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Lancashire Bird Report 2014 The Birds of Lancashire and North Merseyside

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Front cover: Shore Lark, Fleetwood by Steve Young

Back cover: Kingfisher, Seaforth by Steve Young

Introduction

Dave Bickerton

It doesn't seem a year since I was writing the introduction to our centenary edition yet work on the 2015 report will start in three months time! The collation of more and more submissions into a readable report is certainly a challenge but one that a committed group of volunteers takes on annually. Whether it's writing species accounts or articles or serving on the rarities committee, we're grateful of the time they give freely.

We've decided to continue on the full-colour theme of the last report which many of you have commented upon as it is really important that we keep the circulation as high as possible. If you've bought this or are a member of the Society, then thank-you for your support. The low cover price is subsidised from other income we get such as the supply of bird data to consultants but we are always looking for new members. Do you know of anyone who really should be a member?

The Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society is now into its second century and the publication of the very-well received 'Dragonfly Atlas' demonstrated our commitment to publishing information on faunal groups other than birds. We have a book on mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish in preparation and are discussing something on the lepidopteran front.

This year we have the usual systematic list summarising the records of over 250 species recorded in the area during 2014. There are also articles on Grey Wagtail migration and the finding account of Lancashire's first Buff-bellied Pipit. I feel that there is a lot more emphasis being placed on local patch birding these days by many of you - we have a short obituary on Eric Ward, a man whose local patch in Rossendale was one of the most thoroughly studied in the country.

I do hope you enjoy this year's report and if you have any comments, drop me a line.

Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society

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Next Annual General Meeting will be held on 10am Saturday 5th March 2016 – see website for details of location which will be announced nearer the date.

Membership of the Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society is still just £10 per annum – this includes a copy of the Lancashire Bird Report posted to your home address and any General Reports published (this included the 'Dragonfly Atlas' in 2015). 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 Lancashire – 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, BTO, Butterfly Conservation, etc. 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 website (www.lacfs.org.uk) or directly from the Honorary Secretary.

We regularly have a stand at the North-west Bird Fair held at Martin Mere in November and look forward to meeting many members there.

Review of 2014

John Wright

January

The month was very unsettled, with a continuation of the run of deep Atlantic low pressure systems from December 2013. These brought further spells of very strong wind and heavy rain. Mid-month saw some brief sunny spells, but the rain continued with few dry days and some high rainfall accumulations. The westerly weather resulted in a mild month with a notable absence of frosts.

This stormy weather brought a host of unusual sightings for the start of the new year. On the 1st these included a **Great Northern Diver** on Southport Marine Lake, 92 **Red-throated Divers** off Blackpool, a **Great Skua** and a **Velvet Scoter** off Rossall and a **Shag** in Blackpool's Stanley Park.

On the 2nd redhead **Smews** were seen at Dean Clough Reservoir and Hesketh Out Marsh. This displaced theme continued with a **Leach's Petrel** off Rossall on the 3rd. A male **Black Redstart** was at Heysham Red Nab on the 4th, the first of 23 recorded in the county this year.

More regular winterers included impressive counts of 5000 **Black-tailed Godwits** and 300 **Skylarks** at Marshside, 62508 **Wigeon** on the Ribble, 1055 **Greylag Geese** in Lancaster and District and 304 **Mute Swans** on the Lune Estuary. A **Bittern** showed well at Brockholes from the 9th and a **Glaucous Gull** was on the Wyre Estuary from the 12th. An unusual inland winter movement of **Shelduck** brought 18 to Lower Foulridge, seven to Stocks and five to both Dean Clough and Fishmoor Reservoirs on the 13th.

A **Glossy Ibis** with a flock of Little Egrets at Thurnham Hall from the 16th was a sign of the times and the mild weather.

February

February was another stormy, very unsettled and wet month. During the first half the weather was dominated by a succession of major winter storms, continuing a sequence from late January. These brought strong winds, heavy rain and significant weather impacts including flooding. Although the stormy weather ended on the 15th, the rest of the month remained unsettled but mild.

The month began with the spectacle of 10000 **Dunlin** wheeling over Marshside on the 1st. There was a flurry of **Snow Buntings** across the county with 25 at a moorland feeding site in north Rossendale, seven on the top of Pendle Hill, seven frequenting the beach between St Annes and Starr Gate, three on Pilling Marsh and one at Fleetwood. At least three **Lapland Buntings** also frequented the Rossendale site. **Bramblings** were present in good numbers with the largest flock of 400 seen at Turton Tower on the 4th.

The stormy weather continued to impact on seabirds and an exhausted **Puffin** was taken into care at Rossall Point on the 7th. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good and the discovery of a pristine adult **Ross's Gull** at Leighton Moss on the afternoon of the 9th was testament to that; present with a **Guillemot**, a **Kittiwake** and a **Long-tailed Duck** on the Public pool it also fed in nearby fields. This eighth for the county delighted all who managed to see it before it headed off to roost and was not seen again.

First one then two **Siberian Chiffchaffs** were found at Martin Mere from the 19th, including a singing male. They could be seen alongside several nominate **Chiffchaffs** and proved very educational. A **Lesser Whitethroat** was an unseasonal visitor to a Heysham bird table.

Waxwings were very scarce this year. As a result four birds lingering in the traditionally favoured Weir Street Car Park in Blackburn proved very popular.

March

The month was very unsettled, with a continuation of the run of vigorous Atlantic low pressure systems that had characterised the early year. The first half saw a succession of winter storms bringing strong winds and heavy rain. Despite some brief sunny spells, the rain continued, with few dry days and some high rainfall accumulations for many areas. Again this was a mild month with a notable absence of frosts and snow.

A **Slavonian Grebe** appeared on Southport Marine Lake from the 3rd with another at Rossall Point on the 10th. Two overwintering **Long-tailed Ducks** were still in residence at Marshside and Leighton Moss and an impressive flock of 15000 **Common Scoters** was counted off Formby Point.

Three northbound **Swallows** along Southport seafront on the 5th was a sign that the wild and windy winter was nearing its end. These were the earliest arrivals recorded in the county. **Lesser Redpolls** had also started to move and the flocks included at least five **Mealy Redpolls** at New Laithe Farm, Newton and four at Rishton.

A **Firecrest** overwintered successfully at Leighton Moss and whilst present until the 29th it ranged widely and proved elusive.

April

The month opened quietly but this was followed by a few days of unsettled weather. After the first week high pressure dominated for a while and most areas remained fine. However, low pressure was often centred near or to the south of the county during the last ten days, leading to some localised downpours. There were some pleasantly warm days at times through the month.

On the 1st, an evening of light winds and clear conditions, six **Bitterns** were seen 'gull-calling' and circling high before leaving Leighton Moss.

A small flock of **Tufted Ducks** brought a dapper male **Ring-necked Duck** to Newton Lake on the 7th; giving fantastic close views it was well appreciated but moved on overnight. Another exciting find was a **Hoopoe** which brought a touch of the exotic to Treales near Kirkham from the 16th.

Rare wildfowl then returned to the headlines with a male **Green-winged Teal** at Stocks Reservoir from the 19th (one of four records this year) and a smart male **Surf Scoter** on the sea off Blackpool on the 20th.

An unexpected arrival of **Wood Warblers** delighted observers along the coast. The first at Marton Mere on the 23rd was followed by records at Fleetwood, Fluke Hall, Formby, Stanley Park and two at Heysham. A graceful **Montagu's Harrier** was a brief visitor to Leighton Moss on the 26th.

Ruff began lekking at Marshside with a maximum of 33 handsome males and five females from the 22nd and into May. On the evening of the 29th a coordinated count of **Whimbrel** roosts produced a notable total of 1173 across eight sites in the county.

May

The month opened with a few days of scattered showers but also some bright weather, but after the 5th it became more unsettled. A return to high pressure then resulted in some fine and warm weather mid-month. The 20th saw a return to unsettled conditions with showers, scattered thunderstorms and some more prolonged spells of rain. The last two days were mainly dry and bright.

