Coppice, Roddlesworth, Yarrow Overflow and Rivington in May and a pair bred successfully at Belmont, fledging three young.

Birds were present in suitable breeding habitat at 14 locations in north Lancashire and pairs at Arkholme and Abbeystead succeeded in fledging young. Only one confirmed breeding record was received for the lowlands, however – the regular pair at Salwick, near Kirkham raised a brood of three.

A very light autumn passage began with one at Huyton on 13 Aug; there were two or three at Prescott Reservoirs during 27-29 Aug and one at Marton Mere on the 30th. September records included three in the Fylde in the second half of the month, one at Prescott Reservoirs on 4 Sept, three at Heald Brow, Silverdale on the 10th and one at MMWWT on the 24th. Inland, there were three at Anglezarke Reservoir on 8 Aug, and 18 September records in east Lancashire (eight in 2008, 24 in 2007): three were at Sunny Bank, Langho, four at nearby Egg Syke Brook on 9 Sept and one at Moor Lane, Billington on the 22nd. A bird at Oswaldtwistle on 1 Oct was the last record of 2009.

## ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

### **Abundant breeding resident, autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.**

So familiar and taken-for-granted is the Robin – perhaps the commonest species in Chorley region, for example, in Garden Bird, Breeding Bird and Atlas surveys – that quite a few observers simply omit it from their annual submissions.

Heysham reported numerous wintering birds in the early year and 494 were recorded across all squares in the Lancaster & District January 10km survey (532 in 2008). Peak counts in the first winter period included 21 at St Michael's, Fylde on 25 Jan, 44 at Lightfoot Green on 22 Feb and 35 at Moor Piece on the 28th. Twelve passage birds were recorded at Heysham between mid-March and late April.

The abundant breeding population seems, on the whole, to be stable. Nesting was confirmed at 18 sites in east Lancashire and was considered probable at many more. In the north 26 pairs bred on Warton Crag RSPB (mean 21.5 1989-2008) and 13 on British Energy land at Heysham, as last year; there were 36 singing males on the Lune between Leck Beck and Hornby, including ten in the Arkholme area in April. The annual ringing total at Leighton Moss was 17, lower than the average of recent years. In the south-west 42 singing males were at Mere Sands Wood (48 in 2008) and nine pairs nested on Freshfield Dune Heath, a continuing decline from 15 in 2008 and 19 in 2007.

Autumn movements began in early September. Several site and regional reports contain intriguing reports of 'influxes' of Robins in the first half of the month but, with the exception of eleven Seaforth on the 11th, without any details of the numbers involved: Burnley on 6 Sept and three arrivals at Heysham during the 9-13th. Up to eight were on Hesketh Out Marsh during 6-11 Sept and there were 19 at Devonshire Road Rock Gardens, Blackpool on 18 Sept. In October there were 25 at Seaforth on 5 Oct and 28 on the 12th. Further influxes were recorded at Heysham on 4, 10 & 12 Oct and a bird trapped there on the 12th was a noticeably grey/orange continental type; a total of 39 Robins was ringed there between late August and mid-November. There were 15 at Singleton, Fylde on 5 Oct and 38 in south-west Clitheroe on the 14th; 30 were in Devonshire Road Rock Gardens on the 31st.

On 6 Nov a bird at 410m altitude on Beatrix Fell in east Lancashire was considered to be a migrant; there were 26 at Dow Brook, Fylde on the 8th. Twenty-eight at Savick Brook, Fylde on 12 Dec was the only significant end-of-year report received.

## BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

**Rare breeding bird; uncommon double passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List (breeding decline).**

Last year's exceptional total of 14 records involving 15 individuals was far exceeded in 2009, with 23 birds recorded at 19 different locations.

A first-winter was in the precincts of Blackburn Cathedral on 12-13 Jan, a female at Glasson on 1 Feb and one at Sunnyhurst Hey Reservoir, Darwen during the 6-21st.

A male at Rossall Point on 20 March may have been an early spring migrant. A male in Liverpool City Centre on 17 April was thought likely to be the bird later recorded in song intermittently from 16 May to 2 June; there was a female at Rivington Water Treatment Works on 23 April and one was reported from a Great Harwood garden on 7 May. A first-summer male at Seaforth on 4-5 May was possibly the same individual that held territory in the Central Docks throughout the summer.

A very busy autumn began with an adult male at Seaforth on 7-8 Oct; there was another male in Lancaster on the 27th and a bird moved between Red Nab and Heysham No 2 Outfall on the 29th. A marked influx in mid-November brought a first-winter/female type bird to Cockersand during 9-15 Nov; another was at Pilling Lane during 13-15th and a third at Heysham Harbour on the 17th. A male at Longridge on 12 Nov was joined by a first-winter/female on the 15th; both remained until 17 Nov, the first-winter until the 20th.

There were six records of singles in December: a female at Dunsop Bridge on 3 Dec, three sightings of a bird at Heysham during the 9-16th and a first-winter male at Winter Hill on the 12-13th. Singles at Formby on the 20th, at Fleetwood on the 22nd and a first-winter/female at Preston Guild Hall on the 30th completed an outstanding year, lacking only a confirmed breeding record.

## REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

**Fairly common breeding bird and double passage migrant. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern).**

A very light coastal passage began with a male at Singleton, Fylde on 6 April and was over by the end of the month, with four birds recorded in the south-west, five in the north, including four at Heysham, and two more in the Fylde.

The first Redstart to arrive at inland sites was at Earnsdale Reservoir, Darwen on 6 April followed by singles in east Lancashire at Mearley Hall and Stocks Reservoir on the 10th and at Braddup Hall next day; Chorley's first was at White Coppice on the 12th.

Eighty singing males were recorded at 39 sites in east Lancashire, all but one in Bowland or the Ribble and Hodder Valleys. The first pair with young was at New Laithe Farm, Newton on 6 June and breeding was confirmed at a further four sites and considered probable at another 24. On the United Utilities Bowland estate only eleven nest-boxes were occupied, compared with 22 in 2008, but the number fledged per nest was slightly higher, 4.5 compared with 4.2. In the north singing males were in suitable habitat in Roeburndale, Hindburndale, Tower Lodge, Abbeystead, Melling, Littledale, Birk Bank, Hawthornthwaite and Whittington. Single pairs at Belmont and White Coppice were the only confirmed breeding records in Chorley NHS region although singing males were in the usual woodlands at Anglezarke and Rivington during April-June. On the western edge of the breeding range there were three singing males in the Upper Brock Valley and two in Grizedale during May.

Autumn passage, both inland and coastal, was negligible this year. In east Lancashire there was a total of four birds at Gawthorpe and Great Harwood in late August-early September; in the

north, three were at Tower Lodge on 28 Aug. On the coast three were recorded at Seaforth between 31 Aug and 13 Sept, while one at Fleetwood Cemetery on 20 Sept was the last Redstart recorded in 2009.

### WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

**Scarce and declining breeder on eastern hills; uncommon double passage migrant. Amber List (breeding decline).**

The deterioration in this species' status appears to be accelerating. The first spring migrant was at Cabin Hill, Formby on 16 April, followed by one at Marshside on the 18th; the first of 25 April birds in the Fylde was at Pilling Lane Ends on the 21st and birds on Aldcliffe Marsh and Heysham on 22 April were the first in north Lancashire. Subsequent arrivals brought four to Seaforth up to 28 May, nine more to Marshside with the last on 31 May, and two more to Heysham. There were eight in the Fylde and a total of five on Downholland and Plex Mosses during May.

One at Crowshaw, near Hurst Green on 24 April was the first Whinchat to arrive in east Lancashire, followed by a bird at Shedden Clough on the 28th and May records from six locations; the first in Chorley region was at White Coppice on 2 May.

Although eleven territories were located on the United Utilities Bowland estate there was no proof of breeding anywhere in east Lancashire this year; singing males or pairs were present at White Greet (six) and Catlow Fell. Chorley NHS region reported no breeding-season presence and no pairs were located in the Belmont area for the first time in the observer's memory.

Four passage birds were recorded in the ELOC region between 7 & 29 Aug, there was one at Allsprings, Great Harwood on 1-2 Sept and the last in the region was at Clowbridge on the 19th. A juvenile at Belmont on 20 Sept was the only migrant reported from Chorley. An early mover at Mythop, Fylde on 7 August was the first of an all too typically thin coastal passage; there were singles at Leighton Moss and Downholland Moss on 27 Aug and a total of eight birds in September, four in the Fylde, two at Brockholes Wetland and one apiece at Heysham and Marshside. No autumn Whinchats were recorded at Seaforth, for only the second time ever; one on Cockerham Moss on 23 Sept brought a dismal year to a close.

### STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

**Fairly common, increasing breeding bird, mainly in upland areas; fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor.**

After a decade of steady growth a consistent theme across a wide range of regional and site reports this year is of significant declines in both breeding and wintering numbers. The ELOC received 162 reports across all months, compared with 273 in 2008; the decline was particularly marked in January-February with 18 reports compared with 31. A survey of the Birk Bank-Clougha area of north Lancashire also indicated a reduction in the wintering population there. In coastal and lowland regions, however, there was no clear evidence of decline with ones and twos widely distributed around Morecambe Bay, the Ribble Estuary and on the south-west coast and mosslands.

Spring movements began in early March, about two weeks later than usual, and volumes were generally light with coastal peaks of four at Aldcliffe Marsh on 1 March and at Marshside next day, six at Ridge Farm, Pilling on the 3rd, five at Prescot Reservoirs on the 10th and three at Heysham on the 13th. Inland, six Stonechats were at Dean Clough Reservoir, Darwen on 5 & 18 March.

Substantial reductions in breeding numbers were reported from several inland regions. In east Lancashire nesting was confirmed at eight sites and judged probable at another 13; only 34 territories were located on the United Utilities Bowland estate compared with 66 during the last full census in 2007. In Chorley a pair bred successfully at Rivington Reservoir and two pairs at Belmont Reservoir, where as many as six pairs had bred in 2007; the total of five territories located on the West Pennine Moors around Belmont was an overall decline on recent years. In north Lancashire a reduction in breeding numbers was evident in the Birk Bank-Clougha area, with four pairs and a maximum of 23 young, and on Harrisend Fell (three pairs, maximum 14 young).

On the positive side, however, breeding Stonechats appear to have done well along the coast. At least six pairs bred on the Sefton coastal dunes from Hall Road north to the old Tobacco Dump on Formby Point; single pairs nested at MMWWT, Lytham St Anne's NR, Fleetwood Golf Course and Silverdale Moss, with possible breeding by a pair on Middleton Industrial Estate, Heysham.

Light autumn movements were recorded from mid-September. Lowland peaks included three at Prescott Reservoirs on 1 Oct, four on Fleetwood Golf Course on the 13th and ten at MMWWT on 11 Nov. Inland, 14 were at Clowbridge Reservoir on 11 Sept, eight at White Coppice on the 13th and up to eleven around Belmont Reservoir later in the month. At the year's end there were reports of noticeable declines in wintering numbers in east Lancashire compared with 2008, and also at both coastal and inland locations in the north. Two were regularly present at Marshside and three on Fleetwood Golf Course in December; there were four on Birkdale Green Beach on 4 Dec and two at Winter Hill TV mast on the 13th and on Lytham Moss on the 19th.

#### WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

**Fairly common though local breeding bird; common double passage migrant. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern).**

The first Wheatears of 2009 were singles at Seaforth and at Pendleside Farm in east Lancashire on 15 March. Widespread arrivals on subsequent days brought birds to Marshside, Fluke Hall, Carnforth Marsh, Heysham and Downholland Moss by 17 March. Numbers built up quite quickly, with a total of 55 passing through Heysham by the end of March; there were twelve at Seaforth on the 19th and 16 passed Crag Bank watchpoint, Carnforth on the 25th. The first to arrive in Chorley region was on Withnell Moor on 21 March; twelve more Wheatears were recorded in east Lancashire before the end of the month.

The first 'Greenland' bird was trapped at Seaforth on 13 April, after which almost all birds there were of that race. Passage was very light during most of April but a major influx toward the end of the month brought 105 to Downholland Moss and c.80 to Plex and Altcar Mosses on the 25th; Heysham and Seaforth recorded their spring peaks, 81 and 30 birds respectively, on the same date, when 40 were also present on Pilling Moss. Another 120 Wheatears were counted on Downholland Moss next day. As usual, migrant numbers were much lower in May: 22 at Seaforth on 8 May was the highest count there, and the last was recorded on the 28th; 35 passed through Heysham, with the last on 23 May. Noteworthy counts elsewhere included 20 at Marshside and 18 on Carnforth Marsh on 10 May and 88 birds in the Lytham-Ballam-Mythop area of south Fylde on the 25th. Inland, ten passed at Belmont during May and there were 16 on Farington Moss on the 9th.

In north Lancashire breeding pairs were reported from Leck Fell (three), Clougha-Birk Bank (three), Wray, Roeburndale and Abbeystead; the regular coastal pair nested on Carnforth Slag Tips. In east Lancashire there were only two confirmed breeding records, on Waddington Fell and at Swinden Reservoir, east of Burnley, although 17 territories were located on the United Utilities

Bowland estate. In Chorley NHS region one or two pairs bred in the vicinity of Belmont Reservoir, and nesting took place in at least six locations in Rossendale, with presence recorded at another ten sites.

The first coastal migrant was at Blackpool on 25 July while Heysham and Seaforth both recorded their first juveniles on 3 Aug. Thirteen more birds passed through Heysham and 13 at Seaforth during the month, with ten at the former on 23 Aug. The first autumn Wheatear was at Prescott Reservoirs on 11 Aug and there were nine on Fleetwood Golf Course on the 27th. Inland, 14 passed through Belmont Reservoir during the month and there were five at Peewit Hall, Anglezarke on the 7th.

The passage accelerated during September with totals of 50 birds at Heysham and 19 at Seaforth; there were eight on Downholland Moss on 1 Sept and on Pilling Marsh on the 19th, and twelve on Fleetwood Golf Course on the 26th. ELOC recorded 152 Wheatears during September from 17 sites, and there were six at Peewit Hall on the 10th.

As is the norm, passage dwindled very quickly in October: Seaforth recorded its last on 13 Oct, the last of twelve Fylde birds was at Bank End on the 16th and Marshside's last was recorded on the 23rd. There were 11 October records at Heysham, out of a total of 20 in north Lancashire; one at Belmont on 1 Oct was the last in Chorley region. Three November stragglers were reported this year, single birds at Heysham on 1 Nov and at MMWWT and Barnoldswick on the 5th.

## PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

### **Uncommon breeding bird and passage migrant.**

A male at Bowland Wild Boar Park on 10 April was the earliest ever seen in county, the previous earliest being on 12 April in both 1994 and 2008. The next to return were at Belmont on 13 April, Anglezarke the following day and Hindburndale on the 15th.

Females in a garden at Whittle-le-Woods on 18 April and at Fluke Hall on 16 May, a male on Kirkby Moss on 14 April and a female at Irwell Vale on 19 April were the only spring records away from breeding areas.

Monitored nest boxes were in ten woodlands in the Lune Valley recorded 54 pairs of which at least 43 were successful. Of the occupied boxes 34 were in Roeburndale, nine in woods alongside the Lune, seven at Hindburndale and four in Little Dale. Twelve pairs were recorded in nest boxes on the United Utilities estate, compared with 17 in 2008 and 24 in 2007 and there was a minimum of 16 pairs at Moor Piece on 9 June, just hatching young or still on eggs. Breeding also took place at Bowland Wild Boar Park and the Brock Valley and six were at new Laithe Farm, Newton-in-Bowland on 12 April. Two newly fledged birds were at Abbeystead on 7 July. Three pairs bred at Belmont, one on a new site, and single pairs at Rivington and the Roddlesworth Plantations.

The only autumn migrants were singles at Leighton Moss on 7 Aug and Jackhouse on the 24th.



Pied Flycatcher, Bowland Wild Boar Park, 24 May (Steve Young)

#### DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

**Abundant breeding resident and uncommon double passage migrant. Amber List (breeding decline).**

One hundred and thirty-two Dunnocks were recorded by the Lancaster & District January 10km survey across all squares, exactly the same total as in 2008. The only significant early-year gatherings reported were 17 at Bone Hill, Fylde on 3 Jan and ten at Heysham on the 5th. Nine probable passage birds were trapped at the latter site between mid-March and early May.

With its highly polygamous breeding habits, the term 'breeding pair' is perhaps inappropriate, but there were 13 territories on British Energy land at Heysham, around the average of the last ten years, and productivity seems to have been better than usual. A good ringing total of 31 birds at Leighton Moss also suggested healthy breeding results there; nine pairs bred on Warton Crag (mean 6.5 during 1989-2008). Elsewhere there were 17 singing males at Mere Sands Wood (eleven in 2008), five pairs on Freshfield Dune Heath (twelve in 2008) and three each on the edge of Marshside-Crossens marshes and at Brockholes Wetland. A 'pair' at Seaforth fledged three broods, the last two juveniles appearing on 25 Aug. Inland there were eight singing males at Arkholme on 16 April; five territories were located on Lomeshaye Marsh, with nesting considered probable at another 16 locations in east Lancashire, and a pair nested in moorland bracken above the treeline at 300m altitude near Belmont.

A very light coastal passage included ten at Heysham on 10 Sept and three there on the 27th; 22 Dunnocks were ringed during September-October. Twelve at Seaforth on 12 Oct were judged to include some migrants. Inland, a bird passed over Caton Moor on 15 Oct. Thirteen birds at Greenhalgh, Fylde on 6 Dec was the only significant late-year count received.

## HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

### **Abundant but decreasing resident. Red List (breeding decline).**

Happily, it seems that numbers of House Sparrows may have stabilised and are perhaps on the way up again, especially in some suburban and rural locations.

The Lancaster January survey recorded 1355, a further increase of 30% over the previous year that in turn was 50% up on 2007. The census around Millhead, Carnforth resulted in 46 pairs compared to 38 in 2008. In the Pilling-Preesall area 26 monitored pairs had 45 clutches, laying 200 eggs, from which 149 hatched and 130 young fledged. At Belmont, several pairs built open nests in Clematis.

In south Liverpool, numbers were similar to previous years with up to 60 at Liverpool Hope University during the year, and the sight of one back in Sefton Park after many years absence was noteworthy. A number of pairs bred around the fringes of Marshside resulting in a peak count of 70 in the spring.

On the Fylde there were counts of between 50 and 70 from Cockerham, Great Marton Moss, Greenhalgh, Ingol, Lightfoot Green, Lytham, Newton-with-Scales, Norcross, Pilling Lane and St. Michael's on Wyre. These were surpassed by 90 at Starr Gate on 2 Aug and 100 at Out Rawcliffe on 30 Aug.

In east Lancashire numbers weren't as high but there were a few concentrations: over 30 were at Chipping on 8 March, 34 around Bashall Eaves on 5 June and at least 30 were in a Rishton garden on 26 Sept where the numbers in the local area have noticeably increased. Over 25 were regular on garden feeders in Belmont during the late autumn.

## TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

### **Fairly common but declining breeding bird. Flocks in winter also decreasing. Red List (breeding decline).**

#### Monthly maxima from selected sites on the Fylde

	Jan	Feb	March	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bradshaw												
Lane Head	96	114	72	65	10	26	20	/	43	50	77	38
Cockerham												
Sands	12	6	50	20	6	7	3	30	55	30	6	6
Eagland Hill	60	40	1	10	7	5	/	/	/	/	24	34
Rawcliffe Moss	157	165	155	12	1	/	3	4	18	133	268	305
Todderstaffe												
Hall	35	30	22	8	/	/	/	25	30	30	20	8
Ridge Farm	41	/	43	/	/	/	/	25	51	5	/	/

Over Wyre continues to be the best place for this species where it is now widespread with records from 72 sites during the year. The table above shows the monthly peaks at the main sites, most of which have supplementary feeding schemes throughout the year. A peak of over 305 were counted on 17 Dec at Rawcliffe Moss where numbers were high throughout the last two months of the year. In the Pilling-Preesall area 209 pairs had 420 clutches, in which 2052 eggs were laid, 1418 hatched and 1208 young fledged; productivity was slightly down on 2008 at 2.9 fledged young per clutch.

The other area where this species is concentrated is around MMWWT where 55 pairs bred. A least two pairs nested at Mere Sands Wood and four at Brockholes Wetland. Birds were seen in the breeding season around Banks, Tarleton, Burscough, Downholland Moss and King's Moss. There were peak counts of 20 at Lathom on 20 April, 21 on Halsall Moss on 1 March, 20 at Hesketh Out

Marsh on 15 Aug and 20 at Eccleston Delph on the 22nd. Birds were present around Tarbock Hall, Knowsley during June.

East of the M6 there were records from twelve sites with most around Great Harwood, where three pairs nested at Brownsills and a minimum of 15 were present at Harwood Bar Caravan Site on 3 Jan. Another regular site was at Commonsides, Whalley where ten were present on 1 Jan, up to nine visited feeders in Mellor during the latter part of the year and six were on niger seed feeders at Barrow on 26 Dec. Birds were seen with nesting material near Ribchester and a bird was trapped and ringed at New Laithe Farm, Newton on 9 Nov.

In the Lancaster area there was a scattering of records of birds regularly visiting feeders in a Silverdale garden in the second winter period to a breeding pair at Arkholme.

## YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flavissima*

**Scarce and declining summer visitor; fairly common passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).**

A reasonably busy coastal passage by recent standards began with one on 14 April at Marshside, where up to three were present on a few subsequent dates with the last on 30 April. The first of 13 spring migrants at Seaforth was on 15 April, the last on 15 May. Three were at the Eric Morecambe complex at Leighton Moss on 18 April and the first of ten in the Fylde was at Ridge Farm, Pilling on the 20th. Inland, single females at Upper Foulridge Reservoir, Colne on 25 April and at Alston Reservoirs, Longridge on 30 April were the only spring birds reported in east Lancashire.

There were no breeding-season reports from either east Lancashire, where nesting was last recorded in 2005, or from the Chorley region. In north Lancashire, although there were records of one or two birds at Wenning Foot in the Lune Valley on a few dates in May, no confirmed breeding was recorded anywhere.

A tiny remnant population seems to be holding out in the south-west, however. One, possibly two, pairs bred on Tarleton Moss where a pair with two juveniles was present on 13 July; breeding by a single pair was considered probable at MMWWT and there was breeding-season presence at the nearby traditional site on Curlew Lane, Rufford and on Hesketh Out Marsh, where a juvenile was seen on 27 July. Single birds were seen at Halewood and Oglet, south Liverpool, in late June. Breeding probably also occurred on the Old Coach Road but few records were received from the Rainford-Kirkby mosses this year.

A fairly lively autumn passage on the coast began with two at Bank End, Fylde on 7 Aug; a total of seven Yellow Wagtails was recorded in the region during the month. About 20 were recorded on Downholland Moss between 19 & 31 Aug, three on Hesketh Out Marsh on the 15th and two at Brockholes Wetland on the 18th. Two were at Mere Sands Wood in the first week of the month and an adult with three well-fledged juveniles was at Holmeswood on the 27th.

Further inland, three singles were at Lower Foulridge Reservoir between 14 & 24 Aug; three on Farington Moss on the 23rd was the only record in Chorley region all year. September movements included four on Downholland Moss and five at MMWWT during the first half of the month, two in the Fylde and singles on Middleton Industrial Estate, Heysham, Seaforth, Ainsdale and Gorse Hill near Ormskirk. In east Lancashire a single was at Upper Foulridge on 1 Sept and three on Higher Towneley Playing Fields, Burnley during the 9-15th.

Three coastal birds were recorded in October, at Ridge Farm, Pilling on 1 Oct, on Downholland Moss on the 10th and the last of the year on Banks Marsh on the 17th.

**BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava flava***Scarce passage migrant, mainly in spring.**

Only two were recorded in 2009, both in the south-west: males at Curlew Lane, Rufford on 16-17 April and at Seaforth on the 27th.

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea***Fairly common breeding bird, mainly on upland streams in the east; common passage migrant, especially in autumn. Widespread in small numbers in winter. Amber List (long-term breeding decline).**

During the first winter period 18 were recorded during the Lancaster & District January survey (16 in 2008); there were 19 reports from 17 sites in the ELOC region during January-February and ones and twos were reported from coastal and inland sites across the Fylde.

Five spring migrants were recorded at Heysham during 15-21 March with a very late bird on 25 April, and singles were at Marshside on 19 March and 16 April.

In north Lancashire 22 pairs were located along the 32km of the River Lune from Kirkby Lonsdale down to Skerton Weir (17 in 2008) and breeding was recorded at 13 other locations, including Scorton and Millhead in the lowlands. In Chorley DNHS region pairs nested at Cuerden Valley and Yarrow Valley Parks and at White Coppice, the usual territories were occupied at Rivington and Anglezarke Reservoirs, and a family party was on the River Goit at Brinscall on 11 June. Nesting was confirmed at 13 sites in east Lancashire and considered probable at a further 18; at least four pairs bred along the 4km of the River Hodder between Thorneyholme and Whitewell. Pairs were present in at least a dozen locations along the rivers and streams of Rossendale.

In the coastal west single pairs nested on the Lower Brock near Myerscough, at Prescott Reservoirs and in Princes Park, south Liverpool. Birds were present in Liverpool city centre throughout the breeding season and a pair fledged at least two young by the busy ornamental ponds on Southport's Lord Street. Breeding was considered possible in the vicinity of Seaforth, where four were present on 6 July.

Early migrants were on the move by late August with a bird at Heysham on the 25th, one over Caton Moor on the 27th and a bird at Marl Hill in east Lancashire on the following day; a small passage was also observed at Seaforth in the last week of the month, and there were 13 at Prescott Reservoirs on the 30th. Twenty-six Grey Wagtails were recorded on Downholland Moss during the autumn. Heysham recorded 138 migrants in September with peaks of 17 on the 9th and 12th; in the Fylde there were ten over Knott End and 15 over Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on the 12th, with another twelve over the latter site on the 19th. In east Lancashire eight were on the River Calder at Whalley Weir on 10 Sept.

Moderate movements were recorded intermittently throughout October in coastal areas, including a total of 35 at Heysham with a peak of ten on the 5th, and 34 at Seaforth, with nine on the 5th and eight on the 22nd. 5 Oct appears to have been a day of widespread movements; in addition to the Heysham and Seaforth birds, nine flew over Fairhaven Lake and another nine were at Fleetwood Marsh. Inland, seven moved over Caton Moor during October, the last on the 31st.

Passage appears to have ceased everywhere by the beginning of November. Grey Wagtails, mainly in ones and twos, were again widespread throughout the county at the year's end, including up to three at Seaforth and five along 4km of the River Calder between Altham and Martholme on 28 Nov. There were twelve reports from eleven sites in east Lancashire during December.

## PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

**Common and widespread breeding bird and winter visitor; abundant double passage migrant.**

Smallish roosts and flocks in the first winter period included c40 at Burnley Market Hall in January, a similar number feeding on recently spread slurry near Whalley on the 7th and up to 30 roosting in Heysham Power Station; there was a roost of 150+ in Preston on 4-5 Feb.

Eighty Pied Wagtails were recorded by the Lancaster & District January survey, the lowest total for several years. A few reports of spring migrants from mid-March to early April included 20 passing at Heysham during March, 20 at Seaforth on the 12th, 30 at Hightown on the 14th and 80 at Upper Foulridge Reservoir, Colne on 9 April.

In spite of this species' abundance as a breeding bird only a few reports of nesting were received, as usual, in 2009. Breeding was confirmed at eleven sites in east Lancashire and considered probable at another nine; 46 pairs were located on the River Lune from Kirkby Lonsdale down to Skerton Weir (55 in 2008). Three pairs nested at Belmont Reservoir, two each at MMWWT and Marshside-Crossens and single pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath and Brockholes Wetland.

Post-breeding flocks or early migrants were on the move by the end of July; a flock of 44 adults and juveniles was at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on the 31st. Counts in August included 50 at Bank End, Fylde on 7 Aug and 25+ at Belmont Reservoir on the 13th, building to totals of 175 at Arkholme on the 19th and 91 on Downholland Moss on the 24th. Passage peaked in September, with counts of 123 on Downholland Moss on the 5th, 100 at Higher Towneley Playing Field, Burnley on the 19th and 83 over Caton Moor watchpoint on the 27th. September roosts in north Lancashire included c.250 at Leighton Moss, 150 at the Sainsbury's site in Lancaster and 100+ at Heysham Power Station; 161 high-flying *alba* wagtails over Heysham during the month were very likely to have been *yarrellii*. October movements were much smaller: 136 passed through Heysham with a peak of 24 on the 4th, and parties of 25+ were regular at Alston Reservoirs, Longridge during the month.

Some substantial flocks and roosts were reported towards the end of the year, including 425 in Parker Street, Liverpool City Centre and 113 on Banks Marsh on 17 Nov; over 300 were still roosting in Parker Street in December, and about 100 in Preston's Corporation Street.

## WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba alba*

**Spring migrant in variable numbers, mainly coastal; much scarcer in autumn.**

A fairly typical spring passage opened with a bird at Crosby Coastal Park on 11 March, followed by one on Aldcliffe Marsh on the 14th and four at Marshside next day; there were nine more coastal records in March and the first inland bird was at Upper Foulridge Reservoir during 21-29th.

Movements continued at fairly low levels until 10 April when 58 arrived at Marshside and 52 at Seaforth; subsequent peaks included 60 at Seaforth on 14 April with 50 there on the 17th, 20 at MMWWT on the 16th and 33 at Bolton-le-Sands on the 26th. There were 32 April records in the Fylde with a peak of ten on Rawcliffe Moss on the 18th; White Wagtails were thought likely to constitute the majority of 87 high-flying *albas* that passed Heysham between 1 April and 1 May. In east Lancashire there were up to three at Stocks Reservoir on dates in late April; there were two at Croston Finney, Chorley on the 4th and at Belmont Reservoir on the 29th.

As usual, movements dwindled away quickly in May, the last significant counts being of 30 at Bolton-le-Sands on 1 May and 60 at Seaforth on the 6th. There were four May records in the

Fylde with the last two at Mythop on 8 May, the same date as the last inland record of two at Stocks Reservoir; a bird at Seaforth on 15 May was the final migrant of spring.

A thin but protracted autumn passage began with an early bird at Mythop on 8 Aug; there were only two further records of singles that month, at Prescott Reservoirs on the 29th and Rishton Reservoir on the 31st. Up to three were regular at Seaforth in the first week of September; other records during the month included twos at Stocks Reservoir on the 2nd and at Curlew Lane, Rufford on the 6th and the last inland record, a bird at Billington, near Whalley on the 27th. There were three records in October, all on the coast; two at Torrisholme, Morecambe on 30 Oct were the last White Wagtails reported in 2009.

### TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

#### **Uncommon local breeding bird in the north and east, and double passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).**

The first of a moderate coastal passage flew over Seaforth on 5 April, followed by three at Marshside and one on Warton Crag on the 11th and the first in the Fylde at Ridge Farm, Pilling the following day. A total of 51 passed over Rossall Point during April with a peak of eleven on the 22nd. Inland, the first to arrive in Chorley region was at White Coppice on 9 April, with the next at Healey Nab on the 24th; none was recorded in east Lancashire during April. There were only four coastal records in May, with two at Heysham on the 17th the last migrants reported.

In east Lancashire there were records of singing males in May to June at Collyholme, Halsteads Farm, Roddlesworth Plantations (two), at three localities in the Longridge Fell area and on Beacon Fell and one was at Stocks Reservoir on 14 July, but no confirmation of successful breeding was obtained anywhere. In the north two singing males were reported from the Trough of Bowland and singles from Roeburndale and Birk Bank, a substantial decline on the totals of recent years. In Chorley region there were reports from White Coppice during the first half of May, but again no proof of nesting.

There was an above-average autumn passage in east Lancashire with three at Allsprings, Great Harwood on 17 Aug, eight there next day, and eleven more to the end of the month; two were at Jackhouse on 22 Aug and one on the 30th. On the latter date one flew south at Belmont Reservoir, the only autumn record in Chorley. An exceedingly sparse passage along the coast involved seven single birds between 25 Aug and 20 Sept, at Heysham (two), Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, Blackpool, Downholland Moss, Hightown Dunes and Prescott Reservoirs.

### MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

#### **Abundant breeding bird, especially in the east, and double passage migrant; scarcer in winter. Amber List (breeding decline).**

Over a hundred at Marshside-Crossens on 11 Jan and 80 at Green Dick's Lane, Fylde on 11 Feb were the only sizeable counts reported in the first winter period. Only 43 Meadow Pipits were recorded in the Lancaster & District January survey across seven 10km squares, a similar total to those of recent years; 20 at Dinckley Hall was the highest count reported from the east.

Spring movements began quite late with only a few very small coastal flocks in late February. Heysham recorded 372 migrants during March with a peak of 205 on the 19th. Passage gained momentum in the second half of the month: there were 226 at Ridge Farm, Pilling and 164 at Rossall Point on 19 March, 600 at Ridge Farm next day and 250 at Brockholes Wetland on the 21st; at the month's end 200 were on Warton Marsh on 28 March and 60 at Marshside on the 29th. About 40 at Billington, near Whalley on 30 March was the largest flock reported in inland areas.

Six hundred and eighteen Meadow Pipits passed over Rossall Point on 1 April; 1527 migrants were recorded at Heysham during the month, peaking at 796 on the 13th. Inland flocks included 95 at Arkholme on 16 April; movements everywhere appear to have petered out by the 20th.

Twenty-three pairs on Hesketh Out Marsh was by far the highest breeding total reported from the coast; there were five pairs on Marshside RSPB and another on Crossens Inner, three pairs nested on Middleton Industrial Estate, Heysham, and birds were on territory at four locations across south Liverpool. In Chorley region there were 29 Meadow Pipits in May and 37 in June in a 1km BBS square on Darwen Moor; in north Lancashire 18 pairs were located on the Leck Beck-Arkholme stretch of the River Lune. There were only two confirmed breeding records from east Lancashire, at Braddup Farm and on Waddington Fell, but many 'probables' were located at other sites, all of them in Bowland.

The first coastal migrant reached Seaforth on 12 Aug; movements in Chorley region during the month included 100+ at Peewit Hall, Anglezarke on the 14th and 150+ at Belmont Reservoir on the 22nd, and sixty-four passed over Caton Moor during 24-31 August. A moderate coastal passage developed from the second week in September; peaks included 267 at Heysham on 10 Sept, 120 at Seaforth next day and 106 on Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on the 12th. A substantial movement on 20 Sept brought 565 to Downholland Moss and 300 to Cockerham; there were 250 on Carnforth saltmarsh on the 25th. Totals of 2158 and 1210 Meadow Pipits were recorded at Downholland Moss and Heysham, respectively, during September. Inland, a total of 2284 passed over Caton Moor with a peak of 660 on 19 Sept, when 430+ were also present around Belmont Reservoir; 50 birds per hour passed at Belmont next day.

Passage numbers in October, both coastal and inland, were much lower, with highest counts of 252 over Rossall Point on 1 Oct, 221 on Downholland Moss and 100 each at Seaforth and Brockholes Wetland on the 5th, and 143 over Fairhaven Lake on the 12th, when about 100 were also at Simpshey Hill in east Lancashire. October totals of 1625 were recorded on Downholland Moss, 1186 on Caton Moor and 272 at Heysham. Very small movements continued into early November, including 54 at MMWWT on 1 Nov and 69 on Downholland Moss on the 7th. A few fair-sized flocks were reported from both coastal and inland locations at the year's end: there were 47 at Jackhouse on 27 Nov and 39 there on 13 Dec, and 158 on Downholland Moss on the 20th.

## RED-THROATED PIPIT\* *Anthus cervinus*

### **Vagrant.**

One flew east, calling, over Marine Drive at Marshside on 20 Oct (G Clarkson). This is the third record for the county; the previous occurrences were both at Seaforth in spring, in May 1992 and April 1995.

## ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

### **Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant, mainly in autumn.**

The overwhelming majority of our wintering Rock Pipits are nowadays to be found on shores and saltmarshes from the Wyre Estuary northwards, and this year was no exception. January peaks in the Fylde included six on Barnaby's Sands on 11 Jan, 15+ on nearby Burrow's Marsh next day and nine across the river at Stanah on the 15th; in February at least ten were at The Heads during 11-13th. Early-year peaks on the north coast included nine on Aldcliffe Marsh and twos at Jenny Brown's Point, Conder Green and Heysham. A very dark *petrosus/kleinschmidti* -type bird was on Heysham North Harbour Wall on 19 Jan.

Further south the only records were of singles at Crosby Coastal Park on 4 Jan, Birkdale Shore on the 13th and Warton Bank on 27 March. Two spring birds in east Lancashire, on the River Calder at Altham on 19 March and at Upper Foulridge Reservoir on 5 April, were, in all probability, on passage.

Relatively strong and widespread autumn movements were reported this year, beginning with singles at Seaforth on 27 & 29 Sept and Morecambe Stone Jetty and Starr Gate on the 30th. A total of seven passed at Rossall Point during October and 16 were recorded over Fairhaven Lake between 5 Oct and 6 Nov, including five on 29 Oct and six on 6 Nov. A total of 14 was recorded at Seaforth with four flying south on 22 Oct; singles over Caton Moor on 12 Oct and at Rishton Reservoir on the 25th were the only records at inland sites.

Wintering birds seem to have been installed by the end of November; twelve were on Burrow's Marsh on 4 Dec and the north recorded late-year peaks of five at Aldcliffe and two apiece at Stodday and Glasson. A single bird at Marshside during 30 Nov-2 Dec was the only record south of the Ribble.

### WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

#### **Uncommon winter visitor and scarce passage migrant. Amber List (rare winterer).**

An elusive individual was seen intermittently at Leighton Moss between 19 Feb and 31 March. At Barnaby's Sands-The Heads two were present on 11 Feb and one next day; there were two there on 12 & 19 March and one on the 30th. At the other regular wintering site, Warton Bank, two were seen on several dates from 4 to 14 Feb, increasing to three on 26 March and six next day. A bird in partial summer plumage at Seaforth on 17 March was the only early-year record south of the Ribble, and a bird there on 26 Nov was the only Water Pipit recorded anywhere in the second half of the year.

### CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

#### **Abundant breeding bird, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Numbers in the first winter period were very much similar to those of 2008 with few large flocks. The largest counts came from the feeding stations around Eagland Hill where up to 250 were present by the end of February. Over 150 were at South Woods Farm, Pilling on 3 Jan and 128 at Rawcliffe Moss on 3 Feb. Over 150 were in tree tops around Fair Oak in the Hodder Valley on 23 Feb whilst over 200 were in two roosts near Belmont on 21-22 Feb. Up to 400 were along Wyke Lane, Scarisbrick for several weeks in January but elsewhere numbers only reached double figures. The January survey in the Lancaster area still showed the species to be widespread but overall numbers were down on previous years.

Very little spring passage was noted although increasing numbers were noted at garden feeder sites around 28 March.

Breeding numbers seemed to be roughly similar to previous years. At Heysham, 15 pairs bred, there were five pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath, four at Hesketh Out Marsh, ten at Brockholes Wetland and three at Lomeshaye Marsh. A total of 56 singing males were along the River Lune from Leck Beck to Wenning Foot and the Warton Crag RSPB census recorded an average showing of 24 pairs. The species was noted as spreading further into Liverpool city centre.

Autumn passage was also relatively quiet with a few birds passing in September and the main passage occurring in October. There were peaks of 198 at Caton Moor and 62 over Heysham on 4 Oct, 1644 over Fairhaven and 285 at Seaforth on the 5th, 554 over Fairhaven and 98 over Otterspool on the 13th and then a lighter passage until a large movement the end of the month.

There was a second peak of birds on 29 Oct with 850 Seaforth, 725 south over Formby Point and 1485 over Fairhaven. Heysham's largest count of the year was 136 on 31 Oct.

Numbers in the second winter period were probably even lower than in 2008. Peak counts from the east of the county came from Bolton-by-Bowland where there were a couple of large flocks totalling over 100 on 8 Nov (probably augmented by some late migrants) and Moor Piece where 60 were counted on the 22nd. Only 30 were in the rhododendron roost at Belmont in late December and nowhere else reported any numbers in excess of 50.

### BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

**Winters in variable numbers. Fairly common double passage migrant, mostly in autumn.**

Both winter periods were very poor as evidenced by the extremely low roost counts at Belmont where there just five on 22 Feb and 2 on 23 Dec. Elsewhere, only six were seen in the Lancaster January survey and numbers at Fylde feeding stations peaked at just eight at New Lane, Pilling on 2 Feb. At least six were with the large Chaffinch flock at Fair Oak on 6 March and six were in a Belmont garden during January, rising to ten by the end of March. Several were amongst a Chaffinch flock on Croston Moss on 21 Feb and at least ten were amongst Chaffinches on Wyke Lane, Scarisbrick during January.

Birds were present in gardens at Oakenclough to 8 April, Over Kellet to the 15th and Rishton to the 2nd. Four flew north over Marshside on 4 May.

The first autumn passage birds were recorded at Fairhaven on 5 Oct. The main passage, if you could call it that, was between 17-31 Oct: twelve were over Rossall on 17 Oct and on the 29th over 30 were at Shedden Clough, 23 flew south over Fairhaven, two over Seaforth, two over Speke and six over Formby Point. On 5 Nov 16 passed over Tatham and 20 were still present at Shedden Clough, but after then there was an extreme paucity of records.

### GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

**Common breeding bird. Some autumn movement, flocks in winter.**

This species has declined dramatically over the past couple of years as indicated in last year's report due to the effects of trichomoniasis on the population. The January survey of the Lancaster district resulted in a total of 118, half the number of previous years. Many contributors commented on the low numbers of this species at garden feeders throughout the county although there were one or two pockets where reasonable numbers were present. Only 110 were ringed all year at Heysham compared to an average of 178 over the previous ten years.

The largest counts of the first winter period were at Brockholes Wetland with 100 on 9 March, Shedden Wood where 60 were roosting on 15 Feb and Princes Park, Liverpool with 55 at a roost on the 25th. Otherwise, the largest congregations were in the 20-25 region such as at Marton Mere on 11 Jan, Peel Park, Clitheroe on the 18th, Roby Mill on the 18th, Lower Darwen on the 24th, Clowbridge Reservoir on 5 Feb, Belmont on the 22nd, Lightfoot Green on the 22nd and 34 at Lytham Crematorium on the 26th.

There were only two males at Warton Crag RSPB in April and none remained to breed. Conversely, there were 13 pairs at Heysham, an average showing. Three pairs bred at Freshfield Dune Heath and at Lomeshaye Marsh. A post-breeding flock of 55 was at Hesketh Out Marsh on 11 Sept.

Autumn passage was poor with only 278 recorded over Heysham during September and October (peak of 58 on 23 Oct), 599 over Fairhaven (peak of 243 on 5 Oct), 640 over Rossall Point

(295 on 17 Oct and 345 on the 18th) and a peak of 68 south over Seaforth on 28 Oct. Marshside had a peak count of 50 on 16 Nov and 50 were at Cockerham Sands on the 20th.

In the second winter period flocks of 20 were recorded at Belmont, Shedden Clough, Clowbridge, Jackhouse, Stanah and St. Michael's on the Wyre.

## GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

### **Common breeding resident and passage migrant. Flocks in winter.**

This species is considered to be the second most common finch in the Chorley region and that assessment could probably be applied to the rest of the county with its year-round presence in significant numbers. It was reported regularly in small flocks from 132 sites on the Fylde for instance, while the January survey in the Lancaster area logged 253 birds.

Peak counts in the first winter period included 70 at Forton, 74 at Lytham Moss on 6 Jan and 70 at Belmont on the 4th rising to 180 there on 22 Feb. Over 70 were at Clock Face Colliery, St. Helens on 16 Jan, rising to over 100 by 14 Feb. Many smaller flocks were reported across the county.

There was a reasonable spring passage that peaked in the third week of April. At Heysham a total of 117 were recorded by the vis mig team whilst 475 flew north over Rossall Point with a peak of 263 on 18 April.

There was a limited amount of breeding information. Two pairs bred at Freshfield Dune Heath, six pairs at Marshside, five pairs at both Heysham and Arkholme and 28 pairs were mapped in the Millhead-Warton area. Two early juveniles were seen in Colne in mid-May and a late breeding pair was on a nest in August at Low Moor, Clitheroe. Post-breeding flocks included 100 at Prescot Reservoirs on 28 July, 70 at Clitheroe Tip on 3 Aug, 105 at Belmont on the 9th and 140 at MMWWT on the 12th. Up to 240 were present at Marshside in August and September and at Seaforth there were between 80-100 from early August through to mid-October. A flock of 150 at Mythop on 12 Aug increased to around 300 by the 19th. Also on the 19th, there was a flock of 100 at Rawcliffe Moss as well as three flocks totalling 350 birds on thistles at Arkholme. Between 14 - 29 Sept there were up to 340 birds on the Conder Estuary and a flock of 220 was at Altcar Rifle Ranges on the 11th. There was a peak of 100 at Downholland Moss on 6 Oct.

Autumn passage was also reasonable: 200 were counted over Heysham with a peak of 38 on 23 Oct but most were recorded at Seaforth, where over 150 flew over south on 27-29 Oct. Approximately 70 were at Helmshore, Rossendale in the last week of October.

Flocks of 100 were at Lytham Moss on 22 Nov and Prescot Reservoirs on 4 Dec, whilst in the east of the county the largest flocks in the last couple of months of the year were 25 at Jackhouse on 20 Nov, at least 20 regularly in Rishton and 110 in the Rhododendron roost at Belmont on 23 Dec..

## SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

### **Uncommon recent breeding colonist. Common double passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Siskins were extremely scarce in the first winter period, exemplified by the total lack of records on the Fylde in January and only two in February. Apart from a handful of records, it was mid-March before there was any significantly wider reporting as birds started to move through the county.

Sixty-two passed over Heysham between 17 March and 28 April and 42 were ringed between 17 March and 13 April at Over Kellet. Twenty-two flew north over Seaforth on 30 March, totals of 30 passed over Knott End on 14 & 15 April and 36 flew north at Rossall Point on the 18th. A notable spring migration at Marshside in mid-April included a peak of 75 on the 16th. Over 60

were along the Fisherman's Path, Ainsdale NNR on 19 April, up to 40 were regular in a Belmont garden in the first two weeks of the month and at least 30 were in a Longridge garden on the 9th.

Breeding season records came from Silverdale, Wray, Thrushgill, Tarnbrook, Roeburndale, Warton, Claughton (nine males singing all summer), Belmont, Moor Piece, Dunsop Valley (15), Longridge Fell (15), Rossendale and Marl Hill suggesting a healthy breeding population, but unusually none was confirmed in the Formby-Ainsdale pinewoods.

Autumn passage was very quiet for the second successive year with just 34 recorded over Heysham, 43 over Fairhaven and 42 over Seaforth. There were 40 at Fluke Hall on 18 Oct and 50 at Ridge Farm on the 22nd.

Numbers in the second winter period were once again very low with very few counts of note. There were 50 at Wayoh Reservoir on 5 Dec, 45 at Leighton Moss from late November to the end of December, twelve at Cuerden Valley Park and 30 at Stocks Reservoir on 15 Dec and 15 near Belmont on the 6th.

### LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

**Common breeding resident. Double passage migrant, common winter flocks in the west. Red List (breeding decline).**

As usual, virtually all first winter period records were confined to the lowlands in the west of the county with one at Waddington on 2 Jan being the sole record from the east. There was a plethora of records from the Fylde with larger flocks being 100 at New Lane and Black Hill Farm, Pilling on 3 Jan (numbers at the former rising to over 200 by 4 Feb), up to 80 at Rawcliffe Moss from 25 Jan to 12 Feb, 55 at Cockerham Sands on 5 Jan rising to 130 by 30 March and up to 60 at Marton Mere during the period. On the Lune estuary there were flocks of 155 at Aldcliffe on 10 Feb, 80 at Glasson on 1 Feb and 70 at Bank Houses on 9 Jan. In the south-west, up to 170 were on Halsall Moss on 27 Feb, up to 64 on Farington Moss while over 100 were in a mixed finch flock along Wyke Lane, Scarisbrick on 21 Jan, rising to 220 by 4 Feb.

The earliest records in the east with 23 at Alston Wetland on 22 March and the rare sight of a single bird on a garden feeder in Rishton on 2 April. Birds were back on territory at Champion Moor and Lowerhouse Lodges by 7 April. Spring migration brought 313 through Heysham with a peak of 48 on 16 April and 82 over Rossall Point on the 18th.

Breeding reports included two pairs at MMWWT, 15 at Freshfield Dune Heath, four at Belmont Reservoir, at least 15 in bracken on Winter Hill, four at Heysham, two at Arkholme, an estimated ten pairs on the Marshside reserve and six on Crossens Inner Marsh. Between 7-14 pairs were present in the breeding season at Hesketh Out Marsh and birds were present on at least twelve sites around south Liverpool. There were breeding season records from at least 29 sites on the Fylde. In the east of the county the species is more thinly scattered and pairs were present in suitable habitat at Great Harwood, Burbles Hill, Braddup Farm, Hare Clough, Whalley Nab, Waddington Fell, Alston Wetland and Marl Hill.

There were no really large post-breeding flocks until September; 201 were at Carr House Green Common on the 10th, 123 at Todderstaffe Hall on the 26th, up to 100 at Ridge Farm throughout the month, 100 at Marshside on the 28th, 45 on the Hightown Dunes on the 14th, 50 at Belle Vale on the 21st, 60 at Champion Moor on the 6th and 160 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on the 17th that remained into October.

There were some notable movements over Seaforth during autumn passage; 26 south on 22 Sept, 45 on 5 Oct, 20 on the 6th and 80 south on the 29th. Heysham recorded just 55 on vis mig

although up to 38 fed at the north harbour wall feeding area. Caton Moor had 186 over during this period with a peak of 33 on 27 Sept. Ninety-five fed on Oil-seed Rape at Oglet on 12 Oct.

In the second winter period, the flock at Lower Foulridge Reservoir dwindled to 20 by 3 Nov and eleven were still present on 4 Dec. There were 108 at Eagland Hill on 10 Nov, 100 on Croston Moss on 6 Dec, 80 at Plex Moss on the 13th, up to 120 on Downholland Moss through December and 103 in Stubble at Speke on the 24th. However the largest count by far was of approximately 700 on wild bird seed mixture plots at Clifton Marsh Farm on 23 Dec during a spell of hard weather.

## TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*

### Scarce and decreasing breeder. Winters on some coasts. Red List (breeding decline).

#### Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	March	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cant Clough	25	25	23	3	/	0	/	0	40	70	34	16
Heysham	66	39	47	7	/	/	/	/	/	33	82	67
Bank End	50	42	20	/	/	/	/	/	/	3	2	6
Conder Estuary	50	55	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Preesall Sands	62	40	8	/	/	/	/	/	/	60	60	60
Fluke Hall/ Ridge Farm	/	20	48	/	/	/	/	/	/	15	30	42
Birkdale shore	52	50	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	45	73

The table above summarises the peak counts at the main wintering sites for this species all but one of which are on the coast. The feeding area at Cant Clough in east Lancashire still attracts plenty of birds but none were recorded this year over the summer period; numbers were higher in the second winter period with a peak of 70 in October. The only other records from the east were twelve at Bowland-with-Leagram on 12 Feb, two at Beacon Hill and two at Harrop Fold on 10 June, four at Swinden Reservoir on 5 July and ten at Shedden Clough on 12 Oct. There were no records from the West Pennine Moors around Belmont for the first year in living memory.

The establishment of a regular flock at Birkdale Green Beach over recent winters has given birders south of the Ribble a better chance to view the species at close quarters; numbers here peaked at 73 towards the end of December. There are regular flocks of up to 20 on the saltmarsh at Marshside and Banks Marsh but they tend to range over a wide area. Further south, there were 14 at Cabin Hill NNR on 31 March with eight there on 4 April, and two at Seaforth on autumn passage on 5 Oct and 6 Nov.

The only breeding report came from Rossendale where at least one pair bred in a quarry (locality withheld). There were also breeding season sightings at Deeply Vale and Musbury and ten were seen at Helmshore on 28 Sept.

The feeding station on the North Harbour wall at Heysham continued to attract a large number of birds and these tended to be faithful to the site throughout the second winter period (unlike the first) with little evidence of interchange with the flocks on the Fylde and a lack of flocks in the Lune Estuary. During the year, ringing at the North Harbour Wall site produced a total of 166 birds consisting of 120 new birds, 43 retraps from previous years and three controls. Fifteen birds were present below Heald Brow, Silverdale on 12 Jan.

On the Fylde, a regular flock of up to 60 was present at Preesall Sands/Knott End in both winter periods and flocks also turned up at several other sites such as 48 at New Ridge Farm on 8 March and 40 at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 28 Feb.

## LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis cabaret*

**Fairly common but decreasing breeding bird. Common double passage migrant and winter visitor. Red List (breeding decline).**

Except in passage periods, this species seems to be becoming far less prevalent in the west of the county in comparison to the higher ground in the east. Very small numbers were present in the Lancaster area in the first winter period although they were seen at feeders in Melling, Lancaster, Claughton, Nether and Over Kellet. On the Fylde there were just seven first winter period records and hardly any came from the south-west.

In east Lancashire there were 20 records between January and March with peak counts of 14 at Martholme Viaduct on 12 Feb and 13 at niger seed feeders in Rishton on the 8th. There were just four records in Rossendale with a peak of nine at Whitworth on 11 Jan. Twelve were in Cuerden Valley Park during January.

Spring passage was a relatively quiet affair though some notable flocks were reported; a turnover of birds was noted at Rishton in late March/early April and 20 were at Whin Scar Clough on the 2nd and up to 30 were in a Belmont garden in mid-April. There were just 38 recorded at Heysham and eight over Seaforth, all in late April. There was a brief flurry of activity over the Fylde where numbers peaked at 37 over Knott End on 20 April and 57 over Rossall on the 21st. The peak count for the county came from Prescott Reservoirs where there were over 100 on 29 April. At Hesketh Golf Course there were regular sightings of small flocks of up to 30 during April and May whilst at Marshside, a peak of 44 was noted on 14 May. Similarly, at Cabin Hill, migrants were noted in late April with a peak of 57 flying south-east on 10 May. At least 40 were regularly visiting a Formby garden up to 2 May. A minimum of 20 were at Moor Piece on 29 April and 19 flew north over Crag Bank on the 25th.

Breeding was suspected or confirmed for 16 pairs at nine locations on the West Pennine Moors, six displaying males were seen at Stocks Reservoir on 19 April and males were regularly recorded at Moor Piece. Nine pairs were noted on Longridge Fell and breeding was suspected at Colne, Rishton and Braddup Farm. In the north of the county, probable breeding birds were reported from Birk Bank, Roeburndale, Langden Beck, Abbeystead, Tatham, Lowgill, Melling, Tower Lodge, and Claughton. South of Liverpool, birds were present at several sites around Tarbock Hall Farm during the breeding season.

A paltry twelve were recorded over Heysham during the autumn and there very few records from elsewhere in the Lancaster or Fylde districts for the whole of the second half of the year. Seaforth did record some passage with 46 over between 21 Sept and 9 Nov with a pronounced peak of 32 on 8 Oct. A flock of 40 was at White Coppice on 13 Sept and 30 were there on 9 Nov. There were also flocks of 30 near Belmont on 26 Sept, 34 at Jackhouse on 5 Oct, 29 at Prescott Reservoirs on the 11th, 31 at Stocks Reservoir on the 19th, ten at Brockholes Wetland on the 10th and 23rd and ten over Speke Hall on the 29th.

The species was especially scarce in November and it was not until late December when hard weather movements brought a few to Rishton and Halewood; 13 at Belmont Reservoir on the 1st and 22 at Prescott Reservoirs on the 11th were easily the largest counts of the second winter period.

## COMMON (MEALY) REDPOLL\* *Carduelis flammea*

**Scarce winter visitor.**

A minimum of three were at Longridge Fell on 6 April along with Lesser Redpolls whilst probable Mealies stood out from the Lessers at Rishton on the 2nd and Colne on the 14th.

Twelve were reported from Marshside on 16 April and one on the 25th. A male was trapped and ringed at Knott End on 2 April.

The county records committee has agreed a new policy for dealing with this very tricky species (see separate article).

## CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

### **Rare breeding bird. Occasional irruptive movements.**

An average to poor year for this species; for example, ELOC received just 17 reports compared to 64 the previous year.