May is always an exciting month and 2014 was no exception. The discovery of an American **Buff-bellied Pipit** at Slack Lane, Cockersand on the evening of the 4th was the undoubted highlight. A long-awaited county first it was also the first summer-plumaged bird seen in Britain. Unfortunately it had departed by the following morning. Also in its breeding finery was a **Black-necked Grebe** at Leighton Moss on the 5th.

Eight **Pomarine Skuas** made for a fine sight as they flew into Morecambe Bay past Rossall on the 6th. More rarities then appeared with a male **Lesser Scaup** on a farm pond near Slaidburn from the 7th, the ninth county record and the first for east Lancashire. A beautiful male **Woodchat Shrike** was much admired at Aldcliffe Marsh on the 8th – the ninth Lancashire record.

More typically, a **Spoonbill** was on the Eric Morecambe complex from the 9th and two **Temminck's Stints** at Lunt Meadows from the 17th. Another two rarities then appeared with a splendid **Black Stork** circling high over Rivington Reservoir on the 27th – the ninth county record. The other rarity, rather sadly, was a **Turtle Dove** at Seaforth on the 30th; the inexorable decline of this species shows no signs of abating.



Male Lesser Scaup, private site, Slaidburn, 7 May
(Gavin Thomas)

June

The month opened with a few showery days which became heavier and more widespread around the 7th to the 10th. High pressure then built, bringing a spell of much more settled weather with some warm days and plenty of sunshine. The last week was unsettled once more, with some local thundery downpours.

The breeding season was well underway and the good weather helped with census work. The proposed West Pennine Moors SSSI was alive with many birds scarce elsewhere in the county. Sixty pairs of **Snipe** breeding alongside **Golden Plover**, **Dunlin**, **Curlew** and **Lapwing** was a particular highlight, along with breeding **Long-eared**, **Short-eared** and **Barn Owls** and a healthy population of **Grasshopper Warblers**.

The most remarkable spectacle though was the 10136 pairs of **Black-headed Gulls** at Belmont Reservoir, now thought to be the largest colony in the UK. Strutting amongst them were over 40 pairs of **Mediterranean Gulls**, the country's largest inland colony. This area is a real jewel in Lancashire's crown and will hopefully gain the protection it deserves.

A **Great Skua** at Preston Dock from the 14th had been ringed in Norway but was in poor health and was taken into care on the 15th.

In Bowland 18 **Ring Ouzel** territories were located on the United Utilities estate following an excellent spring passage. Six **Hawfinches** at Gaitbarrows on the 16th was another exciting discovery.

Two summer rarities were much appreciated with a summer-plumage **White-winged Black Tern** at Seaforth on the 18th and an adult **Rose-coloured Starling** in the Rose Grove area of Burnley from the 25th, the ninth record for the county. Two **Spotted Crakes** calling at MMWWT from the 25th was an intriguing discovery and an unseasonal female **Dotterel** on Pendle Hill from the 29th brought the month to a close.

July

The month opened with a spell of fine and warm weather, and this continued through much of the month although there were showers and thunderstorms at times. There was a dry, hot spell around mid-month. It remained very warm or hot until the last few days, with further localised thunderstorms and downpours.

Swifts were conspicuous as they fed growing families, with 500 over Brockholes on the 4th a particularly impressive sight.

Excellent news came from Bowland where two pairs of **Hen Harriers** successfully raised nine young against all the odds. Further evidence of a good breeding season came with news of six pairs each of **Merlins** and **Short-eared Owls** breeding successfully in Bowland.

Other notable records included 1808 **Manx Shearwater** past Formby on the 15th and the first **Cetti's Warbler** for east Lancashire at Lee Green Reservoir on the 26th.

Another success story was the **Common Tern** colony at Preston Dock. There was an increase to 140 pairs thanks to the provision of tyres to nest in. They had high fledging success as did the 156 pairs that nested at Seaforth. Four pairs of **Arctic Terns** could also be seen at Preston with two pairs nesting. Seaforth attracted several **Roseate Terns** but more unusually a pair made a brief appearance at the Preston colony on the 30th.

August

The month opened with a spell of showery weather and isolated thunderstorms interspersed with some fine and bright weather. Heavy rain affected many areas from the 8th and stormy weather on the 10th was associated with ex-Hurricane Bertha. A northerly air flow resulted in some particularly cool nights from the 20th. Brighter and warmer weather returned for the last few days of the month.

That it had been a good summer for breeding birds was highlighted by ringing totals from the North Lancashire Ringing Group. Catches for many species were the highest on record. Warblers in a particular did very well with totals of 462 **Chiffchaffs**, 585 **Willow Warblers**, 300 **Blackcaps** and 257 **Whitethroats**.

The second **Black-necked Grebe** of the year was at Mere Sands Wood on the 4th. Single **Glossy Ibises** were seen at both Leighton Moss and Martin Mere on the 5th.

A **Balearic Shearwater** off Formby Point on the 10th was our sixth record, and the county's third highest **Sanderling** count was recorded on the 13th, with a remarkable 8000 at Ainsdale.

The **Red Grouse** population is currently the subject of much discussion and they had an excellent breeding season. Unfortunately, we know this because of the 5000 shot on the Abbeystead Estate in just the first eleven days of the season.

A bizarre record was of a **Shag** in a field at Pilling Lane Ends on the 16th.

September

The month was dominated by high pressure, bringing plenty of fine and settled weather. Temperatures were largely above average, despite easterly winds. Rainfall was limited, though there were a few heavy showers at times during the second half of the month. Fog was reported on a few days during the second half of the month.

A confiding sub-adult **Long-tailed Skua** was found at Formby Point on the 1st and was relocated on the 4th, remaining in the area until the following day. Another unusual record was of four **Quails** flushed by combine-harvesters at Eagland Hill on the 7th, perhaps suggestive of local breeding.

Pectoral Sandpipers appeared as now expected with juveniles at Martin Mere on the 11th and two at Leighton Moss on the 13th. The Leighton Moss birds were joined by a colour-ringed juvenile **Curlew Sandpiper** and a **Little Stint**; amazingly, both had been ringed at the same site in Norway.

A first-winter **Yellow-browed Warbler** was trapped and ringed at Billinge Hill on the early date of the 19th – the first of twelve of these charming sprites seen in the county this year.

Hérons were much in the news, starting with a juvenile **Night Heron** at Brockholes on the 19th. It was subsequently seen on the Ribble and then at Vernons Lodge in Preston. **Little Egrets** then peaked with a county record of 182 roosting at Leighton Moss on the 21st. Also roosting here at this time were three **Great White Egrets**. A remarkable hat trick was completed with the discovery of a **Cattle Egret** at Leighton Moss on the 23rd.

Autumn was certainly in full swing and one of our most iconic species, **Pink-footed Geese**, arrived in huge numbers. Many of them headed for Martin Mere and the 36600 that roosted there on the 29th was a sight to behold.

Caspian Gulls remain a prized find but appear to be getting a little more regular in the county. A third-winter bearing a Polish ring was present at Preesall Sands on the 30th.

October

The month was predominantly unsettled, with strong winds and rain a recurring feature. These winds were generally from a southerly direction so it was mild, especially in the second half. Rainfall was above average.

Ring-necked Parakeets appear to have a new stronghold in the county as Sefton Park in south Liverpool saw birds reported regularly, peaking at 20 on the 1st.

Pink-footed Geese continued to increase and skeins were reported from all parts of the county. On the 2nd it was estimated that 80000 were present with 45800 at Martin Mere alone.

In contrast, **Pintail** numbers did not exceed 1000 with 861 on the Ribble estuary the highest count of the year. Average numbers have more than halved in the last five years, reflecting the 40% decline experienced nationally.

A **Firecrest** was at Fleetwood on the 6th and a **Slavonian Grebe** off Formby Point on the 9th. An exciting discovery on the 12th involved three majestic **Cranes** heading south over Sunderland Point and Cocksands before being picked up over Seaforth later in the day.

The last day of the month brought a huge flight of **Fieldfares** all down the coastline from Morecambe Bay to the Mersey: 6200 moved over Heysham, 9000 over Fairhaven, 2850 over Cabin Hill, 3720 over Hightown Dunes and 6211 over Seaforth; these were record day-totals for both Heysham and Seaforth.

A white morph adult **Lesser Snow Goose** was found at Eagland Hill on the 31st. In November it visited Downholland, Plex and Formby Mosses, Banks and Hesketh Out Marshes and was seen over MMWWT.

November

The month was generally unsettled, with rain or showers and strong winds at times, but with temperatures often above average. The last few days became drier, allowing fog to form on some nights.

Three **Great Grey Shrikes** was a good return for this most striking and popular of species. The first was found near Queensway on Lytham Moss from the 1st. This was followed by one at Cabin Hill NNR from the 3rd and another at Grindleton Fell from the 12th.

An adult and a juvenile **Greenland White fronted Geese** were at Fleetwood from the 10th whilst **Purple Sandpipers** could be found at Fleetwood, Blackpool and Heysham.

Cetti's Warblers seemed to have prospered in the mild weather and birds were wintering in good numbers at Leighton Moss and Marton Mere with others at Fleetwood Nature Park and Brockholes. **Willow Tits** were also wintering at Brockholes and nearby Fishwick Bottoms LNR.

A **Grey Phalarope** off Morecambe on the 15th was the only record of the year, whilst a juvenile **Black Tern** at Heysham until the 23rd was the latest ever recorded in Lancashire.

The area from Cockers Dyke to Pilling Lane Ends was a favoured site for **Twite**, with numbers peaking at an impressive 263 on the 26th.

December

The month comprised alternating spells of colder and milder weather, with frosts common between the 3rd and 8th and again between the 26th and 30th but some very mild weather at other times. A vigorous depression brought stormy weather around the 9th to 12th, after which the weather was milder until Christmas. The last few days were mostly clear, sunny and frosty.

A beautiful and confiding **Shorelark** was found on the 3rd at Rossall Point. It went on to spend the winter here and was well watched and photographed by many appreciative observers.

A juvenile **Great Northern Diver** was a great inland find at Rishton Reservoir on the 7th. Following the large arrival of **Fieldfares** in October a spectacular flock of 20000 darkened the sky over New Laithe Farm, Newton on the 6th.

A **Long-tailed Duck** was found on the 7th on Crosby Marine Lake and a large **Greenfinch** roost at Fleetwood peaked at 300 on the 8th. A **Little Auk** close inshore at Half Moon Bay, Heysham on the 12th was a typically fleeting sighting of a bird that is very hard to catch up with in the county.

Careful scrutiny of goose flocks was rewarded with the discovery of five **European White Fronted Geese** on the Lune marshes from the 12th and two presumed **Todd's Canada Geese** at Todderstaffe Hall on the 16th. The **Todd's Canada Geese** then moved to Fleetwood Farm and were joined amongst the **Pinkfeet** by two **Tundra Bean Geese**, a **Greenland Whitefront** and a **Pale-bellied Brent Goose**.

Another exciting year in the county came to a close with a drake **American Wigeon** at Crossens Inner Marsh on the 20th and 21st December.

Systematic List

KEY TO STATUS (Based on results of the 2007-2011 atlas surveys)

Breeding	Non-breeding
Rare: breeding in 1-6 tetrads or 1-10 pairs	Vagrant (or very rare passage migrant): 1-10 records in past 25 years
Scarce: breeding in 7-38 tetrads or 11- 50 pairs	Rare: 11-50 records in past 25 years
Uncommon: 51- 250 pairs	Scarce: 51-250 records in past 25 years
Fairly common: 251- 1000 pairs	Uncommon: 11-20 annually
Common: 1001-5000 pairs	Fairly common: 21-200 annually
	Common: 201-1000 annually
	Very common: 1001-5000 annually
Abundant: more than 5000 pairs	Abundant: more than 5000 annually

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Fairly common breeding resident.

International importance: 2400. National importance: 740

Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	62	44	44	39	124	106	151	145	83	128	59	13
Ribble WeBS	54	30	45	104	78	90	24	12	51	30	102	37
Alt WeBS	1	3	2	2	13	9	15	10	11	5	0	0
Marshside	14	8	10	38	9	5	/	/	/	1	/	/
Southport ML	85	/	30	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

The Lancaster January survey located 412 birds, 304 of them in SD45 (Lune Estuary). The next highest count of the year across the county was 225 during January at Hundred End, where 80 remained on 13 March. Other high counts in the early year included 70 at Cockerham on 18 April, 40 on the Conder Estuary in June and September and 18 at Stanley Park, Blackpool in May.

Peak post-breeding counts were broadly similar and included 71 at Sandside on 9 Dec, 75 at Glasson on 24 Dec, 59 at Pilling on 2 Dec, 49 at Lytham on 3 July, 41 at Brockholes on 16 Nov, 35 at Jeremy Lane on 26 Oct, 34 at Freckleton on 4 Nov and 30 on the Conder Estuary in September and at Cocksand on 30 Dec

Breeding remained widespread throughout the county – as usual almost always single pairs on any one site.

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

Fairly common but declining winter visitor.

International importance: 200. National importance: 70

There seems to be no end to the decline. A handful were seen at various sites on the Lune Estuary until 23 Feb, with 13 there during January and peaking at 16 on 19 Feb; two past Fleetwood on 9 March were the last of spring. Following two at England Hill on 1 Nov up to seven were seen on the Lune Estuary until the end of the year.

Fewer appeared south of the Ribble. Five were at Hundred End at the start of the year with three remaining until 8 Feb, while up to six – probably the same birds – were on Hesketh Out Marsh in January. MMWWT produced a single on 12-16 Jan with presumably the same at Rufford on the 18th. At the other end of the year numbers peaked at ten at Hundred End on 31 Dec and up to five on Hesketh Out Marsh during December. Singles were on Croston Moss on 23 Nov to 5 Dec and MMWWT on 27 Dec, the latter a different bird on bill pattern from the one at the beginning of the year.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Common and increasing winter visitor.

International importance: 210. National importance: 110

Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Over Wyre	350	283	320	0	0	308	361	207
South Fylde	43	48	44	6	0	20	87	61
MMWWT	1587	1100	800	19	4	513	957	1346
Ribble WeBS	450	449	228	0	0	0	104	99

Numbers overwintering on the Ribble, at MMWWT and north Fylde remained similar to those of December 2013 with over 2000 present in the county before declining from mid-February.

Reports of feeding flocks in north Fylde included up to 350 at Bradshaw Lane and Bone Hill in January and 283 at Cockersand on 18 Feb with similar numbers remaining until mid-March. Unusually none were reported on Lytham Moss during the first winter period, while south of the Ribble 126 were at Hundred End on 14 Jan and 128 on Halsall Moss on 6 Feb. Smaller numbers were reported from a large number of other sites.

One flew over Alston Wetland on 14 Jan but the first real sign of northbound movement was 26 north past Heysham on 17 Feb. The pace of migration quickened during March with double-figure flocks seen regularly off Blackpool and Fleetwood; the largest counts inland were 30 over Stocks Reservoir on 3 March, 18 over Brockholes on the 8th and 15 over Cant Clough Reservoir on the 30th. Almost all had departed by the first week of April, the last one at Cockersand on the 27th, leaving two at MMWWT throughout the summer.

The first returning birds were two past Lytham on 1 Oct. Coinciding with the first frost of autumn, a new pair at MMWWT on 2 Oct joined the two over-summering birds. An arrival there on 7 Oct increased the MMWWT flock to 29 birds – including two early juveniles. Flocks of overflying migrants were then recorded at various inland and coastal sites with occasional single figures resting briefly on the eastern reservoirs, including nine at Belmont on 29 Oct and six on Lower Foulridge and seven on Hurstwood on the 31st.

Numbers roosting at MMWWT increased rapidly from early November, peaking as usual in December. The largest second winter flocks in north Fylde included 236 at Bradshaw Lane Head on 24 Oct, 320 at Pilling Lane Ends on 16 Nov and 242 at Eagland Hill on the 17th, with slightly lower counts recorded on several sites throughout December.