The largest count by far was of 40-50 around the Woodland and Fisherman's Paths at Ainsdale NNR on 1 Jan although far fewer were seen subsequently. At the adjacent Freshfield Dune Heath, there were ten on 22 Jan and 16 on 4 April whilst at Cabin Hill NNR 13 flew east on the 19th and another on the 26th. At Prescott Reservoirs, there were records of one on 3 Jan, three on 5 July with at least one on the 27th. There were regular sightings of five to eight at Mere Sands Wood from 6 Feb to 21 March and a single was at MMWWT on 13 April.

On the Fylde there were two at Mowbreck Hall on 31 Jan, singles over Barnaby's Sands on 15 March and Fleetwood on 5 April and two over Warton Aerodrome on 31 July. In the north of the county there were just two records in the early part of the year: 14 over Tarnbrook on 31 May and four near Wray on 26 July. In Bowland there were two at Grindleton Forest on 7 Jan and at Moor Piece, singles on 2 & 10 March with three on 28 June. Birds were heard in the plantations around Belmont during June. A flock of 34 was at Clough Bottom Reservoir on 19 July and there were twelve at the same site on 1st October.

Autumn brought a scattering of records. In October, there were two near Belmont on the 10th, twelve at Billington and four over Caton on the 12th, 15 at Moor Piece, three over Speke Hall and two over Seaforth on the 29th whilst at Formby Point there were four on the 14th, five on the 28th and five on the 29th. November brought two over Alston Reservoirs on the 15th, ten at Moor Piece on the 13th and 17 at Entwistle Reservoir from the 26th to 4 Dec. Eight were at Stonyhurst College on 9 Dec, 22 at Middle Lees on the 29th and 16 further up the Hodder at Whitewell the same day.

## BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

### **Common breeding resident. Amber List (breeding decline).**

A similar sort of picture to 2008 for this species that is increasingly seen at garden feeders. It was recorded at 19 sites in south Liverpool, including records from Sefton Park and Princes Park where it has rarely been encountered in the past; juveniles were seen at the Old Garden Festival site in September. The highest counts in the two winters at Mere Sands Wood were of 23 and five respectively and as many as three pairs may have bred. The species was present all year at Prescott Reservoirs with a family party recorded in August.

Bullfinches were recorded the year round at 16 sites around Anglezarke and Rivington and were seen at several sites in the Preston area with up to nine at Cottam Brickworks in the early part of the year. The species is generally absent from the coastal plain with few records from the Fylde apart from occasional singles at Poulton-le-Fylde and Marton Mere. Also there were no records from the Southport-Formby strip save for the area around Birkdale dunes where it is not unusual to encounter at least ten birds in a late winter/early spring visit.

In the Lancaster area, 59 were recorded in the January survey, fifteen pairs bred again at Warton Crag RSPB, three at Arkholme and one at Heysham (where eight were trapped over the year).

There were regular counts of up to seven from a large number of sites in east Lancashire and ten were trapped and ringed in a garden at Rishton in the winter periods. Breeding was confirmed or probable at Longridge Fell, Jackhouse, Great Harwood, Rishton, Colne, Higherford, Rowley Lake, Lomeshaye Marsh, Clitheroe, Moor Piece, Worston, Barley, Hesbert Hall and at about eight sites in Rossendale. There were nine at Strongstry on 15 Feb.

The only evidence of vis mig at Heysham NR was one south on 24 Oct and two south on the 31st. Counts of ten were reported at Billington on 16 Sept, Clayton-le-Dale in November and Belmont on 23 Dec. Fifteen were also reported from Darwen Moor on 23 Dec while five at Brockholes Wetland on 28 Dec were a good count for the site.

### HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

#### **Rare and localised breeding resident. Red List (breeding decline).**

Woodwell, Silverdale is still the only regular site for Hawfinch – up to three were reported occasionally in both winter periods but observers commented on the unequal competition from Grey Squirrels for the Hornbeam seeds. Two were at the quarry at Jenny Brown's Point on 23 Nov and up to four were seen at Gait Barrows.

East Lancashire had a couple of records. One near the Fishery at Stocks Reservoir on 24 Jan was joined by another the following day, both remaining in the area until 15 Feb and four were in a garden backing onto the Belvedere Sports Field, Reedley on 26-27 Sept.

### SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

#### **Fairly common winter visitor to summits and coasts.**

During the first winter period four to six were seen regularly along the beach at Ainsdale between 8 Jan and 13 March with ten there on 19 Jan. On the Fylde singles were at St. Anne's on 1 March and Cockersand on the 3rd. There was just one report from Pendle Hill in this period when one was heard near the summit on 21 Jan. A male at Seaforth on 6 May was the only spring passage record.

In the second winter period there were almost daily reports from Pendle Hill between 4 Nov and 28 Dec when 30 were present. One was seen on Winter Hill on 13 Nov.

A male was at Heysham North Harbour Wall on 12 Nov and the following day singles were at Pilling Lane and St. Annes beach. Two were at Cabin Hill NNR on 13-14 Nov and one at Rossall Point/Fleetwood Marine Lake between the 23rd and 30th.

In December there was one at Birkdale-Ainsdale beach on 4 & 5 Dec then two from the 6th to the 29th as well as a single north of Southport Pier on the 31st. A male was at Cockersand on the 13th & 14th and one was at Starr Gate, Blackpool on the 24th.



Snow Bunting, Ainsdale, 18 January (Steve Young)

#### YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

**Fairly common but decreasing resident, mostly in the south. Scarce autumn passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).**

This species is still locally common in the arable lowlands of the county. It is described as fairly common around Bretherton, Croston, Eccleston, Mawdesley and Coppull and there were reports of singing males from Downholland Moss (2), and Roby Mill (2). Also in this area, there were three males on Tarleton Moss in the breeding season, one at Hesketh Out Marsh and a pair at Haskayne cutting.

In Merseyside, 31 males held territory around Tarbock, at least eleven at Cronton and ten across Halewood. Two males were singing at Clock Face Colliery, St. Helens and two pairs were carrying food at Abbotsfield Farm, St. Helens. There were also reports of males in the breeding season from Bold (3) Sutton Manor (3), Giller's Lane, Prescot (3) and Dukes Clough, Rainhill (5), Fir Tree Farm, King's Moss (3) and various sites around Kirkby and Rainford.

From the Fylde, singing males were reported from Eagland Hill, Myerscough, Rawcliffe Moss, Mowbreck Hall, Cockerham Moss, Pilling Moss, Winmarleigh Moss, Hale Nook, Dow Brook, Skitham, Kellamergh, Salwick and Elswick.

#### Monthly peak counts at Fylde feeding stations

	Jan	Feb	March	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bradshaw Ln Hd24		16	15	6	6	/	/	1	1	/	8	18
Eagland Hill	4	4	1	4	4	3	/	/	/	/	1	/
Rawcliffe Moss	8	15	18	/	1	3	3	2	/	3	3	14

The table above summarises the peak numbers at the feeding stations on the Fylde. Away from these sites there were just a scattering of single-figure counts in both winter periods, the exceptions being eleven at Black Hill Farm, Pilling on 11 Feb. and eleven at Halsall on 7 Jan.

Away from the breeding areas, the only records were of a male at Belmont on 7 March (the first local record since 2002) and a female over Heysham NR on 24 Oct.

## ORTOLAN BUNTING\* *Emberiza hortulana*

### Vagrant

A male visited the Bradshaw Lane feeding station near Pilling on the evening of 20 May (G Radwell); it was seen going to roost late that evening but had gone by the following morning.

This was Lancashire's 10th record and a long overdue one as the ninth was in June 1990. Five out of the ten accepted records have been of spring males.

## LITTLE BUNTING\* *Emberiza pusilla*

### Vagrant

One at Seaforth on 5-6 Oct (AJ Conway) was only Lancashire's fifth record of this species. This followed hot on the heels of one at Knott End last year which in turn was the first since two during the winter of 1993-94.

## REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

**Common breeding bird and winter visitor. Double passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).**

### Monthly peak counts at regularly watched sites on the Fylde

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Marion Mere	12	7	16	14	15	20	6	1	8	11	6	6
Rawcliffe Moss	21	41	2	2	-	2	4	3	2	30	9	10
Singleton	17	13	3	3	2	-	-	-	-	4	2	1

The largest numbers reported in the first winter period came from the Fylde with the most regular sites summarised in the table above. There were also 13 at Todderstaffe Hall on 8 Feb and 15 at The Heads on 12-18 Feb. Notable counts from the east of the county were eleven at Shedden Clough on 13 Jan increasing to 80 by 7 Feb, and eleven at Clitheroe Tip on the 21st rising to 20 on 16-23 Feb. Twenty-five were at Clowbridge Reservoir on 6 Feb. Very few were recorded on the January survey of the Lancaster district. The largest counts south of the Ribble were eleven on Farington Moss on 2 Jan, 25 on Downholland Moss on 28 Jan, 20 at MMWWT on 20 March and up to 32 at Mere Sands Wood.

An estimated 112 pairs nested at MMWWT and 36 pairs at Brockholes Wetland. There were at least ten singing males at Marion Mere in June and four at Winmarleigh Moss. At least twelve territories were located around Tarbock Hall Farm, Knowsley, ten elsewhere in the Tarbock area and another 25 at various sites between Speke and Clock Face in St. Helens. Three pairs bred at Seaforth, two pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath, nine at Marshside, five at Hesketh Out Marsh, eight around Belmont Reservoir, six at Middleton Industrial Estate and fourteen territories were recorded between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot on the Lune. There were five singing males at Waddington Fell on 11 May, four at Hare Clough on the 19th and five males on territory at Burnslack on 16 June. Thirteen territories were located on the United Utilities Bowland Estate. There was a multitude of ones and twos from many sites across the county and the indications from the ringing totals in autumn was that 2009 was a good year for them: 230 were ringed at Leighton Moss in the year, more than double 2008's total, and 104 at Middleton, where there were very few local juveniles and the majority were trapped during a strong autumn passage.

Autumn passage was good with a total of 195 through Fairhaven from 5-31 Oct with peaks of 59 and 65 on the 5th and 13th respectively, 75 over Heysham (peak of 20 on 7 Oct) and 51 over Seaforth (peak of 19 on 5 Oct). At least 20 were at Oglet on 20 Oct and 18 flew south over Formby

Point on the 28th. There were counts of 20 at Shedden Clough and Clitheroe Tip in late October, and 30 and 39 on Downholland Moss on 27 Sept and 2 Oct respectively.

The second winter period brought an unprecedented 39 to Alston Reservoirs on 21 Dec in the cold weather. Ten were in a Belmont garden on 20 Dec, 24 were counted at Light Ash on 4 Dec and counts of fifteen were made at Bretherton on the 5th and Hesketh Out Marsh on the 23rd.

## CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

### Common breeding bird in the south-west and Fylde.

#### Monthly maxima at Fylde feeding stations

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bradshaw												
Lane Head	64	80	61	45	55	1	-	-	16	-	43	60
Eagland Hill	43	70	1	2	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	15
Rawcliffe Moss	2	70	25	3	1	3	2	1	-	2	27	38

Numbers at the Fylde feeding sites were possibly up a little on 2008 with peak counts occurring in January and February. There were high counts during this period from Black Hill (75 on 13 Jan), Pilling Moss (80 on 25 Jan), Bone Hill (49 on 2 Feb) and Peel (57 on 4 Feb). The first singing male was at Moss House Farm on 24 Feb and thereafter there were reports of singing males from Tarn Farm Wood, Rawcliffe Moss, Bradshaw Lane Head, Bone Hill, Bradshaw Lane Head, Todderstaffe Hall, Bone Hill, Cockerham Moss Edge, Eagland Hill, Copthorne, Eagland Hill, Pilling Lane Ends, Peel, Primrose Hill Farm and Stalmine Moss.

In the south-west, 47 were on Downholland Moss on 24 Jan increasing to 65 by 4 Feb, 51 on Farington Moss on 2 Jan, 20 on Plex Moss on 24 Jan, eight on Midge Hall Moss on 8 Jan and over 30 between MMWWT and Mere Sands Wood on 19 Feb. During spring, birds were also noted at Hesketh Out Marsh (three pairs) Cabin Hill NNR, Carr Mill Dam, Curlew Lane and Low Meadows (Rufford), Gaw Hill Lane (Ormskirk) Hutton Marsh and Longton Marsh. On 5 May there was a flock of 51 at Low Meadows, Rufford. Five were at Crosby Coastal Park on 1 April and one was at Cockersand on 10 May.

Later in the year there were two at Crosby Coastal Park on 28 Oct followed by one over Seaforth on the 29th. At Croston Finney, numbers built up from twelve on 31 Oct to 20 by 19 Dec. whilst on Downholland Moss there were 43 on 11 Sept rising to 79 by 19 Dec. Sixty-six were off Heathy Lane, Scarisbrick on 12 Dec and 34 on Plex Moss on the 13th. The few records from Hesketh Out Marsh outside the breeding season included twelve on 15 Dec and 16 were at Old Hollows Farm on the 24th. There was a peak of 17 at MMWWT on 22 Oct and the only record all year from south Liverpool, where the species is heading for extinction, was of one near Speke on 26 Dec.

## ESCAPES, CATEGORY D & HYBRID WILDFOWL

### TRUMPETER SWAN *Cygnus buccinator*

The bird which has apparently been resident in the Ribble valley since at least 2007 was reported again at Longridge in early January and Ribchester on 9 Aug.

### BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus*

At least two were present on the Ribble marshes throughout the year, often with Mute Swans, and reported from various sites on the north bank of the river, and from Hesketh Out, Hutton and Banks Marshes on the south, and occasionally wandering as far as Little Singleton on the Wyre and Glasson on the Lune.

### BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

One was at Leighton Moss on 21 April, two with feral Greylags at Stocks Reservoir on 15 May, three at Marshside on 4 July, one at MMWWT on 14 Sept and two with Canada Geese at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 5 Oct.

### CHINESE (SWAN) GOOSE *Anser cygnoides*

One was in Blackpool's Stanley Park on 1-11 April, 16 May and 30 Oct.

### SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens*

On 11 Oct a flock of at least 27 Lesser Snow Geese – at least 21 white morphs and at least six blue morphs - was seen over Marton Mere flying west. Later that day they flew north over Conder Green and in mid-afternoon the same flock was seen north of Brockholes, heading west, and in a field at Grimsargh Reservoirs. On 23 Sept a flock of 33 – with similar ratios of white to blue morph – had spent the day at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, and on 24 Jan and 1 Feb 2010 flocks of 27 and 17 respectively flew over Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire.

Four white morphs were found with feral Greylags at Carnforth Marsh on 30 Oct staying until 22 Nov. They then relocated to Aldcliffe Marsh on 2 Dec where they remained into 2010. It seems likely that two seen flying over nearby Glasson were two of the birds from Aldcliffe.

### LESSER CANADA GOOSE *Branta hutchinsii*

One was at Willowgrove, Preesall on 15 Nov.

### RED-BREASTED GOOSE *Branta ruficollis*

Our old friend continued to move with feral Barnacle Geese between its winter quarters at MMWWT and Knowsley Park/Prescot Reservoirs in summer. This year, however, it appeared to move between the two sites during both winter periods, being seen at MMWWT on three dates between 12 and 31 Jan and at Prescot from 2008 to 28 April. At the other end of the year it was first seen at MMWWT on 14 Sept and then regularly until the end of the year, while it was reported at Prescot Reservoirs from 6 Aug to the end of the year. It was never reported at the two sites on the same day so was presumably commuting on a fairly regular basis – unless there really are two!

### BARNACLE x CANADA GOOSE

One was on Prescot Reservoir from 28 Feb to 7 March.

### CANADA x GREYLAG GOOSE

One was reported sporadically from Blackpool's Stanley Park and Marton Mere between January and April, and October to December. One was occasionally present with Canada Geese at Stocks Reservoir during the year.

## ROSS'S x BARNACLE GOOSE

One was seen at Fluke Hall on 9 & 18 Oct, then moved to Hesketh Out Marsh and subsequently Marshside and Crossens Out Marsh, with a second bird present at Mythop, Great Plumpton and Todderstaffe Hall on 27 & 29 Dec.

## ROSS'S x PINK-FOOTED GOOSE

The presumed hybrid, which has been around for several years and which is frequently mistaken for a blue morph Snow Goose, was present with Pink-footed Geese Over Wyre between 3 and 20 February. It was later shot in Iceland.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Having been seen on Pine Lake on 2 Jan, one was with Greylags at Leighton Moss and the Eric Morecambe complex from at least 16 Jan to 3 May.

CAPE SHELDUCK *Tadorna cana*

One was on Prescott Reservoirs on 23 June.

RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*

One was at MMWWT on 8 Feb and 13 March with two there on 19-21 March. Two were seen at Aldcliffe Marsh on 5 July before presumably one of these decamped to Leighton Moss and the Eric Morecambe Complex, where it remained until at least 30 Oct. Finally, one flew north past Blackpool on 29 Sept.

## RUDDY SHELDUCK X SHELDUCK

One was on Hesketh Out Marsh on 27 Oct.

MUSCOVY DUCK *Cairina moschata*

Just two records were received this year: a white male at Seaforth on 20-21 April and one on Towneley Hall Pond, Burnley on 22 Nov.

WOOD DUCK *Aix sponsa*

One at Mere Sands Wood on 1 March was the only record from this recently established breeding site. A male was at Bank End on 16 May.

WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL *Anas bahamensis*

One was at Bispham Marsh on 30 Oct and Myerscough Quarry on 14 Dec.

## WIGEON x AMERICAN WIGEON

A male was at Cockersand on 13 Jan and Glasson on the 20th, and a female at Cockersand on 4 March.

YELLOW-BILLED (CHILEAN) TEAL *Anas flavirostris*

A male was at Seaforth on 1-2 Feb.

## TEAL x GREEN-WINGED TEAL

A male was at Marton Mere on 30 Dec.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

A male and female were at Prescott Reservoirs on 13 Dec.

## MALLARD x RED-CRESTED POCHARD

One was on the Ribble in Preston and a nearby sewage works on 19 Jan to 21 Feb and 18 June, with presumably the same bird at Stanley Park on 27 Oct.

**FERRUGINOUS DUCK** × **POCHARD**

A female was at Marton Mere on 4-5 Jan with presumably the same bird at Brockholes Wetland on 29 Feb.

**HELMETED GUINEAFOWL** *Numida meleagris*

Two that had been introduced to Plex Moss survived at least several months of winter. Three were noted in the Fylde at each of Greenhalgh on 2 May, Coat Walls Farm on 25 June and Hackensall Hall on 25 July, and two were in Galgate on 29-31 December. One was near Belmont in November.

**REEVES'S PHEASANT** *Syrmaticus reevesii*

A male was seen at Little Singleton from 1 Jan to 28 Feb and Rawcliffe Moss on 28 Feb and 29 March, a female at Little Singleton on 2-29 March, three at Rawcliffe Hall on 19 April and three males on Rawcliffe Moss on 17 Sept. Another was at the bottom end of Whitendale on a number of occasions between 16 March and 14 June.