Elsewhere, the largest numbers reported were 42 on Croston Moss on 4 Dec and 339 on Hesketh Out Marsh on the 26th. One feeding among Pink-footed Geese at Rainford on 30 Nov was the only record of the year for the St Helens area.

TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis rossicus*

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

Two were with Pinkfeet at Fleetwood Farm on 24-25 Dec.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Abundant winter visitor to Fylde, Ribble Estuary and south-west mosslands. Amber List (localised winter distribution).

International importance 3600; National importance 3600.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pilling Marsh	7500	850	3869	1179	0	0	4	0	3000	16020	7870	4000
Ribble WeBS	3234	6053	11481	4086	5	0	1	0	1	1431	7408	2681
S. Ribble marshes	/	/	3000	/	/	/	/	/	/	3000	8000	2000
Marshside	/	/	3100	4800	0	0	0	0	2000	9000	/	1200
MMWWT	5140	2790	2000	4	4	0	0	0	36600	45800	17400	5500

Despite the absence of a coordinated roost count it does appear that relatively few were present during the first winter period.

However, it was a different story later on: the counts at MMWWT of 36600 on 29 Sept and 45800 on 2 Oct were both records for the site and, together with those on Pilling Marsh in the table, 900 at Barnaby's Sands and an estimated minimum of 10000 in Merseyside at the time, suggest that perhaps as many as 80000 were present that month. Numbers at MMWWT fell to 33000 on 8 Oct and many began to leave the south-west from mid-autumn while numbers in north Fylde held up. An additional count of 7400 on 16 Oct was received from Simonswood Moss, the other main roost site in the south-west.

Coordinated roost counts

	19 Oct	16 Nov
Wyre Estuary	2350	3260
Cocker's Dyke	560	3456
Pilling Marsh	16020	7870
Ribble Estuary	6476	2114
MMWWT	21500	9120
Alt/Taylor's Bank	16710	12656
Simonswood Moss	3800	3400
Total	67416	41876

In the Fylde, large counts of feeding birds during the first winter period included 6000 at Bone Hill on 8 Jan and Eagland Hill on 2 Jan, 4000 at Bradshaw Lane Head and Cockerham Moss Edge in January, 3500 at HMS Inskip on 2 Jan, 2500 on Lytham Moss on 18 Jan and at Skitham on 23 Feb, and 2100 at Rawcliffe Moss on 1 March and Braides on the 17th. Second winter peaks there included 6000 on Lytham Moss on 11 Oct and at Eagland Hill on the 15th, 4000 at Preesall Moss Side on 13 Dec, Todderstaffe Hall on the 18th and Horse Park Lane on the 30th, 2500 at Singleton on 28 Dec and 2000 at Fleetwood Farm on 10 Nov.

The largest flocks in north Lancashire were 1600 on Aldcliffe Marsh on 5 March and 5700 on Heysham Moss on 20 Nov with 5000 there on 30 Dec.

Most flocks over east Lancashire were flying to the west with the last seen on 18 Feb. Up to ten were present at Stocks Reservoir between 30 March and 24 April on some days only, but smaller numbers there and at other east Lancashire sites up to 27 May suggest that these were feral or injured birds. Skeins of 100 or more were also recorded in the east from 24 Sept with most during October. The only record received from Rossendale was of two feeding on pasture with Canada Geese at Holden Wood Reservoir on 4 May.

In the West Pennine Moors 80 circled and attempted to land on Springs Reservoir in poor weather conditions at dusk on 31 Jan, while overflying flocks were recorded in the Belmont area from 24 Sept until mid-December.

Peak counts in the Chorley area were 2000 on Croston and Mawdesley Mosses on 5 Jan and 1500 on Croston Moss on 5 Oct, with 2000 or more in the area during November. As usual, many more fed on the south-west mosses where the largest count was of around 10000 dropping into fields to the east of Birkdale on 10 Oct, with other large counts of 6500 on Formby Moss on 5 Nov, 5600 at Rainford on 16 Oct, 5000 near Maghull Hey Cop on 17 Oct, Downholland Moss on 7 Nov, Dairy Farm Road Rainford on 26 Jan and 30 Nov and Lydiat during October, and 3000 at Blundellsands in late autumn and near Cabin Hill on 30 Oct.

GREENLAND WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons flavirostris*

Uncommon winter visitor.

An adult with Pinkfeet in the Fleetwood and Pilling areas from 10 Nov until the end of the year was seen together with a juvenile at Fleetwood Farm on 11 Nov.

EUROPEAN WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons albifrons*

Uncommon winter visitor.

A family party of five was with Pinkfeet on the Lune marshes in the Aldcliffe area from 12 Dec until the end of the year. In the Fylde one was at Fluke Hall on 23 March and a juvenile at Fleetwood on 24 Dec.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Feral: uncommon breeder and common winter visitor. Wild: scarce winter visitor. Amber List (localised winter distribution). National importance: 1400

A total of 1055 was found during the annual Lancaster and District survey in January, spread throughout seven 10km squares.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	217	80	165	89	78	106	156	184	341	100	571	64
L Moss/EMC	220	140	135	90	175	130	135	55	220	380	412	460
Aldcliffe Marsh	175	6	132	6	8	23	18	184	52	260	/	/
MMWWT	500	180	250	50	30	70	70	130	790	100	125	450
Stocks Res.	27	93	20	40	94	228	103	4	12	72	4	99

Counts of 100 or more in the Fylde not in the table included 469 on Aggleby's Pit, Stalmine on 22 Sept, 270 at Little Singleton on 5 Oct with up to 234 there during November and 203 in December, 256 at Wardley's Creek on 12 Oct, 150 at Freckleton Naze on 25 Aug, and 129 at Barnaby's Sands on 7 Sept. Elsewhere, 265 were on the Lune at Hornby on 30 Aug and 140 on Silverdale Moss on 13 Feb.

An estimated 54 pairs nested at Leighton Moss and other RSPB sites in the north, seven pairs at Marshside and at least five broods were seen at Stocks Reservoir. Two pairs bred on the Preesall Flashes and Upper Rivington Reservoir, while single pairs nested at Heysham, Marton Mere, Brockholes and Lunt Meadows.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens***Vagrant and escape.**

A white morph adult Lesser was first seen with Pinkfeet at Eagland Hill on 31 Oct to 4 Nov. The day after it was last seen in north Fylde it reappeared on Downholland, Plex and Formby Mosses from 5-9 Nov, Banks and Hesketh Out Marshes on 14 Nov and over MMWWT the following day, heading towards Banks Marsh. One that flew south over Speke with 75 Pinkfeet on 18 Oct was possibly the same bird.

Up to four feral birds were in the Leighton Moss/Jenny Brown's Point area on 18 Feb, 5 April and 8-18 Aug. Presumably one of these was with Canada and Greylag Geese at Aldcliffe on 30 Jan and 13 Oct, on Colloway Marsh on 23-24 Nov, and at Glasson on 12-14 Dec.

Other white morph feral adults were on Newton Marsh on 11-15 Sept and at Stocks Reservoir with Greylags from at least 13 June to 12 July – almost certainly the same individual that moulted there last year.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis***Common breeding resident.****Monthly peak counts**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	218	/	3	1	6	15	27	81	231	130	25	2
Aldcliffe	218	/	3	10	6	34	26	68	96	130	11	150
Brookside Lodge	12	8	9	10	6	/	/	63	8	118	59	8
Jackhouse Res.	61	85	65	63	28	48	22	148	149	/	56	54
Parsonage Res	86	90	70	/	/	11	/	67	103	120	/	89
Rishton Res	155	/	6	/	/	16	/	/	93	110	160	/
Holden W'd Res	33	101	24	34	33	56	117	136	161	125	100	42
Brockholes	88	60	62	74	82	93	95	105	221	16	2	14
Ribble WeBS	1624	518	268	198	216	1237	455	506	2556	327	2082	2170
Marshside	133	/	62	51	80	70	180	100	/	484	/	73
Fairhaven	8	51	33	42	32	264	135	2	20	43	/	4
MMWWT	60	27	34	10	10	/	/	/	100	/	/	9
Mere Sands Wood	25	37	40	0	36	22	27	44	800	446	0	83
Seaforth	30	25	8	16	14	349	226	89	53	84	12	50
Carr Mill Dam	79	52	28	31	7	7	7	0	14	61	129	44
Stocks Res.	136	10	96	61	64	327	289	95	270	142	233	220

The January Lancaster and District survey located 784, more than half of them in SD57. An astonishing 1400 were on Newton Marsh/Freckleton Naze on 25 Aug, suggesting that at least 2500 may have been in the county that month; 800 on Longton Marsh on 31 Aug and 630 on Clifton Marsh on 4 Sept

were part of the same gathering. Other counts in the Fylde of 100 or so were 134 at Aggleby's Pit on 7 Sept, 95 at Ream Hills on 5 Oct and 91 on Marton Mere on 8 Nov.

Large counts south of the Ribble not listed in the table included 210 at Lunt Meadows on 25 Aug with 220 there on 26 Oct, and 100+ on Eccleston Mere on 19 Jan and Newsham Park lakes, Liverpool on 27 Feb. In Chorley 300 were on Croston Twin Lakes on 25 Sept. Additional three-figure counts in east Lancashire were 250 at Higher High Field (north of Slaidburn) on 4 Feb, 317 on Whitemoor Reservoir on 11 Jan with 216 there on 13 Dec, and 180 on Upper Foulridge Reservoir on 8 June, with 175 there on 20 July and 200 on 3 Aug. Belmont Reservoir recorded 113 on 8 June.

Successful breeding in east Lancashire was reported from Brookside and Jackhouse, the Leeds-Liverpool Canal in Burnley, Grimsargh Wetland, Stocks Reservoir and Wood End Sewage Works, but with no more than two pairs at any one site, while at least 21 sites were occupied in Rossendale.

Only eleven pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir, where no young were raised due to the ongoing control measures which resulted in 60 eggs 'pricked' and 18 adults shot in 2014. Elsewhere in the West Pennine Moors, continuing licensed control by egg 'pricking' on 25 United Utilities reservoirs/water bodies again resulted in a notable decline in breeding numbers over the last decade, with just 21 nests totalling 92 eggs located in 2014. However, five pairs breeding on the moorland catchment areas fledged at least 14 young.

Elsewhere, 13 pairs had seven broods at Marshside, six pairs nested at Seaforth, four pairs at Fairhaven and single pairs at Cuerden Valley Park, Brockholes (showing the effectiveness of control measures), Lightfoot Green and King's Moss.

Wild birds

Two thought to be of the *interior* sub-species ("Todd's Canada Goose") were found amongst Pinkfeet at Todderstaffe Hall, Poulton-le-Fylde on 16 Dec, remaining there until the 20th (F Bird, C Batty). They moved to Fleetwood Farm the following day and stayed there until the 24th and were seen again at Knott End on the 30th and 31st. What seem likely to have been the same birds had been photographed at Lynn Point, Norfolk on 16 Nov.

The record has been submitted to the BBRC.



Todd's Canada Goose, Knott End, 30 December (Chris Batty).

Two Canada Geese accompanied Pink-footed Geese on the Fylde between 16th-31st December, and appeared smaller in size than feral Atlantic Canada Geese, with a dusker breast and the upperparts lacking any obvious pale fringing. Their appearance matched "Todd's Canada Goose" *interior*, the subspecies thought most likely to occur in Britain as a vagrant.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Wild birds, fairly common winter visitor; scarce feral breeder, fairly common in winter.

Wild Birds

Very few were reported with Pinkfeet during the first winter period: singles on Aldcliffe Marsh on 5 Jan, Crossens on 10 & 22 Jan and 13 April, and past Rossall Point on 2 April. Significantly more were seen in the second half of the year. Twenty-one flew past Sunderland Point on 23 Sept and 28 past Heysham on the 29th. Up to six at various sites in north Fylde from 14 Oct to the end of the year may have involved some of these birds, while five on Banks Marsh on 3 Oct and six on Hesketh Out Marsh on 13 Dec were presumably different. Elsewhere, two were at MMWWT on 30 Sept and

singles at Dairy Farm Road, Rainford on 5-17 Oct, with probably the same near Simonswood Moss on the 23rd, and at Marshside on 17 Oct and 9 Nov.

Feral Birds

The Blackpool Zoo flock numbered 24 in the early year and 33 were at Marton Mere on 18 Sept and 16 Nov; up to three were also seen at various sites in the north of the county in the latter half of the year.

No information was received from Knowsley Park but up to 35 were at MMWWT, their traditional wintering ground, in the first winter period, while a regular bird was at Marshside in July. The regular wintering flock at Stocks Reservoir is assumed to breed outside the county; it peaked at 39 up to 6 Feb and 50 from 21 June to the end of the year.

The only other records were six at Mere Sands Wood on 4 April and one at Seaforth on 2 May.

DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla bernicla*

Scarce winter visitor.

Singles at Rossall Point on 4-5 Jan with this or another regularly from 7 Jan to 17 March at Pilling were the only records in the first winter period. Probable migrants were then at Warton Marsh on 24-30 March, Bolton-le-Sands the next day and on 10 April, and Glasson on the 20th. One at Lunt Meadows on 12-19 March was perhaps the bird seen there at the same time in 2013. The only sizeable flock, however, was seven seen offshore at Heysham on 13 April and possibly the same birds there on 8 May; singles were seen there on 16 April and the late date of 31 May.

There were only three records in the second winter period: eight at Bolton-le-Sands on 7 Nov and singles at Rossall Point on the 12th and Lytham St. Annes on the 16th.

PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla hrota*

Scarce winter visitor.

One off Rossall Point on 15 May was the only record in the first half of the year.

Later, one or two juveniles were with Pinkfeet at Pilling, Cocker's Dyke, England Hill and Fleetwood Farm from 11 Oct until the end of the year, and three flew past Rossall Point on 4 Nov.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

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

International importance 3000; National importance 610.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	2064	1057	1171	626	699	525	296	232	1288	1606	1485	747
Ribble WeBS	1927	1661	1227	990	1445	1593	1963	178	2048	1717	3280	1207
Alt WeBS	226	124	100	77	105	73	42	26	53	338	326	368
MMWWT	821	598	850	180	20	353	175	/	12	15	346	600

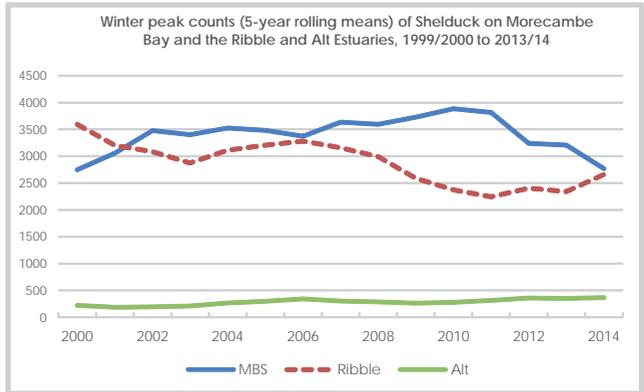
Morecambe Bay saw a further slight decline in the annual maximum resulting in the five-year average dropping below 3000, and hence the threshold for international importance, for the first time in 14 years. Good numbers were present on the mudflats off Heysham during autumn, the best being 517 on 25 Sept. It was the third time in four years that the largest annual count was recorded on the Ribble rather than Morecambe Bay.

Numbers on the Alt Estuary have increased fairly smoothly since the turn of the century (see graph), while on the two larger estuaries trends have diverged markedly since around 2005, with populations on Morecambe Bay and the Ribble Estuary again converging. This apparent negative correlation between Morecambe Bay and the Ribble appears to show changes in wintering areas of an essentially stable Lancashire population.