**LADY AMHERST'S PHEASANT** *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

A male was at Little Singleton on 23 Feb and 22 March.

**BROWN-EARED PHEASANT** *Crossoptilon mantchuricum*

A male was photographed in Lancaster on 31 March 2008.

**TEMMINCK'S TRAGOPAN** *Tragopan temminckii*

On the basis of additional photographs the female photographed in a garden in Chorley in July 2005 is now thought to have been this species, having been previously published as Tragopan sp.

**TURKEY** *Meleagris gallipavo*

Small numbers of birds were still present and breeding in the Belmont Plantations with up to twelve present at the year's end; a female was seen with 11 young in July.

**INDIAN PEAFOWL** *Pavo cristatus*

A female was on a roof near Fairhaven Lake on 12 Oct, two were Lytham Crematorium on 6 Nov and four at Heyhouses, St. Anne's later in the year. Up to six were reported from Siddows Waste Disposal centre, Clitheroe throughout the year.

**NORTHERN BALD IBIS** *Geronticus eremite*

On the basis of additional photographs the bird found wandering on Blackpool Promenade in October 2002 has now been confirmed as this species.

**RUPPELL'S VULTURE** *Gyps rueppellii*

One flew over Newton-le-Willows on 27 July. It had recently escaped from Settle, North Yorkshire.

**GYR FALCON** *Falco rusticolus*

One was at Parrox Hall, Preesall in mid-May.

**HARRIS'S HAWK** *Parabuteo unicinctus*

The bird that took up residence in the Liverpool docks sometime before autumn 2008 was seen in the Central Docks on 9 Jan and presumably the same bird over Waterloo on 18 April.

Elsewhere, singles were at Hackensall Hall, Knott End in mid-May, Leighton Moss (an escape from Leighton Hall) on 9 Sept, in Croxteth Park, Liverpool from at least October to the end of the year, and Newton-le-Willows on 19 Dec.

RED-TAILED HAWK *Buteo jamaicensis*

One was near Belmont on 25 Jan.

COCKATIEL *Nyphicus hollandicus*

One was at Belle Vale in south Liverpool on 14-21 Sept.

GREEN PARAKEET *Aratinga holochlora*

One was reported lost in Burnley in November.

YELLOW-FACED PARROT *Alipiopsitta xanthops*

One was reported lost in Kirkby in September.

SCALY-HEADED PARROT *Pionus maximiliani*

One was reported lost in Colne in May.

RÜPPELL'S PARROT *Poicephalus rueppellii*

One escaped in Chorley in August 2007 .

RED-CROWNED AMAZON *Amazona viridigenalis*

One escaped in Liverpool in October 2006.

DIAMOND DOVE *Geopelia cuneata*

One escaped in Lancaster in June 2008.

EAGLE OWL *Bubo bubo*

One was seen roosting near the 2007 nesting site in Bowland on 17 & 29 March; the first breeding attempt here failed but a second attempt succeeded in fledging one chick which was seen with the adults on 14 June and 26 July.

Singles were in Kirkby on 28 May and at Knott End in mid-November.

BLUE JAY *Cyanocitta cristata*

The record from Thornton (Merseyside) and Hillside, Southport in June 2003 has been assigned to Category E by the BOURC.

Confusingly, the likelihood of escape was considered less than negligible as none are known to be held in captivity in Europe; the bird was therefore assumed to have been ship-assisted. This alone is no longer held to be sufficient reason to keep a species out of Category A (unless the bird was known to have been captured or otherwise assisted by people) but the BOURC has taken the view that the species is physically incapable of crossing the Atlantic without ship-assistance – perhaps a matter worthy of some debate.

This judgement must surely cast some doubt on the validity of several other North American passerines already on Category A of the British List.

TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL *Loxia leucoptera*

The bird that escaped in Liverpool after capture in the Bay of Fundy in 1855 was incorrectly described in the avifauna as sub-species *bifasciata*, which is actually the European race, rather than the nominate North American form *leucoptera*.

## LANCASHIRE RINGING REPORT 2009-2010

*Pete Marsh*

Welcome to the 2009 report. The trend for an increasing percentage of the ringing returns to come from colour-marking schemes continued apace. As a result, the recoveries documentation has had to be strictly rationed and I've adopted a strategy of rotating a detailed recovery list of the likes of Black-tailed Godwit and Whooper Swan between different years. I am not a fan of bland summary tables each year as it is the seasonal fine detail of the movements, such as the Svalbard Pink-footed Goose in this report, which are of most interest.

It is quite difficult to predict the response to colour marking. Assuming an average of about one in 50 metal-ringed birds are reported, you would expect colour rings to produce a much better return. This is not always the case. The problems seem to be with small passerines with colour combinations, as opposed to a single ring with some 'scopable lettering on larger birds such as Mediterranean Gull. The Twite reports nosedived when we had to start using two colours on one ring ("too much effort to work out the combination and they only come from up the road at Heysham" was one quote) and the Grey Wagtail study at Heysham, where southbound autumnal migrants are given a single metal and a two-colour combination, has so far produced very poor returns, despite extensive publicity via various water companies!

Another reason, as exemplified by the Leighton Bearded Tits, is that some birders see it as a 'local study' with the rings there for the benefit of the researcher, not for them to report. In this respect, virtually all current colour-ringed Twite reports come from people with a special interest, e.g. Eddie Maguire at Machrihanish Bird Observatory who runs a feeding station for the species. We can only appeal to birders to please send in any small bird colour-ring reports, with a simple example being any Birkdale Green Beach Twite which are as likely to have come from Heysham, Askam-in-Furness or the Pennines as from the small 2008 catch at Southport.

The current colour-ringing schemes include a project to find out the origin/breeding sites and indeed any mid-season movements of Coot wintering in our area. This is coordinated by Kane Brides at MMWWT and will hopefully produce many interesting returns over the next few years. It would be particularly valuable for Lancs-based birders to check all nesting Coot so we know the exact breeding and at least one wintering site (how site-faithful are they?) of the more 'resident' individuals.

Perhaps the most interesting recovery of the year may be derided in some quarters as a "fence hopper" – a feral Greylag Goose emulating some Canada Goose movements with an autumnal Scottish moult sojourn. Perhaps I ought to ring the Mandarins on our local pond! Other reports of special interest include a Svalbard Pink-footed Goose, a very detailed Great White Egret, an eastern Russian Whooper Swan, an Arctic Canadian Knot, a long-distance Wren, and a "jammy" Mealy Redpoll. Comments are made under the relevant ringing recoveries

The BTO county summary is really helpful in plugging the gap with respect to ringing recoveries reported by members of the public which, in times past, we did not hear about at a county level. However, there is still a 'loophole' whereby some colour-ringed birds are reported by the finder via e.g. the Dirk Raes site. The finder then receives the ringing details directly and the information is sometimes neither passed on to the county bird report nor the BTO. Please make sure that you pass on any colour-mark sightings where you have dealt directly with the ringers, so we can make sure the BTO are informed and the details can be published in the county report.

Thanks to Eddie Maguire, Chris Batty, Bill Aspin, Tony Disley, Seaforth birders, Mark Prestwood, South-west Lancs Ringing Group, Merseyside Ringing Group, Fylde Ringing Group, Kane Brides, MMWWT, Roy Dennis, Ian Hartley, Richard du Feu, John Wilson, Seamus Eaves,

Laurens van Kooten and many other people who have taken the trouble to report ringed birds. My contact details are: PMrsh123@aol.com, Leck View Cottage, Ashleys Farm, High Tatham LA2 8PH & 07989866487

## MUTE SWAN

U4808

Ringed	Glasson Dock	1st CY F	9/9/93
Read in field	Kensington Gardens, London	331km SSE	12/3/09

By far the longest movement of the year.

## BEWICK'S SWAN

Z70880 / UBS

Ringed	Martin Mere, Lancashire	Ad M	12/12/1990
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		26/11/1991
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		23/02/1992
Read in field	Gammelvraa Enge, Nordjylland, Denmark		09/03/1992
Read in field	Zonnemaire, Schouwen-Duiveland, Netherlands		27/12/1992
Read in field	Altforst, Gelderland, Netherlands		02/03/1993
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		26/11/1993
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		06/02/1994
Read in field	East Spakenburg, Gelderland, Netherlands		25/02/1994
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		02/01/1995
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		23/12/1996
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		12/01/1997
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		18/11/1997
Read in field	Crooks Farm, Ribble Estuary, Lancashire		15/02/1998
Read in field	Warffwiesen, Domitz, Elbe, Mecklenburg, Germany		03/03/1998
Read in field	Warffwiesen, Domitz, Elbe, Mecklenburg, Germany		07-20/11/1998
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		04/12/1998
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		23/01/1999
Read in field	Bad Wilsnack, Brandenburg, Germany		26/02/1999
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		14-16/01/2000
Read in field	Noordpolder, Groningen, Netherlands		20/12/2000
Read in field	Lutjenwestedt, Schleswig Holstein, Germany		13/03/2002
Read in field	Domitz, Mecklenburg, Germany		05/11/2002
Read in field	Vorland Baarz, Prignitz, Brandenburg, Germany		27-28/11/2002
Read in field	Domitz, Mecklenburg, Germany		22/12/2002
Read in field	Sondelerleien, Friesland, Netherlands		11/01/2003
Read in field	Vielank, Ludwigslust, Mecklenburg, Germany		05/03/2003
Read in field	Noorderringweg, Creil, Flevoland, Netherlands		15/11/2003
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		04/01/2004
Read in field	Zwinweg, Netherlands		24/11/2004
Read in field	Hesketh Bank, Ribble Estuary, Lancashire		09-29/01/2005
Read in field	Lexfahre, Schleswig Holstein, Germany		10/03/2005
Read in field	Oldenbuttel, Schleswig Holstein, Germany		20/03/2005
Read in field	Martin Mere, Lancashire		22/01/2006
Read in field	Westhoek, Friesland, Netherlands		10/11/2006

Read in field	Norderstapel, Schleswig Holstein, Germany	17/02/2007
Read in field	Meggerdorf, Schleswig Holstein, Germany	03/03/2007
Read in field	Friescheweg, Noord Holland, Netherlands	18/11/2007
Read in field	Bradshaw Lane Head, Fylde	06/01/2008
Read in field	Fluke Hall, Fylde	10/01/2009
Read in field	Marsh Farm, Ribble Estuary, Lancashire	29/01/2009
Read in field	Hundred End, Ribble Estuary, Lancashire	24-26/12/2009
Read in field	Thurnham, Fylde	07/02/2010

An example of a very comprehensively recorded individual, apart from on the actual breeding grounds.

## WHOOOPER SWAN

Z76073

Ringed	Martin Mere	2nd CY M	13/1/93
Unknown	Nenets, Russia 67 37N 53 3E	3,373kmENE	c.22/5/09

Fewer than 20 Whooper Swans have been recovered in Russia according to the BTO's data.

## PINK-FOOTED GOOSE

*Please keep sending in neck-collars and colour rings – a resume will be included in next year's report.*

### B5A & metal ring

Ringed/seen	Vest Stadil fjord, Denmark 56 12N 8 08E	Adult	31/3-3/4/04
Read in field	Steinkjer area, Norway c63 58N 11 25E		17/4-12/5/04
Read in field	Steinkjer area, Norway c63 58N 11 25E		19/9-21/9/04
Read in field	Gaastmeer area Netherlands 52 58N 5 34E		10/10-30/10/04
Read in field	Zuierenkerke area Belgium 51 16N 3 07E		1/11-29/12/04
Read in field	Steinkjer area, Norway c63 58N 11 25E		1/5-10/5/05
Read in field	Filso, Denmark 55 42N 8 14E		14/10/05
Read in field	Oudega area, Netherlands 53 00N 5 33E		16/10/05-29/1/06
Read in field	Holmsland, Denmark 55 52N 8 12E		7/3/06
Read in field	Steinkjer area, Norway c63 58N 11 25E		23/4-10/5/06
Read in field	Steinkjer area, Norway c63 58N 11 25E		22/9/06
Read in field	Smollbrugge, Netherlands 52 58N 5 37E		15/10-20/11/06
Read in field	Klemskerke, Netherlands 51 14N 3 02E		10/12/06-8/1/07
Read in field	Nibe, Denmark 57 00N 9 33E		19/3/07
Read in field	Leksdal, Norway 63 51N 11 38E		21/4/07
Read in field	Langoya area Norway 68 35N 14 56E		6/5-10/5/07
Read in field	Filso, Denmark 55 42N 8 14E		6/10-8/10/07
Read in field	Oudega area, Netherlands 53 00N 5 33E		12/10-29/12/07
Read in field	Plet, Denmark 56 40N 8 07E		12/1/08
Read in field	Vest Stadil fjord, Denmark 56 12N 8 08E		24/3-16/4/08
Read in field	Oudega area, Netherlands 53 00N 5 33E		2/11-8/11/08
Read in field	Damme, Belgium 51 16N 3 17E		12/12/08-11/1/09
Read in field	Attrup, Denmark 57 03N 9.30E		2/3-30/3/09
Read in field	Langoya area Norway 68 35N 14 56E		14/5/09
Read in field	Gaastmeer area, Netherlands 52 58N 5 34E		5/11/09
Read in field	Upper Thurnham, Fylde		21/2/10

One of at least two displaced Svalbard birds in the county during winter 2009/10.

## GREYLAG GOOSE

5221926 & CR

Ringed	Speech House Lake, Forest of Dean, Gloucs	Adult	9/7/03
Read in field	Slimbridge		25/7 & 17/8/03
Read in field	Slimbridge		1/1/04
Read in field	Hogganfield Loch, Glasgow		13/6-27/7/04
Read in field	Slimbridge		22/8/04-8/3/05
Read in field	Parkend Pond, Forest of Dean		1/6/05
Read in field	Hogganfield Loch, Glasgow		18/6-4/8/05
Read in field	Slimbridge		6/8-19/10/05
Read in field	Woor Green lake, Forest of Dean		5/5/06
Read in field	Slimbridge		26/12/06
Read in field	Slimbridge		5/9/07
Read in field	Woor Green/Parkend Pond, Forest of Dean		29/4-16/5/08
Read in field	Calder, Martholme, Great Harwood		8/7/09

Thanks to Stephen Grimshaw for perhaps the most unlikely of the recoveries reported during the year. It may be lurking in east Lancs as this is being written in July 2010. Presumably nesting in the Forest of Dean, moult migrating to Glasgow, latterly Great Harwood and wintering in the Slimbridge area. The following metal-ringed bird was quite probably of similar origin without any obvious Scottish factor.

5250501

Ringed	Slimbridge, Severn Estuary, Gloucestershire	Ad male	4/2/08
Dead	The Heads, Wyre Estuary, Fylde		2/9/09

## BARNACLE GOOSE

TTH

Ringed	Ny-Alesund, Spitsbergen, Svalbard	Nestling male	4/8/05
Read in field	Mersehead, Solway Firth, D and G, Scotland		26/1/09
Read in field	Caerlaverock, Solway Firth, D and G, Scotland		30/1 & 27/2/09
Read in field	Pilling Lane Ends, Fylde		31/1/10
Read in field	Knott End, Fylde		16/2-19/2/10
Read in field	Crossens outer marsh, Ribble Est		1/2/& 5/2/10

BDN

Ringed	Mersehead, Solway Firth, D and G, Scotland	Ad female	15/1/00
Read in field	Mersehead, Solway Firth, D and G, Scotland		26/1/09
Read in field	Mersehead, Solway Firth, D and G, Scotland		30/1/09
Read in field	Caerlaverock, Solway Firth, D and G, Scotland		27/2/09
Read in field	Pilling Lane Ends, Fylde		31/1/10
Read in field	Knott End, Fylde		16-17/2/10
Read in field	Crossens outer marsh, Ribble Est		1/2 & 5/2/10

Two Svalbard birds displaced from the Solway, perhaps due to the severe conditions.

## SHELDUCK

GC38364

Ringed	Martin Mere	Ad M	6/2/08
Dead	Burhave, Germany 53 34N 8 23E	743km E	6/8/09

GC62295

Ringed	Martin Mere	2nd CY F	19/11/08
Dead	Terschelling, Netherlands 53 20N 5 10E	534km E	1/10/09

GC38007

Ringed	Slimbridge, Gloucs	Ad M	24/1/07
Trapped	Banks Marsh, Ribble Estuary	222km N	25/2/09

The first two are moult migration casualties.

## WIGEON

FP52181

Ringed	Applegarthtown, Lockerbie, Dumfries & Galloway 2CY M		7/2/05
Shot	Glasson Marsh	133km SE	4/1/09

FP92997

Ringed	Seaton, Devon	Ad M	1/2/06
Shot	Banks, nr Southport	330km N	31/1/09

FV87298

Ringed	Ribble Marshes NNR	Ad M	6/3/05
Dead	St-Just-Luzac, Charente-Maritime, France		9/11/08

FH10197

Ringed	North Duffield, Selby, N Yorks	1stW M	2/11/07
Shot	Banks Marsh		16/10/09

## TEAL

Nasal tag

Ringed	Rouxique, Pontevedra, Spain 4 25N 8 49W	1st CY M	17/8/05
Read in field	Stocks Reservoir		6/12/09

## PINTAIL

FH04697

Ringed	Slimbridge	Ad M	10/12/08
Shot	Ribble Marshes	222km N	21/1/09

FP70809

Ringed	Martin Mere	1st CY M	19/1/08
Trapped	Slimbridge	212km S	16/12/09

FP70828

Ringed	Martin Mere	Ad M	9/12/08
Shot	Newton Arlosh, Cumbria	143km N	28/9/09

FP80281

Ringed	Slimbridge	Ad M	1/2/05
Shot	Lytham Moss	230km N	28/1/09

FP70740

Ringed	Martin Mere	Ad M	21/11/07
Shot	Balakovski, Saratov, Russia 51 57N 47 37E	3,398km	9/4/09

## POCHARD

Two returns indicating a change of wintering area from Martin Mere to Welney, Norfolk.

## CORMORANT

5248152

Ringed	Puffin Island, Anglesey	Nestling	27/6/09
Freshly dead	Ramsbottom	120km ENE	23/9/09

Not the most obvious location for a seabird to end its days.

5241265

Ringed	Lady Isle, Ardrossan, Strathclyde	Nestling	23/7/08
Unknown	Ainsdale		24/4/09

## LITTLE EGRET

A/N

Ringed	Porth Penrhyn, Bangor, Gwynedd, Wales	Nestling	13/6/09
Read in field	Freckleton Naze Pool, Ribble Estuary, Fylde		17/9/09
Read in field	Hesketh Out Marsh, Ribble Estuary, Lancashire		26/9-20/10/09

A/V

Ringed	Porth Penrhyn, Bangor, Gwynedd, Wales	Nestling	13/6/09
Read in field	Ashton Hall, Glasson		16/6/10

GC31928

Ringed	Whitson Courst, Gwent	Nestling	28/5/09
Read in field	Eric Morecambe pools		16/8/09

Plus the Faversham (Kent)-ringed bird published in the last report. More to come surely?