In east Lancashire there was an exceptional winter count of 18 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 13 Jan. Clearly a small movement was taking place as the area's other most significant counts also occurred on this date – seven at Stocks Reservoir and five at both Dean Clough and Fishmoor Reservoirs. Otherwise the species remains uncommon this far inland at this time of year with the bulk of

records coming during spring passage.

Eighteen pairs bred at Marshside and four broods totalling 37 young were at Hesketh Out Marsh in July. In east Lancashire, breeding is currently less than annual so it was encouraging that a pair bred at Walverden Reservoir. A pair at Clayton Green, Chorley with six young in an essentially suburban setting was unusual.



MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

Uncommon feral resident and escapee.

While most birds are largely resident there is a noticeable peak of occurrence from late winter into spring, followed by a secondary peak in early autumn. This is unsurprising given the species' discreet breeding behaviour.

For the second year running Arley Nature Reserve recorded the most, ten in January. At least one pair was confirmed breeding there, as was also the case on the River Yarrow near Croston.

Regular reports were received from several sites in east Lancashire, including up to four at Foulridge Reservoirs and up to six at Stocks Reservoir, both in October. There were three pairs in March at Wycoller where one nest was found. A pair on the Hodder near Stocks Reservoir suggested breeding might have taken place nearby. Finally, a male at Towneley was often seen associating with a female Mallard.

A female on the Ribble near Red Scar Weir, Brockholes on 24 April was only the third site record. Up to five were on a pool at Preston Grasshoppers in March. A male present in the Belmont area for almost three years was seen throughout the first winter period until 28 March. Up to three were at Mere Sands Wood during spring but with no confirmation of breeding. In Merseyside two were at Eccleston Mere from 17 April to 17 May, with one staying into June, and three were at Carr Mill Dam on 1 Dec. The only record from the north of the county was of one at Leighton Moss on 15 September.

Sightings in the Fylde were well distributed but concentrated in the period March to October; four were at Singleton in late March but there were no further sightings at what was until fairly recently one of the county strongholds for this species. Other singles in the area were seen at Eagland Hill, Hollowforth, Hackensall Hall, Kincaig Lake and Myerscough Quarry. A pair with a recently hatched duckling at Catforth was the only breeding for the area.

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 4400.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	8144	5344	557	2	1	2	1		149	1744	4147	1564
EM complex	1271	510	240	26	2	1	5	6	312	332	1125	902
Ribble WeBS	62508	19267	3141	7	2	2	0	1	1175	30369	60474	12888
MMWWT	1802	1780	1300	2	2	10	5	4	115	/	/	/
Stocks Res	105	46	5	0	0	0	0	5	33	29	63	91

Despite some large annual fluctuations there has been a significant trend towards lower numbers on the Ribble Estuary in the last five years (see graph), but regardless of this recent decline the Ribble remains by far the most important site in the UK for Wigeon.

The Morecambe Bay population has always been much smaller but has shown a steady increase this century; the January WeBS count was the second highest on record, although well short of the 9587 recorded in December 2012. The low numbers in the county at the end of the year reflected the fact that on the whole it was a relatively mild winter.

This year there was no significant cold weather arrival at Stocks Reservoir and as a result the annual peak shown in the table above was less than half that of 2014. Several double-figure counts occurred at Alston Wetland, peaking at 38 in February but the only other one in east Lancashire was twelve at Brookside on 8 Oct.

An impressive 675 were at Myerscough Quarry on 12 Jan before 800 were logged there on 2 March. Elsewhere on the Fylde there were 208 at Fleetwood Marsh on 5th Jan.

Two or more summered at Marshside but no young were seen. A displaying pair at Newton Marsh in May included an injured female and no further signs of breeding were recorded.

AMERICAN WIGEON* *Anas americana*

Vagrant.

A male, perhaps the same individual that has been visiting the Ribble Estuary for several years, was on Crossens Inner Marsh on 20-21 Dec (A Conlin).

HYBRID WIGEON *Anas sp.*

A hybrid male Eurasian x American Wigeon was seen occasionally on the Lune Estuary at Glasson from 16 Feb to 9 March and was then on Blea Tarn Reservoir from 17-26 March. Another male was seen at MMWWT on 5 March and 20 Nov.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

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

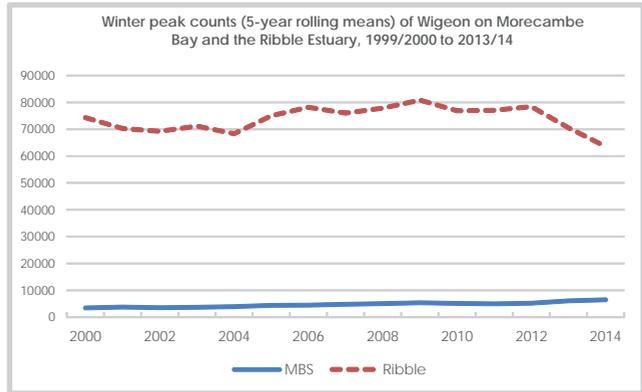
International importance 600; National importance 250.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EM complex	52	40	30	30	18	/	/	/	/	30	35	22
Leighton Moss	97	54	56	57	35	75	58	42	88	58	82	98
Brockholes	55	60	15	10	8	14	6	10	31	65	64	53
Ribble WeBS	30	13	23	20	32	19	41	28	16	21	10	37
MMWWT	/	2	2	12	10	27	/	/	100	/	/	/
Mere Sands	42	50	18	7	2	0	0	0	8	46	32	58

The 100 counted at MMWWT in September was a significant improvement on previous years, but perhaps was a result of low water levels at several of the county's other key sites at the time.

A small spring and autumn passage occurred in east Lancashire with most records centred on Alston and Grimsargh Wetlands as is usually the case; 14 at Grimsargh on 31 July was the area's highest count of the year. In the Chorley area there were 35 at Croston Twin Lakes in January and 40 in October but the area's only record away from that site was four at Lower Rivington Reservoir on 23 March.



Twelve pairs bred at Marshside, eight at Hesketh Out Marsh, three at Brockholes and a minimum of three pairs fledged five young on Newton Marsh; ten young were reared by three pairs at Middleton NR. Unfortunately no records were received from Leighton Moss, one of the key sites for this species in Lancashire.

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 2100.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	2391	1284	504	2	2	0	11	18	403	1250	1520	1321
Leighton Moss	1020	645	440	320	4	39	90	540	1145	890	690	720
Ribble WeBS	3843	2888	915	59	3	13	31	147	258	3468	3389	1960
Marton Mere	820	400	100	10	2	0	0	0	20	56	120	800
MMWWT	2490	2100	1980	34	10	120	/	300	800	1600	/	1100
Mere Sands	454	225	149	25	0	0	0	33	148	220	228	204
Lunt Meadows	50	12	10	10	2	0	0	6	1950	600	430	100
Seaforth	404	320	40	20	1	1	2	33	149	180	500	585
Stocks Res	400	200	47	20	3	6	6	82	426	478	620	500

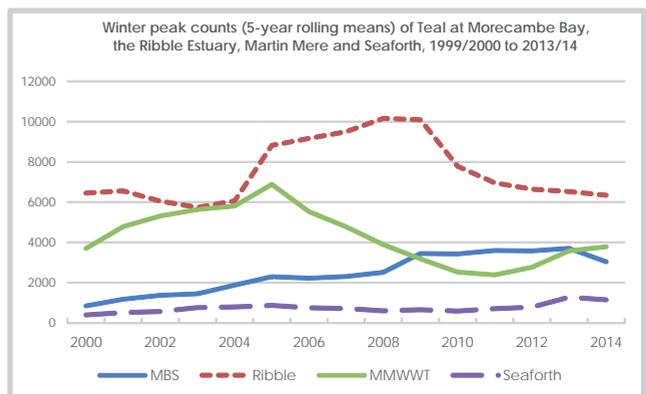
The Ribble Estuary experienced its poorest year since 1987, undoubtedly due in part to the relatively mild weather in the two winter periods, but the massive increase that occurred during the early years of the century has now been reversed (see graph). There has always been a significant interchange of birds between the Ribble and MMWWT and the trend at the latter followed the Ribble's before showing a sharp increase during this decade. Numbers on the Alt at Seaforth have roughly doubled during the same period.