## GREAT WHITE EGRET

Metal CA 69229 &amp; CRs

Ringed	Besné, Brière, Loire Atlantique, France	Nestling	6/5/09
Read in field	Banks Marsh, Ribble		24/9/09
Read in field	Brockholes Wetland		25/9/09
Read in field	Hesketh out marsh, Lancs		26/9/09
Read in field	Crossens outer marsh, Lancs		26/9/09
Read in field	Banks Marsh, Ribble		27/9/09
Read in field	Leighton Moss		30/9-7/11/09
Read in field	Crossens outer marsh, Lancs		8/11-17/11/09
Read in field	Bolton-le-Sands, Lancs		6/12/09
Read in field	Bolton-le-Sands, Lancs		12/12/09
Read in field	Crossens outer marsh, Lancs		13/12-28/12/09
Read in field	Churchtown Moss, Lancs		29/12/09
Read in field	Marshside, Lancs		1/1/10
Read in field	Churchtown Moss, Lancs		8/1/10

Read in field	Hendre Lake, St Mellons, Cardiff, Glamorgan	19/1-10/3/10
Read in field	Peterstone Wentlooge, Gwent	21/2/10
Read in field	Peterstone Wentlooge, Gwent	26/2-27/2/10
Read in field	Peterstone Wentlooge, Gwent	11/3/10
Read in field	Ashleworth Ham, Gloucestershire	17/3-7/3/10
Read in field	Frampton on Severn, Gloucestershire	28/3/10
Read in field	Slimbridge, Gloucestershire	28/3-31/3/10
Read in field	Ashleworth Ham, Gloucestershire	1/4/10
Read in field	Hendre Lake, St Mellons, Cardiff, Glamorgan	4/4-8/4/10
Read in field	Shapwick Heath, Glastonbury, Somerset	26/6-14/7/10

As with Little Egret, there are probably going to be a few more like this in the near future.

## SPOONBILL

8042810 & CRs

Ringed	De Schorren, Texel, Netherlands	Nestling	12/6/99
Read in field	Leighton Moss area		17/5-27/6/02
Read in field	Amstelmeer, Netherlands		28/6-1/8/04
Read in field	Huelva, Spain		8/9-17/9/04
Read in field	Leighton Moss area		23/6-26/5/05
Read in field	Vlieland, Netherlands		28/5-14/7/05
Read in field	Seine Maritime, FRANCE		17 & 18/4/06
Read in field	Vlieland, Netherlands		28/4-20/5/06
Read in field	Leighton Moss area		9/6-10/6/06
Read in field	Texel, Netherlands		3/5-13/8/07
Read in field	Vlieland, Netherlands		11/7-29/8/09

So it seems to have given up the idea of visiting Lancashire. Really intermittent reports for such a large and obvious bird.

## OSPREY

1305949 'Morven'

Ringed	near Keith, Moray Firth, Grampian	Nestling F	8/7/03
Transmitter added, site confidential, nr Forres, Grampian			9/7/08
Signal received	Moray Firth & area		until 27/8/08
Signal received	England (east)/France/Spain/Morocco/W.Sahara		27/8-11/9/08
Signal received	Mauretanian coast wintering area		12/9/08-17/3/09
Signal received	return migration, including bad weather N Spain		17/3-11/4/09
Signal & observation off Rossall, then Heysham, centre of M. Bay			11/4/09 (07-0800)
Signal received	Moray Firth & area		11/4 (1800)-11/9/09
Signal received	Casterton Fell Lancs/Cumbrian border		12/9/09 (late pm)
Signal received	England/France/Biscay/Spain/Portugal/Morocco		2/9-19/9/09
Signal received	W. Sahara & Mauretanian wintering site		20/9/09-9/3/10
Signal received	Mauretania to northern Spain		9/3-28/3/10
Signal received	Off-passage at Villiviciosa Estuary, N Spain		28/3-5/4/10
Signal received	north Spain/trans-Biscay/Cornwall		5/4/10
Signal received	roosting near Kirkby Lonsdale		6/4/10
Poor signals	Moray Firth & area		from at least 9/4/10

There will be more on Osprey movements in next year's report as four out of the five birds from the Moray firth area bearing transmitters passed over north Lancashire. This is a pretty high proportion and suggests we should be documenting about 230 or so (Scottish-breeding) Ospreys passing through the county each spring!

## PEREGRINE

GC05788

Ringed	Thieveley Pike, Lancs	Nestling F	30/5/06
Recaptured	Hartside, Borders Region	230km N	1/5/09

GN66464

Ringed	Burnley area	Nestling	27/5/04
Long dead	Drigg, Cumbria	109km NW	8/6/08

AJ57011

Ringed	Abbeystead, nr Lancaster	Nestling F	3/7/08
Hit car	Woodplumpton	21km SSW	24/9/09

## COOT

GR05471 & CRs

Ringed	Southport Marine Lake	3rd CY+	12/1/10
Read in field	Watermead country park, Leicestershire	167km SE	21/1/10

The most interesting of the returns so far from a colour ringing study of Coot. Cold weather movement?

## OYSTERCATCHER

FA53737

Ringed	Loch of Forfar, Tayside	Ad	7/3/96
Read in field	Fleetwood cemetery	302km S	30/3/09

FA72044

Ringed	Ogwen Estuary, Gwynedd	2nd CY M	7/10/95
Dead	Millfield, Pilling	111km NE	26/5/09

FH23184

Ringed	Heysham	Ad	12/12/08
Freshly dead	Westvoe Beach, Sumburgh, Shetland	656km N	8/4/09

FP31298

Ringed	Wig, near Bangor, Gwynedd	Ad	15/12/01
Read in field	Brockholes Nature Reserve	111km NE	24/7/09

FH23191

Ringed	Heysham	Ad	12/12/08
Dead	Torshavn, Faeroes	914km NNW	8/7/09

A good selection indicating wintering and breeding sites.

FV87123

Ringed	Seaforth	Ad	8/4/85
Dead	Southport		13/3/09

At least 25 years old and apparently loyal to wintering site.

FC64458

Ringed	St Fergus Gas Terminal, Grampian	Nestling	5/7/94
Fresh dead	Southport Beach		14/3/09

## GREY PLOVER

DFH 6306796

Ringed	Norderheverkoog, Schleswig-Holstein 54°25'N 8°48'E	Ad M	19/5/85
Dead	Southport	775km W	15/3/04

A belated report of a species of which we know very little in a Lancashire context as there have been neither colour-ring returns nor any successful ringing attempts within the county.

## RUFF

NLA/1525207

Ringed	Workum, Netherlands 200852°57'N 5°25'E	Unknown	18/4/08
Read in field	Workum		11/7/08
Read in field	Martin Mere		30/9-3/10/08
Read in field	Marshside		14/12/08

The additional sighting at Marshside clearly indicates that this bird wintered in the county during at least 2008/9.

## KNOT

SV74865	Heysham	2nd CY	21/2/04
Recaptured	Marnes, Porsanger, Norway 70 24N 25 32E 2,	315km	27/5/09

Dutch metal &amp; CRs

Ringed	De Richel, Netherlands 53 16N 5 08E	Ad	25/7/01
Read in field	Indre Billefjord, Porsanger, Norway		25/5/04
Read in field	Heysham		21/3/08
Read in field	Heysham		11/12/08
Read in field	Heysham		19/12/09

The extensive mudflats of Porsangerfjord are an important spring staging post for Knot bound for Greenland (via Iceland). A majority of the 'read in the field' returns involve birds colour-marked at the main late summer/early autumnal moulting area in the Netherlands.

1313-59880	Alert, Ellesmere Is. Canada 82 30N 62 20W	Ad M	9/6/07
Read in field	Heysham Red Nab area		12/11/09

Most Knot arrive from the last days of May through the first week of June, so the bird had presumably arrived at short time before being captured with a rocket net at the sewage outfall stream near Alert.

CK97769

Ringed	Heysham	2nd CY	27/1/01
Recaptured	Parque N. B., Cadiz, Spain 36°29'N 6°15'W	1,967km S	12/5/08

## DUNLIN

BT05032

Ringed	Leverton Outgate, Lincolnshire	Ad	10/8/06
Read in field	Rossall Point	234km NW	3/8/09

## BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

Icelandic metal &amp; CRs

Ringed	Iceland - details not yet available		
Read in field	West Kirkby, Dee Estuary		20-28/9/10
Read in field	Eric Morecambe Pools		6/10/09
Read in field	West Kirkby, Dee Estuary		8/10/09
Read in field	Eric Morecambe Pools		11/10/09

The coastal route between these two sites is about 95km. Plenty of space given to this species' more lengthy movements in the last report but rapid switching between the Dee and Morecambe Bay is highlighted for the first time.

## TURNSTONE

NOS7231830

Ringed	Revtangen, NORWAY 58 45N 5 30E	Juv	22/8/09
Photo	Fleetwood Marine Lake		30/11/09

## KITTIWAKE

FRP/FX18853

Ringed	Plogoff, Finistere, France 48°2'N 4°39'W	Nestling	22/8/09
Freshly dead	Ainsdale		30/11/09

## BLACK-HEADED GULL

EL78542 &amp; CR

Ringed	Cleveland Farm, Wiltshire	Nestling	13/6/05
Read in field	Ashton Keynes and area, Gloucs		1/3-12/4/08
Read in field	Ashton Keynes and area, Gloucs		29/3-12/4/09
Read in field	River Mersey mouth, Crosby	218km NW	22/12/09

EL53534

Ringed	Thorne Moor, S Yorks	Nestling	5/6/05
Freshly dead	Kirkby		3/11/09

Two from more unusual sources; quite a few Baltic (mainly adults) & northern English-ringed birds (nestlings) also reported.

## MEDITERRANEAN GULL

382723 &amp; red HE79

Ringed	Retszilas, Fejer, HUNGARY 46 51N 18 34E	Nestling	31/5/09
Read in field	Fishmoor Reservoir, Blackburn	1,677km WNW	8/1-10/1/10

Winter records of this age class are still infrequent. Returning Czech, Polish & Belgian birds present both winter periods in north Lancs.

## 3651898 / LWD

Ringed	De Kreupel Island, IJsselmeer, Netherlands	Nestling	05.07.07
Read in field	Heysham, Lancashire		01.09.07
Read in field	Heysham, Lancashire		02.09.07
Read in field	Knott End, Fylde		14.09.07
Read in field	The Lough, Cork, County Cork, Ireland		08.03.08
Read in field	Inner Marsh Farm, Dee Estuary, Cheshire		17.05.08
Read in field	Ijmuiden, Sluizen, The Netherlands		28.05.08
Read in field	The Lough, Cork, County Cork, Ireland		16.02.09
Read in field	Morecambe, Lancashire		16.08.09

Presumably wintering in Ireland, but the Lough is very well-watched, so any visits there were at best intermittent. The return to Morecambe in autumn 2009 was unexpected.

## 5352010 / AHTJ

Ringed	Elbe Est, Niedersachsen, GERMANY	Ad F	23/5/09
Read in field	Knott End, Preesall Sands (4 occasions)		6/8-21/8/09
Read in field	Heysham power station outfalls.		30/8 & 6/9/09

## 5350336 / AHHS

Ringed	Elbe Est, Niedersachsen, GERMANY	Nestling	14/5/08
Read in field	Skippool Creek, Wyre, Estuary Fylde		24/8-4/9/09

## E907199 /3TP5

Ringed	Jablones, Seine-et-Marne, France	Nestling	07/06/2004
Read in field	R. de Chanteloup, M. d' Olonne, Vendée, France		20/4-28/4/05
Read in field	Knott End, Preesall Sands, Fylde		17/08/2005
Read in field	Fishguard Harbour, Pembrookshire, Wales		06/11/2005
Read in field	Barbâtre, Polder de Sebastopol, Vendée, France		30/04/2006
Read in field	Noordelaan, Noord-Holland, Netherlands		22/06/2007
Read in field	Le Portel, Pas-de-Calais, France		19/07/2007
Read in field	Skippool Creek, Wyre Estuary, Fylde		12/8-23/8/09

## 5346637/AALU

Ringed	Elbe Estuary, Niedersachsen, Germany	Nestling M	17/06/2006
Read in field	Grünendeich, Hamburg, Germany		15/07/2006
Read in field	Cocker's Dyke, Preesall Sands, Fylde		04/08/2006
Read in field	Wissant, Pas de Calais, France		15/09/2007
Read in field	Elbe Estuary, Niedersachsen, Germany		28/4-14/7/09

Note the return to breed at the natal site.

## HGB/386714

Ringed	Bugyi, Pest, Hungary 47°12'N 19°7'E	Nestling	10/6/09
Read in field	Seaforth	1713km WNW	15/8/09

## BLB/E901145

Ringed	Noordelijk Insteekdok, Belgium 51°17'N 4°13'E	Ad	23/6/08
Read in field	Seaforth		6/1/09

## COMMON GULL

## NOS 5153528 &amp; CR

Ringed	Marvika, Kristiansand, Norway 58 08N 4 09E	4th CY+M	20/7/09
Read in field	Seaforth		6/1/10

## NOS 5153345 &amp; CR

Ringed	Tinnheia, Kristiansand, Norway 58 08N 7 57E	4th CY+	22/4/06
Read in field	Seaforth		4/1/10

Two from a similar source wintering together in the Seaforth area.

## LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

## GA14792

Ringed	Tarnbrook colony, Bowland	Nestling	6/9/97
Read in field	Datteln, Munster, Germany 51 44N 7 13E	704km ESE	6/8/99
Read in field	Malaga, SPAIN 36 43N 4 25W	1,928km S	3/1/09

## GA20202

	Banks Marsh colony, Ribble Estuary	Nestling	27/6/98
Read in field	Dongen, Netherlands 51 37N 4 55E	576km SE	15/5/99
Read in field	Dannes, France 50 35N 1 36E	463km SE	9/7/99
Read in field	Gloucester Landfill	211km S	10/12/09

## GN14585

Ringed	Banks Marsh	Nestling	26/6/99
Read in field	Valdovino, Coruna, Spain 43 36N 8 09W	1,186km SSW	25/3/09
Read in field	Chavet Landfill, Guernsey 49 30N 2 32W	468km S	28/3/09

A few of the more interesting recoveries; note the spring passage timing between NW Spain and the Channel Isles

## HERRING GULL

## GN78250

Ringed	Seamer Carr Landfill, Scarborough N Yorks	1st-year	16/3/07
Read in field	Seaforth		12/2/09

## COMMON TERN

## Colour rings

Ringed	Doffcocker Lodge, Bolton	Nestling	2006
Breeding	Preston Docks		2009

## SV43533 &amp; CR

Ringed	Doffcocker Lodge, Bolton	Nestling	12/6/09
Read in field	Seaforth		23/7/09

At least three Doffcocker juveniles were seen at Seaforth between 8 July and 18 August.

## SV43533

Ringed	Saltholme, Cleveland	Nestling	23/6/06
Read in field	Seaforth		30/6/09

## SR26207

Ringed	Saltholme, Cleveland	Nestling	10/7/06
Read in field	Seaforth		10/8/09

## SR42749

Ringed	Shotton, Clwyd	Nestling	25/6/06
Read in field	Seaforth	Male	2009

Attempted to breed with a Roseate Tern.

## SR60829

Ringed	Woodford Shallows, Lough Conn, Mayo 54 6N 9 18W	Nestling	3/8/07
Read in field	Seaforth		6/7/09

## SV27314 &amp; CR

Ringed	Coquet Island, Northumberland	Ad M	1999
Read in field	Seaforth		2000, 2001, 2005, 24/8-4/9/09

## XR24582

Ringed	Rockabill Island, Co. Dublin	Nestling	2/7/88
Read in field	Seaforth		24/6/09

Rockabill terns are seen fairly frequently at Seaforth, especially in autumn. Perhaps this early return indicated a non-breeding veteran.

## XS 21313

Ringed	Pennington Flash, Leigh		8/8/97
Read in field	Seaforth		2002, 29/7/09

## SR01296

Ringed	Seaforth	Nestling	6/7/06
Dead	St Nazaire, Loire Atlantique, France	690km S	29/10/06

## ROSEATE TERN

## SR25371 &amp; 72P2

Ringed	Coquet Island, Northumberland	Nestling	23/6/06
Read in field	Seaforth		13/6/09

The first definite evidence that at least some of the birds passing through Seaforth originate on the English east coast. All other recent recoveries have been from Rockabill, Co. Dublin and have also been second- or third-summers.

## GUILLEMOT

Two 2009 nestlings from Puffin Island, Anglesey ended their short lives on the tideline at Ainsdale in early September/early October respectively.

## BARN OWL

## GF90469

Ringed	Arkholme, Lune valley	Nestling	30/6/09
Dead	Gisburn, Bowland	38km	22/1/10

The longest movement reported during the year.

## BLUE TIT

## V470475

Ringed	Middleton Nature Reserve, Heysham	1st CY	8/10/09
Recaptured	Leighton Moss	17km	13/10/09

The usual time for dispersive movement.

## SAND MARTIN

HC0750

Ringed	Rattla Silla Res., Valencia, Spain 39 21N 0 24W	Ad F	23/8/08
Breeding	Crossdale Beck (off R. Hindburn) Tatham Fells		2009 & 2010

One of three returning birds from the 35 caught in the single 2009 visit.

X287088

Ringed	Eaglesfield, Cumbria	Ad F	24/7/08
Recaptured	Whittington, River Lune	73km	25/6/09

Presumably a change of breeding site.

## SWALLOW

V780720

Ringed	Melling maize field roost, Lune valley	1st CY M	21/9/07
Recaptured	Deeside golf course, Aberdeen, Grampian	333km N	5/9/09

X579555

Ringed	Melling maize field roost, Lune valley	1st CY	7/9/09
Found	Bay of Biscay 45 44N 7 50W	1001km SW	13/5/10

Landed on a yacht.

T968923

Ringed	Bowston, Burneside, nr Kendal, Cumbria	Nestling	20/6/07
Freshly dead	Craven View, Arkholme	26km SSE	23/5/09

Included as an example of a (curtailed) change between natal and breeding site (sex of bird not known).

## LONG-TAILED TIT

CHC019 & 20 (2 birds)

Ringed	Knott End	full grown	11/10/08
Recaptured	Belmont	45km SE	10/3/09

BTL076

Ringed	Norton Priory, Runcorn	Full-grown	16/12/07
Recaptured	Hightown	32km NW	15/2/09

## CHIFFCHAFF

BNR132

Ringed	Rostherne Mere, Knutsford, Cheshire	1st CY M	11/9/07
Recaptured	Mere Sands Wood, Rufford	45km NW	28/6/09

BHP038

Ringed	Copeland Island, Co. Down	1st CY	10/9/09
Recaptured	Leighton Moss		19/9/09

## WILLOW WARBLER

BKH954

Ringed	Leighton Moss	1st CY	10/8/07
Hit car	Shiskine, Isle of Arran, Strathclyde	221km NW	4/8/09

## BLACKCAP

X439825

Ringed	Leighton Moss	1st CY F	14/7/09
Recaptured	Woolston Eyes, Warrington	89km S	30/8/09

## SEDGE WARBLER

FRP.389290

Ringed	Djoudj, Senegal	Full grown	22/1/92
Captured	Altcar Rife Ranges, Hightown		15/5/92

## REED WARBLER

Z49451

Ringed	Hondarribia, Gipuzkoa, Spain 43 21N 1 49W	1st CY	19/8/09
Breeding female	Middleton Nature Reserve, nr Heysham		12/7/10

X579405

Ringed	Leighton Moss	1st CY	13/8/09
Recaptured	Cleveland Farm, Wiltshire	286km S	27/8/09

Not the longest movement (several to/from Icklesham, Sussex) but the first from Wiltshire.

X579443

Ringed	Leighton Moss	1st CY	18/8/08
Dead	Vendee, France 46 32N 1 46W	852km	14/9/09

## WREN

BDT734

Ringed	Freshfield Dune Heath	Juvenile	27/6/08
Recaptured	Icklesham, Sussex	390km SE	4/11/09

A proportion of Wrens do move! Note the previous Heysham-Cheltenham movement of a bird caught in mid-April on an annually observed tiny spring passage. This was thrown into focus by events in 2010 when there was a small but definite mid-April influx of Wrens into previously vacant territories at, e.g. Heysham Nature Reserve and area. Quite where these surviving Wrens spent the 2009/10 winter is perhaps hinted at by the Icklesham recovery which was quite possibly/probably still migrating on 4 November (the small autumn passage at Heysham tends to peak in the second week of October, but even that far to the north, occasional unringed birds are caught in early November).

## BLACKBIRD

CW05509

Ringed	Gosforth, Cumbria	Ad M	31/1/06
Read in field	Caton, Lune valley	61km SE	24-27/12/09

A704357

Ringed	Pori, Finland 61°32'N 21°46'E	1st CY	12/9/09
Read in field	Caton, Lune valley		27/1/10
Recaptured	Caton, Lune valley	1665km SW	30/1/10

In a ringer's back garden, recognised by being on the 'wrong leg' and subjected to telescope scrutiny! The Gosforth bird was also probably a continental bird and these were undoubtedly entering gardens more than usual during the hard weather.

## FIELDFARE

CL99683

Ringed	Hilters fruit farm, Gloucester	Ad F	20/12/07
Dead on road	Heysham	236km N	23/3/10

## PIED FLYCATCHER

T939664

Ringed	Barnacre Reservoir area	Ad F	9/5/09
	Whitney Court, Hereford & Worcs	202km N	17/5/10

T599780

Ringed	Hexham Racecourse, Northumberland	Nestling	10/6/05
Recaptured	Barkin Bridge, Lower Salter, Roeburndale	Breeding F	12/5/09

This elderly female was nesting in a "new" Pied Flycatcher wood. However, this is 'surrounded' by woods filled with nestboxes. So where was it in the intervening years? Plenty of more local movements, especially between Roeburndale and Hindburndale woodlands .

## TREE SPARROW

TL58732

Ringed	South Woods Hill Farm, Pilling	Nestling	28/06/08
Recaptured	Mere Sands Wood		04/01/09

## PIED WAGTAIL

V434743

Ringed	East Kilbride, Strathclyde	Ad M	12/9/08
Read in field	Seaforth		7/4/09

## MEADOW PIPIT

X092267

Ringed	Carnforth outer marsh, Keer Estuary	1st CY	7/9/08
Recaptured	Smithills, Bolton, Greater Man.	61km SE	26/9/09

## GREENFINCH

VP60096

Ringed	Crosby	First-year M	29/11/08
Freshly dead	Durkar, Wakefield, W Yorks	101km E	29/8/09

Very few returns this year, reflecting the reduction in numbers ringed at feeding stations following the virus.

## GOLDFINCH

V968815

Ringed	Belmont, nr Bolton	FG M	31/3/09
Freshly dead	Port Kilcheran, Lismore, Strathclyde	374km NW	5/5/09

X479288

Ringed	Chilworth, Surrey	2nd CY F	27/1/09
Recaptured	Stalmine, Fylde	341km NNW	26/10/09

31 March is early for spring Goldfinch passage, therefore probably wintered relatively close to Belmont.

X818575

Ringed	Kinby Farm, Berkshire	2nd CY F	31/1/10
Recaptured	Moss House Farm, Out Rawcliffe, Fylde		17/4/10

## SISKIN

V336785

Ringed	Mere Sands Wood, Rufford	2nd CY M	8/2/08
Freshly dead	Carron, Charlestown of Aberlour, Grampian	425km N	6/5/09

T806933

Ringed	Over Kellett, Carnforth	2nd CY F	18/4/06
Freshly dead	Curland, Taunton, Somerset	353km S	15/2/09

The longest of several routine 300-400km movements to/from the Scottish Highlands, followed by one ringed in Lancs on spring passage and found in its presumed wintering area for at least 2008/9.

## TWITE

Individual ring not known

Ringed	Heysham north harbour wall	male	28/10-11/12/09
CRs read	Close Moss, Marsdon, W. Yorks SE025107	Breeding	20/5-14/6/10

Paired to an unringed female, the nest unfortunately failed at the small chick stage and the birds then dispersed.

R547xxx &amp; CRs

Ringed	Cant Clough Reservoir, nr Burnley	unknown	15/3/03
Read in field	Priest Island, Summer Isles, NW of Ullapool	510km	15/6/09

R687778

Ringed	Heysham north harbour wall	2nd CY F	13/3/09
Found dead	Island of Kerrera, Strathclyde	312km NW	20/4/09

X292004

Ringed	Southport	1st CY F	16/11/08
Recaptured	Sanda Is, off Mull of Kintyre		1/7/09
Recaptured	Heysham north harbour wall		28/10/09

First two yet more exceptions to "coastal Lancs birds are from Scotland & Pennine birds winter in SE England"? The other explanations are unlikely contrived scenarios involving 'reverse dispersal' prior to autumn and spring passages respectively. Several sightings at Machrihanish Bird Observatory, Mull of Kintyre, will be summarised next year when all are received.

## LESSER REDPOLL

V900159

Ringed	Rishton, nr Blackburn	Ad F	30/12/08
Recaptured	Rishton, nr Blackburn		21/3/09
Recaptured	Calf of Man	161km NW	18/4/09

V909908

Ringed	South Foreland, Kent	1st CY	19/10/08
Recaptured	Belmont	382km NW	30/4/09

X010527

Ringed	Knott End	2nd CY M	5/5/08
Recaptured	Budby, Nottingham	149km SE	26/4/09

V849547

Ringed	Woolston Eyes, Warrington, Cheshire	2nd CY F	4/4/09
Recaptured	Belmont	28km N	22/4/09

V951845

Ringed	Light Oaks, Staffordshire	2nd CY M	12/4/09
Recaptured	Belmont	70km NNW	17/4/09

X010614

Ringed	Knott End	2nd CY F	5/4/09
Recaptured	Belmont	45km SE	8/4/09

X451056

Ringed	Kilnsea, Spurn peninsula, East Yorks	male	16/10/08
Recaptured	Knott End		11/4/10

Significant numbers of this species are being caught both on spring passage and more recently at garden feeders. Note the Lancs wintering bird heading north, presumably to either Northern Ireland or Scotland and the rather early spring passage (or is it still 'late winter wandering'?) bird going in the 'wrong direction'.

## COMMON (MEALY) REDPOLL

X010612

Ringed	Knott End	2nd CY M	2/4/09
Recaptured	Haddon Hall, Woodbridge, Suffolk	356km SE	27/2/10

Identified correctly by both ringers!

## REED BUNTING

X479796

Ringed	Leighton Moss	juv	13/7/09
Recaptured	Middleton Nature Reserve, nr Heysham	17km S	7/10/09

Definitely a (vis mig) passage bird at Middleton and showing the timing of migration of a Leighton-born bird.

## FIRSTS FOR LANCASHIRE

PALLID SWIFT, SEAFORTH NATURE RESERVE, 30 APRIL 2009.

*Chris Sharratt and Pete Kinsella*

On a rather gloomy, drizzly spring morning, CS returned to the offices at Seaforth after a brief check of the reserve before heading off to work, to report that he had been watching an obviously pale swift for several minutes. PK then sped off to check if this was, indeed, a Pallid Swift.

He quickly located the bird as it zoomed up and down the 'Long Bank' on the northern side of the Freshwater Pool in the company of a handful of Common Swifts – the first of which had arrived six days previously. Several key features confirming the identification were immediately obvious, in particular its pale brown colouration, the contrast between relatively pale brown inner wings and dark outer primaries and large pale throat and forehead with a contrastingly dark 'eyepatch'. The bird kept fairly low and, although it was difficult to keep focussed on it, when it flew overhead it revealed distinct pale fringes to the underpart feathers – clinching the identification.

The news was quickly circulated. The bird disappeared to the north after about an hour but reappeared in the late afternoon and by the end of the day perhaps a hundred local birders had caught up with it – many more followed in the ensuing days as the bird became perhaps the most easily 'twitched' – and certainly the most photographed – British record.

It was seen daily until 9 May and then a little less reliably between 13 and 27 May, disappearing along with most Common Swifts when high pressure conditions induced high altitude feeding. Reports to the bird information services on 4 & 6-9 June were never confirmed.

Although it was invariably seen in loose association with Common Swifts no more intimate interactions were ever witnessed, nor did anyone report hearing any calls. Nevertheless, the possibility that it might go on the breed could not be discounted but no evidence was forthcoming.



Pallid Swift, Seaforth, 6 May (Steve Young)

## WILSON'S PETREL ON THE MERSEY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2009.

*Tony (AJ) Conway and Tim Vaughan*

On 5 September 2009 we were seawatching from below the Seaforth radar tower at the mouth of the Mersey in the hope of a few more Leach's Petrels after twelve had been seen the day before.

The wind was NW 5-6, cloudy with good visibility but things were not looking too good with nothing seen in over four hours until TV picked up a fairly distant petrel. Soon afterwards AJC noticed a petrel at close range, just over the sea wall, and was immediately struck by how black the bird looked. It immediately started to feed with a very distinctive bouncing action, up and down as if on a string, very butterfly-like, not fluttery like a European Petrel, but exactly like a Wilson's.

We both watched the bird feeding, picking off the surface with long legs dangling and wings raised straight up, and started shouting in disbelief "it's a Wilson's Petrel" as we continued to watch it bouncing around just 40 metres away.

As the tide was high the bird was in full view all the time from our position and we could see the underwing was black and had no white like a Stormie, it had a very broad white rump which wrapped around the sides and reached the back of the legs, the tail was square-ended and not forked like Leach's, and the upperwing had a broad whitish bar which didn't reach the wing edge as in Leach's. It glided on straight long wings, which showed a straight trailing edge, the feet clearly protruded beyond the tail – all this pointing to Wilson's Petrel.

After a few minutes it flew away to our left and out of sight, as if going into the Mersey towards New Brighton. We went through everything that we had seen – a black petrel, not smoky grey-brown as in Leach's, a slightly bigger looking bird than Stormie, with no white underwing, an obvious broad white rump, square-ended tail, not forked or rounded as in Stormie, a feeding action matching neither Stormie nor Leach's, with the long dangling legs and feet protruding beyond the tail in flight.

We put the news out quickly so that anyone seawatching at New Brighton might get the chance to connect with the bird and moments later we saw it heading out of the river again. It was at about 200 metres range on a direct flight and moving with some speed. Even from these more distant views, it was always a very black-looking bird, the whitish upper-wing bar wasn't as obvious at this range but the broad white rump still stood out well. It then dropped onto the sea quite abruptly, and was watched with Hilbre Island in the background as it bobbed up and down on the swell.

We were soon joined by other observers but the bird had been lost to view. Two hours later, a distant petrel was flushed off the sea by an Arctic Skua. AJC called it as the Wilson's Petrel. It must have drifted further north and slightly closer from where we had last seen it and flew fast between the wave troughs with long, very shearwater-like glides.

Wilson's Petrel had always been regarded as a possibility in the Mersey due to the large numbers of Leach's that are often blown into the narrow river mouth, but that one should turn up when so few other petrels were around was completely unexpected.

This is second record in NW England, following one off Walney Island in Cumbria on 9 October 1990.

## Earliest and Latest Migrant Dates

The table of first and last dates is a regular feature of the bird report giving an 'at a glance' view of actual and expected first arrival and last departure dates. The table summarises the following information:

The earliest spring arrival and latest autumn records in 2009.

The earliest recorded spring and latest recorded autumn records.

The average (mean) earliest arrival and latest departure dates.

The trends for Earlier or Later arrival or departure where these are statistically significant between 1970 and 2009. (ns = no significant trend).

Records of presumed over-wintering and sickly birds have been omitted.

	Spring				Autumn			
	2009	Earliest	Mean	Trend	2009	Latest	Mean	Trend
Garganey	19/3	24.2.95	30/3	ns	26/10			
Osprey	23/3	4.3.05	3/4	E	20/9	7.11.05	21/9	ns
LRP	15/3	12.3.95+00	27/3	E	5/9	19.10.76	10/9	ns
Dotterel	24/4	29.3.89	24/4	ns				
Whimbrel	12/4	11.3.78	7/4	ns	21/9	6.11.88	5/10	ns
Common Sandpiper	3/4	21.3.66	6/4	ns	5/10	29.10.77	13/10	ns
Wood Sandpiper	26/4	14.4.83	4/5	ns	25/8	28.10.78	18/9	ns
Little Tern	15/4	13.4.91	26/4	ns	14/9	3.10.03	15/9	ns
Black Tern	25/4	11.4.80	29/4	ns	3/11	12.11.00	14/10	ns
Sandwich Tern	21/3	13.3.90	28/3	ns	4/11	2.12.94	16/10	ns
Common Tern	4/4	30.3.07	12/4	ns	3/10	17.11.77	21/10	E
Arctic Tern	12/4	1.4.94	17/4	ns	25/10	12.11.05	10/10	ns
Cuckoo	12/4	23.3.00	17/4	ns	6/8	18.10.09	2/9	E
Swift	14/4	1.4.04	20/4	ns	29/9	4.12.63	12/10	ns
Sand Martin	13/3	24.2.90	11/3	E	24/9	29.10.72	3/10	ns
Swallow	15/3	10.3.97	25/3	E	5/12	31.12.86	19/11	ns
House Martin	22/3	17.3.63	3/4	E	11/11	31.12.81	2/11	E
Ring Ouzel	19/3	11.3.99	24/3	E	31/10	11.12.00	4/11	ns
Redstart	6/4	28.3.68	11/4	ns	20/9	10.11.82	8/10	E
Whinchat	16/4	20.3.76	18/4	L	23/9	12.11.79	18/10	E
Wheatear	15/3	26.2.03	12/3	ns	5/11	20.11.98 & 01	31/10	ns
Yellow Wagtail	14/4	24.3.96	9/4	ns	17/10	11.11.95	9/10	ns
Tree Pipit	5/4	17.3.57	6/4	E	20/9	18.10.67	4/10	ns
Grasshopper Warbler	11/4	9.4.75	18/4	ns	20/9	4.10.81	15/9	ns
Sedge Warbler	11/4	27.3.03	13/4	E	18/9	14.11.96	2/10	ns
Reed Warbler	10/4	7.4.02+05	17/4	E	5/10	14.11.93	13/10	ns
Garden Warbler	22/4	14.4.93	21/4	E	20/9	13.11.95	18/10	ns
Lesser Whitethroat	14/4	11.4.08	23/4	E	9/9	23.11.99	27/9	L
Whitethroat	12/4	6.4.65	19/4	E	20/9	23.10.90	30/9	ns
Wood Warbler	21/4	14.4.79	23/4	ns	13/8	26.9.67		
Willow Warbler	31/3	19.3.90	31/3	ns	12/10	18.11.89	13/10	ns
Spotted Flycatcher	13/5	20.4.85	30/4	ns	1/10	15.11.79	3/10	ns
Pied Flycatcher	10/4	10.4.10	17/4	ns	24/8	3.11.01	26/9	ns

## Submission of Records

The task of compiling the report is becoming ever more daunting with the increasing number of records coming into us. With the authorship of the report split between nine people and the growing number of people using bird recording software or word-processing, the preferred method of submission, and indeed the one now favoured one by the majority, is via email, though posting a disc or written records are still perfectly acceptable.

Please can you ensure that records are submitted in systematic order rather than chronological order. Files sent by email or on disc should be in Word or simple text format and can be zipped up to save downloading time if necessary. Paper records should preferably be on one side of A4. In order to keep to our very strict deadlines so that the report can be published during September, all records from individuals should reach us by the end of February and reserve or area reports by the end of March. All records in whatever format you wish to use should be sent to the County Recorder

## British Birds Rarities

Descriptions of nationally rare species (for the list, see British Birds Rarities Reports or their website) should be submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee via the County Recorder at the address above. If records are submitted directly to the BBRC please send a copy to the County Recorder so that they can be added to the county archive. From 1 January 2007 the BBRC has no longer been accepting paper records. Paper submissions, including sketches, should therefore preferably be electronically scanned and sent by email to the County Recorder as low resolution jpegs. Photographs should also be sent as jpegs. Digital copies of the BBRC submission form are available from the County Recorder. We are aware, however, that a diminishing number of birders do not have access to the necessary equipment; if this is the case please continue to send paper records to the County Recorder who will process them before sending them to the BBRC.

The following records have been accepted by the BBRC since the publication of our last report:

- Pallid Swift, Seaforth, 30 April to 27 May 2009
- Laughing Gull, Marton Mere, 25 May, 2009
- Wilson's Phalarope, MMWWT and Marshside, 21-28 August, 2009
- Long-billed Dowitcher, Jameson Road, Fleetwood, 19 September
- Long-billed Dowitcher (two), Marshside & Banks, 24 September to 31 October
- Long-billed Dowitcher, Cockersand, 13-21 October

The following records are still under consideration by the BBRC:

- Lesser Canada Goose, south-west mosses, November 1976
- (American) Night Heron, Mere Sands Wood, 12 February to 21 April 2008
- Long-billed Dowitcher, Marshside & Banks, 7 March to 1 May 2010
- Spotted Sandpiper, Stocks Reservoir, 17-18 May 2010
- Wilson's Phalarope, Seaforth, 22-25 May 2010
- White-tailed Lapwing, Seaforth, 27-28 May 2010

The following records were considered not proven by the BBRC:

- Nutcracker, Forton, 14 January 2001
- (Collared) Pratincole, Wray 2 May 2008

As far as is known, the following records have not yet been submitted to the BBRC:

- American Herring Gull, Seaforth, 5 March 2009

- Bonaparte's Gull, Skippool Creek, 30 June 2009
- Glossy Ibis (six), MMWWT, 24 September 2009
- Glossy Ibis, St. Helens, 29 October 2009
- Ross's Gull, Lytham St. Anne's, 22 March 2009

## County Description Species

Descriptions of species considered to be county rarities (listed below and marked with an asterisk in the text) should be sent to the County Recorder, preferably as soon after the sighting as possible. Most descriptions now come in by the preferred email route, some with digital images attached, but paper records are perfectly acceptable. The increase in digital submissions has meant that the county records committee has been able to circulate records and make decisions promptly. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in time spent in assessment of each and every record submitted with problematical records left to the annual meeting held in May. Current members of the committee are Steve White (Chair), Chris Batty, Maurice Jones, Barry McCarthy, Chris Kehoe, Pete Marsh, Gavin Thomas and John Wright.