January was the only month in which the Morecambe Bay WeBS count exceeded 2000; while remaining well above the level seen during the 1990s and the threshold for national importance, the five-year average is at its lowest point for seven years.

The lack of a really cold spell in either winter period meant that numbers at Stocks Reservoir were considerably lower than last year in almost all months. This was reflected across a number of east Lancashire sites with the exception of Alston Wetland where the November peak of 75 was almost double last year's. Wintering numbers at Belmont Reservoir were exceptional for the second year in succession with a new site record of 314 on 7 Dec.

Other notable counts from sites not listed in the table above included 360 at Fleetwood Marsh in December, 208 at Brockholes in January and 140 on the sea off Cabin Hill on 4 April.

Breeding by at least three pairs was confirmed in the West Pennine Moors with a fourth pair suspected: pairs fledged at least two and six young at Belmont Reservoir and on Hoddlesden Moss respectively, while a nest with predated eggs was found on Darwen Moor. Four pairs bred at Marshside with at least one brood seen; one pair at Newton Marsh had six well-grown young.



GREEN-WINGED TEAL *Anas carolinensis***Vagrant.**

A male was on Crossens Outer Marsh on 3 March. Following on from last year's spring record, another (or possibly the same) passage bird was on Stocks Reservoir from 19 April to 2 May.

There were just two sightings in the second winter period – both one-day records: males at Hesketh Out Marsh on 26 Oct and MMWWT on 13 Nov.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

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

International importance 20000; national importance 6800.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	724	430	231	121	125	173	245	247	335	446	619	378
Leighton Moss	142	95	57	58	56	89	620	660	740	220	240	379
Ribble WeBS	960	1038	551	487	422	495	441	645	849	703	1346	810
MMWWT	1950	1480	1600	1500	1500	1807	/	/	360	880	/	1270
Alt WeBS	403	234	32	23	32	13	72	122	242	193	549	371
Stocks Res	800	500	70	50	84	280	318	425	450	920	900	1110

While still holding the largest population in the county, there was a significant drop in numbers at MMWWT where no counts exceeded 2000, whereas in 2013 that happened in four separate months. Overall numbers were lower than last year in Morecambe Bay but the annual maximum saw a slight improvement, albeit well below the level of previous years.

The largest counts in east Lancashire predictably came from Stocks Reservoir while an impressive 875 were at Alston Wetland in December. Other notable counts included 400 at Lunt Meadows and 260 at Mere Sands Wood in September, 290 at Barnacre Reservoir in October and 250 on a private pond near Belmont in October.

A total of 39 broods were seen in the Belmont area with fledging success said to be the best for many years. There were 36 pairs at Marshside, 20 at Hesketh Out Marsh, at least twelve at Newton Marsh and eight at Brockholes.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

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

International importance 600; National importance 290.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	250	245	35	7	0	0	0	0	138	143	214	364
EM complex	271	42	43	22	3	0	1	6	270	32	28	67
Ribble WeBS	387	228	67	2	12	0	0	0	0	861	290	670
MMWWT	350	269	150	2	0	/	/	1	14	96	/	150
Stocks Res	191	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	15	78

This was the third consecutive year that numbers on the Ribble Estuary failed to exceed 1000. More worryingly still, the five-year average has more than halved in the last five years, reflecting the 40% decline experienced nationally. The best single site counts were at Lytham in October and 750 there in November. A peak of 319 at Marshside was a slight improvement on last year.

The pattern of occurrence at Stocks Reservoir was similar to that of previous winters, showing two brief influxes during a relatively mild January. The peak of 191 on 18 Jan had dropped to eleven the following day before increasing again to 137 on the 29th. The only east Lancashire sighting away from Stocks was a fleeting visit by a pair at Cant Clough Reservoir on 30 March.

Breeding possibly occurred at Marshside but it is always difficult to distinguish between breeding wildfowl and injured birds unable to make their spring migration. The first returning bird of the autumn was a very early individual at Leighton Moss on 20 July, followed by one at MMWWT and

two flying over Fairhaven Lake, both on 25 Aug. A notable record for the West Pennine Moors was of one on a pond near Belmont on 23 Sept.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

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

The first of the year was a pair at Marshside on 4 April, six days earlier than last year. Leighton Moss then played host to a pair from 15-23 April. Three were at Seaforth on 16 April and a single male was there on 5 May. A single male was at Leighton Moss on 1 May, with two there on the 5th and one on the 10th, and another male was at Brockholes on 21 May only. Other late spring records consisted of males at MMWWT from 29 May to 3 June and Grimsargh Wetland on the 4th.

The first Fylde record of the year was a male on a flood at Broad Lane, Winmarleigh from 19 to 21 April. Another male at Marton Mere on 24 April was joined by a female from the 27th to 4 May; a second male was present on 5 May only and the last sighting was of the female on the 8th. At Thornton ICI tanks two birds were present on 1 May with singles on the 18th and 20th.

One male was at Marshside from 23 April until 22 June with two males there on 1 May and 24-26 May. Four together including one female on 31 May raises the possibility that breeding may have taken place. Up to two, including one female, were at Leighton Moss on 6-8 June, with one still there on the 21st. There was no repeat of last year's breeding at Cabin Hill.

The first returning birds of the autumn were at Marsh Farm, Thornton on 20 July and Brockholes on 28-31 July. Quickly following on from these was a female or juvenile at Alston Reservoir from 30 July with probably the same bird seen at Grimsargh Wetland the following day. This bird returned on 1 Aug to Alston where there was then one until 21 Aug and two from 8-11 Aug. A pair were at Myerscough Quarry from 1 to 13 August with another reported on the 28th. Two were at Marshside on 10 Aug while another two juveniles were at Middleton NR on 17-21 Sept. A female was at Leighton Moss on 11 Aug and one was at Mythop from 18-20 Aug. One was on Barrow Scout Fields on 18 and 22 Sept. Singles were on the Thornton ICI tanks, on 3-6 Sept and 21 September to 1 Oct respectively. The last record of the year was of one at Brockholes on 9-13 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 180.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	81	98	27	37	1	1	/	2	1	82	43	22
Leighton/EMC	139	104	88	56	24	66	24	32	88	73	60	36
Ribble WeBS	154	163	127	34	25	45	1	1	5	88	118	84
Marton Mere	27	78	74	20	2	1	1	2	32	64	20	12
Marshside	109	148	109	67	11	36	/	/	11	56	120	50
MMWWT	5	2	20	39	21	22	/	/	/	32	60	21

There was a significant drop in numbers at Leighton Moss, particularly in the second winter period. Away from the usual sites in the table, 75 at Lunt Meadows on 17 Oct was a good record.

The increase in sightings in east Lancashire continues. A total of 56 reports shows the upward trend of the last four years is being maintained. Most records were of short-staying birds and were clearly concentrated in winter and during spring passage. The only count greater than four was a very notable 27 at Grimsargh Wetland on 15 Nov.

Numbers of breeding pairs at Marshside continue to fluctuate, with the twelve pairs in 2014 being well below last year's 20. Five pairs bred at Newton Marsh, where 14 young were seen and at least two fledged. Two pairs bred at Lunt Meadows but were unsuccessful.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

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

International importance 3500; National importance 380.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dockacres	48	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	10	33	78
Leighton Moss	3	28	35	28	24	12	8	2	2	1	38	1
MMWWT	49	35	6	/	5	1	/	/	/	10	/	35
Seaforth	18	15	14	6	0	1	1	3	4	7	30	54
Stocks Res	43	38	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	17

The worrying and widely-noted national decline in this species shows no signs of stopping in Lancashire. Again there were no counts in excess of 100 and the two main sites in the county – the Dockacres complex and MMWWT – experienced further declines. Stocks Reservoir in the first winter period and Seaforth in December were the only major sites to buck the trend.