The job of the committee is to assess every record of a species that requires a description and they have an obligation to apply the rules even-handedly. On odd occasions this means that a perfectly good record will be fail to be accepted (normally through lack of detail). It is very rare that a record is thought to be incorrect, just that it is not 100% proven or there is some doubt.

Many county rarities get to be seen by many observers and an increasing proportion are now photographed, and the committee generally accepts such records on the nod – but it is still important that someone writes the record up so that all records can be reviewed by future generations.

All records of scarce migrants and rare breeding birds are submitted each year for publication in *British Birds*. This makes it vital that we are confident about the accuracy of all records. In the past we have had two categories of 'description species' but have decided to drop the 'basic details only' one so that only major county rarities require descriptions. These need to be as full as possible - if anyone needs any guidance, please contact the county recorder: Steve White, 102 Minster Court, Crown Street, Liverpool L7 3QD. E-mail: [stevewhite102@btinternet.com](mailto:stevewhite102@btinternet.com)

There are three species that can be particularly troublesome. At the rarities committee meeting in May the following guidelines for Honey Buzzard, Caspian Gull and Common (Mealy) Redpoll were discussed and finalised.

### **Honey Buzzard**

Descriptions of Honey Buzzards continue to cause the committee difficulties. Unfortunately, the Honey Buzzard does not lend itself to digiscoping and it would clearly be unreasonable for the committee to expect photographs, as very few have ever been taken in the county. In an attempt to document the occurrence of the species in the county accurately, we intend to publish records in two categories: fully accepted and strongly suspected (the latter category will include all records supported by descriptions that are honest yet not all-encompassing).

### **Caspian Gull**

From the time that the first Caspian Gulls were identified in Britain in Essex in August 1995, reports of this species were considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee until the end of 1999, by which time 85 records had been accepted. Claims of Caspian Gull in Lancashire date back to December 1995 but the first record to be accepted was a first-winter at Fishmoor Reservoir on

26-27 February 2005. However, as detailed in this report, an adult photographed at Seaforth on 6 and 20 October 2001 now officially supersedes the 2005 record.

Given that digital cameras are now so accessible and that, by their nature, gulls lend themselves to digiscoping, the committee feels that it is a reasonable prerequisite that all accepted records of Caspian Gull include a good quality photograph clearly showing a range of key features. Non-photographed birds that are described, submitted and accepted will be published as reported but not confirmed records; those where the photographic evidence is ambiguous will be treated similarly.

### Mealy Redpoll

Mealy Redpoll is the colloquial name for the nominate form of Common Redpoll, *Carduelis flammea flammea* – and the only form of this species that has been recorded in Lancashire. In a typical year Mealy Redpoll is a rare bird in Lancashire, although its status is currently confused by pale male Lesser Redpolls that are often mistaken for Mealy Redpolls, particularly in spring. Systematic ringing of migrating redpolls in recent springs at coastal sites in the county has produced ratios of 200:1 in favour of Lesser Redpoll, suggesting that Mealy Redpoll is genuinely rare here.

However, Mealy Redpoll is prone to occasional eruptions south and west from its Fennoscandian and Russian range, most notably in 1995-1996 when large numbers arrived in Britain and flocks were recorded at several localities in Lancashire. Outside of such influxes, Mealy Redpoll will now require a description to be published as fully accepted in the Lancashire Bird Report.

## Species and Subspecies Requiring Full Descriptions

*These are all marked with an asterisk in the systematic list*

Black Brant	Spotted Crane	Wryneck
American Wigeon	Corncrake	Golden Oriole
Ring-necked Duck	Common Crane	Red-backed Shrike
Ferruginous Duck	Stone Curlew	Woodchat Shrike
Surf Scoter	Kentish Plover	Chough
Black Grouse	American Golden Plover	Woodlark
Great Shearwater	Temminck's Stint	Short-toed Lark
Sooty Shearwater	White-rumped Sandpiper	Shore Lark
Cory's Shearwater	Pectoral Sandpiper	Red-rumped Swallow
Balearic Shearwater	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Cetti's Warbler
Wilson's Petrel	Red-necked Phalarope	Aquatic Warbler
Night Heron	Long-tailed Skua	Marsh Warbler
Purple Heron	Sabine's Gull	Icterine Warbler
Cattle Egret	Ring-billed Gull	Melodious Warbler
Great White Egret	Caspian Gull	Barred Warbler
Red-necked Grebe	White-winged Black Tern	Subalpine Warbler
Honey Buzzard	Roseate Tern	Dartford Warbler
Black Kite	Little Auk	Greenish Warbler
Montagu's Harrier	Puffin	Pallas's Warbler
White-tailed Eagle	Nightjar	Radde's Warbler
Golden Eagle	Alpine Swift	Dusky Warbler
Rough-legged Buzzard	Bee-eater	Rose-coloured Starling
Red-footed Falcon	Hoopoe	Red-breasted Flycatcher

Nightingale	Red-throated Pipit	Lapland Bunting
Bluethroat	Serín	Ortolan Bunting
Grey-headed Wagtail	Common (Mealy) Redpoll	Rustic Bunting
Richard's Pipit	Arctic Redpoll	Little Bunting
Tawny Pipit	Common Rosefinch	Cirl Bunting

## Photographs and Illustrations

If you have any line drawings that we could use in our publications, please send them to the secretary. The quality of the digital images is getting better all the time, many good quality ones being used in evidence with submissions of rarities or unusual sightings. Please keep them coming and keep Steve Young on his toes! (Thanks Steve for the use of so many of your images.)

## Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society

Elected Officials of the Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society

**Chairman:** **Dr Frank Walsh**, 80 Arundel Road, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs, FY8 1BN  
Tel: 01253 737765 email: frank@walsh.me.uk

**Secretary:** **Dave Bickerton**, 64 Petre Crescent, Rishton, Lancs, BB1 4RB  
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### Report Editor and Lancashire Bird Recorder:

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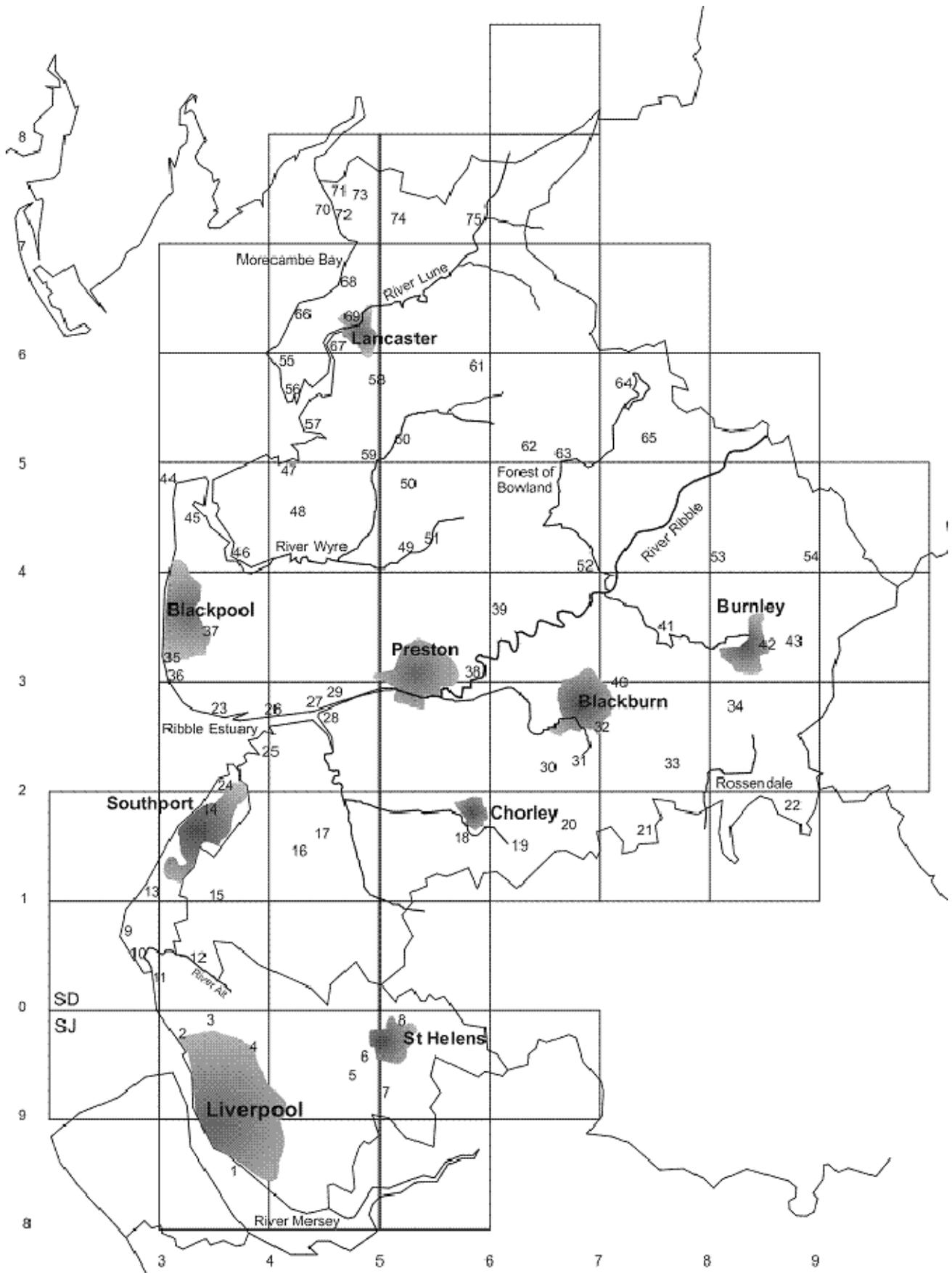
Next Annual General Meeting, 10am Saturday 5th March 2011 at Mere Sands Wood.

Membership of the Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society is still just £10 per annum – this includes a copy of the Lancashire Bird Report and any General Reports published. Members taking the Cheshire Bird Report as well pay £17. The Society is a non-profit making charity, run totally by volunteers who give many hours of their time freely. It provides data that are key in many aspects of conservation in the North West – we are regularly asked for our opinion on developments that may have an ecological impact or for information regarding areas of the county that need protection. We work closely in association with the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, RSPB and BTO and many members are active in those organisations. So if you aren't already a member, please consider joining us and supporting the work we do. Details can be obtained from the web site ([www.lacfs.org.uk](http://www.lacfs.org.uk)) or directly from the Honorary Secretary.

## WeBS

Data presented in this report have been collected by volunteer counters for the purposes of the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), but have not yet been fully validated by the WeBS partners. If you wish to make use of official WeBS data for any purposes, please contact the WeBS Office at the British Trust for Ornithology (email [webs@bto.org](mailto:webs@bto.org) or phone 01842-750050). WeBS is a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (the latter on behalf of Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment and Heritage Service for Northern Ireland).

# A Guide to Birdwatching Sites in Lancashire and North Merseyside



## Site, Location Number on Map and Grid Reference

Ainsdale Dunes NNR	13	SD290100	Longridge Res.	39	SD605360
Aldcliffe Marsh	67	SD460600	Longton Marsh	28	SD450265
Eric Morecambe complex	72	SD475730	Lytham St Annes NR	36	SD310305
Altcar Withins	12	SD325050	Marshside (RSPB)	24	SD355205
Arkolme	75	SD590720	Martholme/Altham	41	SD760330
Banks Marsh/ Old Hollows Farm	25	SD390230	Martin Mere (WWT)	16	SD425145
Barnacre Res.	50	SD525478	Marton Mere	37	SD345353
Belmont Res.	20	SD670170	Mere Sands Wood (LWT)	17	SD448160
Birkacre	18	SD572150	Morecambe Stone Jetty	66	SD425635
Blea Tarn Res.	58	SD495585	Newton/Clifton Marsh	29	SD455290
Brock Bottoms	51	SD550430	Ogden/Calf Hey/ Holden Wood Res.	33	SD765225
Brockholes Quarry	38	SD585305	Otterspool	1	SJ370860
Cabin Hill NNR	10	SD280050	Pendle Hill	53	SD805415
Carr Mill Dam	8	SJ525980	Pilling Lane Ends	47	SD415495
Champion Moor	65	SD745525	Pilling Moss/Eagland Hill	48	SD425450
Cloughton Hall Heronry	49	SD525425	Pine Lake/Dockacres	74	SD515725
Cleveley Mere	59	SD500500	Plex Moss	15	SD340105
Clowbridge Res.	34	SD830280	Prescot Res.	5	SJ470940
Cockersands/Bank End	57	SD430530	Rimrose Valley	3	SJ335995
Cowm Res.	22	SD880190	Rishton Res.	40	SD715300
Dunsop Valley	63	SD655500	Rivington/Anglezarke Res.	19	SD620155
Eccleston Mere	6	SJ482950	Roddlesworth Res.	30	SD650220
Fairhaven Lake	23	SD340273	Rossall Point	44	SD310475
Fazakerley	4	SJ390965	Rowley Lake	42	SD860330
Fishmoor Res.	32	SD700260	Seaforth NR/ Crosby Marine Lake	2	SJ315975
Fleetwood ICI Pools	45	SD335455	Skerton Weir	69	SD480630
Formby Point	9	SD270065	Southport Marine Lake	14	SD335180
Foulridge Res.	54	SD890415	Squires Gate	35	SD303320
Freckleton Naze	27	SD435275	Stocks Res.	64	SD730560
Hambleton Marsh	46	SD365415	Sunderland Point	56	SD420550
Hest Bank	68	SD470670	Sunnyhurst Woods/ Darwen Moor	31	SD680230
Heysham NR & Harbour	55	SD405595	Ward's stone	61	SD590590
Higher Hodder Bridge	52	SD695412	Warton Bank & Marshes	26	SD400270
Hightown	11	SD295030	Wayoh/Jumbles Res.	21	SD735160
Jenny Brown's Point	70	SD460735	Woodwell	71	SD463743
Langden Valley	62	SD630510	Wyreside Fisheries/ Street Bridge GP	60	SD515520
Lea Green Flash and Tip	7	SJ503920			
Lee Green Res.	43	SD880335			
Leighton Moss (RSPB)	73	SD480750			

The sites shown on the map have been determined according to the frequency that they have appeared in the systematic list over the past few years. Full grid references have been included to help you pinpoint any site.

## Abbreviations used in the text

1S - first-summer, 1W - first-winter, and so on.

GC Golf Course

GP Gravel Pit

LNR Local Nature Reserve

NR Nature Reserve

NNR National Nature Reserve

ML Marine Lake

Qry Quarry

SW Sewage Works

Res Reservoir

EMP/C Eric Morecambe Pools complex

MBR Morecambe Bay Reserve (RSPB)

MB(ay)S Morecambe Bay South (Lancashire section of Morecambe Bay WeBS)

MMWWT Martin Mere Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Reserve

MSW Mere Sands Wood (LWT)

SNR Seaforth Nature Reserve (LWT)

BBRC British Birds Rarities Committee

BOURC British Ornithologists Union Records Committee

BTO British Trust for Ornithology

CBC Common Bird Census (BTO)

BBS Breeding Bird Survey (BTO)

WeBS Wetland Bird Survey

CDNHS Chorley & District Natural History Society

ELOC East Lancs Ornithologists Club

FBC Fylde Bird Club

LDBWS Lancaster and District Birdwatching Society

LWT Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside Wildlife Trust

ROC Rossendale Ornithologists Club

SWLRG South-West Lancashire Ringing

## Regional Reports and Other Contributors

Alt WeBS

Arnside Natural History Society

Birdguides

BTO/RSPB Birdtrack

Chorley & District Natural History Society  
Report

Cuerden Valley Park Report

ELOC Report

Fylde Bird Club Database

Heysham NR & Observatory Report

LDBWS Report

Marshside Report

MMWWT Logs

Morecambe Bay WeBS

Rare Bird Alert

Ribble WeBS

Seaforth Bird Report

St. Helens Bird Report

United Utilities

## Contributors

Once again, thank you for all those who've contributed records over the year, 334 individuals in the following list. Apologies if we've missed anyone!

K Abram	AA Cooper	B Gregory	M Malpass	CJ Sharratt
M Ainscough	C Coupe	C Gregson	PJ Marsh	K Sharrock
JA Almond	P Crooks	P Grice	DS Martin	G Shaw
S Ashton	W Crooks	S Halliwell	SJ Martin	R Shenton
WC Aspin	A Cutler	D Hardaker	E McCann	P Slade
K Atherton	RE Danson	IM Harper	B McCarthy	PG Slade
T Baker	T Darbyshire	K Harrison	E McDonald	P Slater
R Banks	J Davie	W Harrison	M McGough	MA Small
JK Bannon	T Davie	I Hartley	P McGough	S Smethurst
PJ Barnes	C Davies	C Hatsell	M Memory	PH Smith
M Baron	P Davies	S Hawtin	R Meredith	NT Southworth
CG Batty	J Dempsey	B Hedley	D Morley	D Sowter
D Beattie	CT Derri	G Hewitt	P Morris	KG Spencer
J Beattie	AS Disley	Z Hinchcliffe	S Morris	AJ Spottiswood
R Bedford	J Donnelly	A Hinchliffe	S Murphy	ET Stevens
W Berry	A Draper	DJ Hindle	M Myerscough	R Stinger
DA Bickerton	S Dunstan	D Holland	D Nadin	G Taylor
F Bird	B Dwire	A Holmes	MJ Naylor	JE Taylor
J Blackburn	B Dyson	PJ Hornby	DJ Nickeas	Ga Thomas
LG Blacow	SP Eaves	R Horner	PJ Olson	Gr Thomas
DJ Bowker	J Edwards	J Hoyes	E Ormand	CG Tomlinson
B Breaks	P Ellis	N Hughes	J Ormerod	S Tomlinson
Ma Breaks	M Fanshaw	B Hugo	C Partington	B Townson
Mk Breaks	M Farrar	G Hulme	N Patel	T Vaughan
KB Briggs	A Fenton	N Hunt	SG Piner	G Waddington
CM Brookes	J Fenton	R Ives	D Priestley	JF Walsh
M Brown	JD Fletcher	A Johnson	E & E Prince	M Watson
S Bullen	M Floey	C Johnson	R Pyefinch	WJ Webb
A Bunting	S Flynn	H Jones	C Raby	S Wende
J Butcher	WD Forshaw	M Jones	P Rhodes	M Wessels
J Butcher	C Fyles	R Jones	RW Rhodes	T Westhead
RA Cadman	D Gallagher	S Jones	C Richards	TE Wheeler
RA Cadman	I Gardner	K Kellett	A Riden	SJ White
J Calder	M Garner	P Kinsella	J Riley	B Willcock
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