Eight at Middleton NR on 11 Feb was a good record for the site given the current decline experienced by this species. Ten in late December was the largest count from Southport Marine Lake. Again very few were at Marton Mere in either winter period, the peak count of just ten coming in September. The only other double -figure counts on the Fylde comprised twelve at Stanley Park and eleven at Myerscough Quarry in February, and eleven at Fleetwood Marsh in October.

There was no confirmation of breeding at MMWWT but four males and two females were seen displaying very actively on 3 April. No records were received from Leighton Moss, the most important breeding site in the county.

RING-NECKED DUCK *Aythya collaris*

Vagrant.

A male at Newton Lake in Newton-le-Willows on 7 April was the only record of the year (P Loydell).



Male Ring-necked Duck, Newton Lake 7 April (John Wright)

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

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

International importance 1200; National importance 1100.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Leighton Moss	65	102	72	57	52	30	30	12	5	2	32	22
Dockacres	80	48	62	18	/	8	5	10	33	92	52	110
Glasson	6	2	12	18	23	14	8	11	4	52	75	40
Brockholes	50	55	76	35	18	12	24	58	121	41	56	50
Ribble WeBS	67	152	88	47	18	50	8	19	7	26	30	24
MMWWT	20	22	10	8	/	12	/	/	/	10	/	23
Mere Sands Wood	33	34	24	19	18	6	8	10	23	24	27	34
Seaforth	27	59	30	16	16	46	70	50	72	109	53	33
Stocks Res	47	44	6	4	6	2	29	28	12	6	5	26

In addition to the expected cold weather influxes during winter, several sites experienced secondary peaks between July and September. There were generally reduced numbers from last year at almost all sites listed in the table. Notable counts from sites not included in the table included 96 at Hesketh Park, Southport on 5 Jan, 116 at Marshside on 16 Feb, 32 at Alston Reservoirs in July, 40 on Ainsdale Sands Lake on 6 Sept and 25 at Croston Twin Lakes on 16 Dec.

Twelve pairs bred at Brockholes, eleven pairs at Marshside, seven pairs at Lunt Meadows with two successful broods and one pair reared four young on Tarleton Moss. Breeding was limited to just two sites in east Lancashire, four pairs at Alston and one at Brookside Lodges. In the Fylde a pair bred at Newton Marsh and five males and three females at Sand Villa Pool were probably breeding. A female with ten recently-hatched chicks on Anglezarke Reservoir on 3 August was a good local record.

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

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

International importance 3100; national importance 52.

The new year began with overwintering birds continuing their stays from 2013 at Brockholes, Leighton Moss and Middleton NR. The latter two, a female and first-winter male respectively, were both last seen on 1 April, while the first-winter male at Brockholes left on 19 March. The Fleetwood area produced several sightings of singles between January and April. A female on the sea off Cabin Hill on 28 April was the last of the first winter period.

The population at Seaforth continues to decline and is seemingly on the verge of disappearing from the site on a regular basis; there was never more than one at any time and there were no long-staying birds; a male on 2 Jan was followed by a female on 19-24 Feb. The second winter period saw a juvenile on 7-8 Dec and an adult female on 29 Dec. There were no reports at all from Scalestones Point, Morecambe, the only other site with a small regular wintering population in recent years.

By early September the first of the autumn were back, led by a female at Brockholes on 4 Sept. The next day a male was on the Ribble at Lytham Jetty, followed by an unusually early couple of juveniles in Granny's Bay on the 9th. One was seen off Rossall Point on 24 Nov and two flew past Knott End on 6 Dec. A male arrived at Fairhaven Lake on 5 Dec before being joined by a female on 9th; they were later joined by a juvenile on the 18th and remained as a group until the end of the year. Perhaps two of the same birds were then on Southport Marine Lake on 30 Dec.

LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis***Vagrant**

An adult male was on a farm pond near Slaidburn on 7-8 May (G Thomas). This was the ninth county record and the first for east Lancashire.

This species has been removed from the list of national rarities considered by the BBRC from 2015 and future records should be submitted to the county recorder.

AYTHYA HYBRIDS

The female Pochard x Ferruginous Duck hybrid that has returned to winter at Brockholes since 2007 continued its stay from December 2013 until 9 March. It reappeared on 13 Nov and was present until at least 24 Dec.

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 550.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	88	91	156	333	102	94	199	55	28	8	36	37
Ribble WeBS	8	7	83	120	171	138	56	54	43	12	0	0
Rossall Point	109	88	86	29	19	/	/	/	9	/	31	29

A spring influx was again noted off Heysham: after low numbers in January there were 70-80 through most of February and early March. This rose very quickly in mid-March to 230 on the 20th and 379 on the 31st. A rapid decline was noted from mid-April as most dispersed to their breeding sites across Morecambe Bay, mostly in Cumbria. The 330 on 17 Oct was unexpected, as was the fact that up to 200 remained in the area throughout the second winter period.

Eleven nests were found on Banks Marsh during gull surveys and there was one nest at Hesketh Out Marsh. During June up to 51 juveniles were seen on the Ribble Estuary off Lytham. Fifteen females with nine young at Cockersand again indicates a number of breeding pairs on the southern coastline of Morecambe Bay.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Uncommon winter visitor, rare inland.

Two long-staying first-winter birds remained from 2013, at Marshside and Leighton Moss, the latter remaining until 7 April. The Marshside bird stayed until 5 May, by which time it was clear that it was a male and was even seen displaying on occasions.

The first Fylde record of the year was one off Blackpool on 1 Jan. This was followed by a sequence of reports of a male off Rossall Point on 28 Jan-10 Feb, 25-28 Feb and 12-25 March – whether this involved one or more individuals is impossible to know. A female was also seen off Blackpool on 4 Feb and another was seen from Rossall Point on 10 April.

The second winter period began with two on 5 Nov and a male on 5 Dec, both seen off Rossall Point. A female or immature was found on 7 Dec at Crosby Marine Lake, remaining there into 2015, occasionally visiting neighbouring Seaforth.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Common 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 1000.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Blackpool	1000	2000	2000	735	549	450	1350	335	5000	1000	110	1000
Formby Point	206	6000	15000	388	112	195	121	22	123	7220	9000	13800

Following a poor year on the Sefton Coast in 2013, there were very large counts in several months. The 15000 counted off Formby Point during WeBS in March is one of the largest inshore counts in recent years. A remarkable 13800 passed Cabin Hill moving south over just 20 minutes on 11 Dec in a westerly Force 6 wind. By contrast, while flocks were present off the Fylde coast throughout the year there were far fewer seen than last year.

Spring passage through Morecambe Bay off Heysham was disappointing. Between 12 April and 11 May just 136 were logged including a peak of 33 on 4 May.

As usual a small spring passage occurred on inland waterbodies beginning with a male at Leighton Moss on 7 April. A female was at Stocks Reservoir on 12-17 April, a male on the River Calder at Altham on 12-13 May and four flew over Eccleston Mere on 15 May.

A more substantial return passage began with nine at Stocks Reservoir on 31 May followed by a male on 15 June. Subsequent records were eight at Clowbridge Reservoir on 26 June, 22 at Parsonage Reservoir on 8 July and nine at Dean Clough Reservoir on 13 July. Thirteen were at Wayoh Reservoir on 20 July. After this all records were of singles: males at Alston Wetland on 19 and 22 July and Stocks Reservoir on 21 Aug , and females at Preston Dock on 31 July, Clowbridge Reservoir on 29 Sept and Stocks Reservoir on 4 Oct.

SURF SCOTER *Melanitta perspicillata*

Vagrant.

A male was seen with Common Scoters on the sea off Blackpool on 20 April (D Rickards). This was the fifth county record.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

Uncommon winter visitor.

The year began with a male that flew west past Rossall Point and one off Blackpool on 1 Jan. Single(s) were seen off Rossall Point on 15 Feb and 12 April. An unusual summer sighting was a single off Formby Point on 10 July.

In a poor second winter period there were just two sightings: two past Rossall Point on 5 Nov and three there on 13 Dec.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Common winter visitor.

International importance 4000; National importance 200.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	78	37	16	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	14	5
Leighton Moss	13	10	14	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	5
Lune Estuary	57	33	22	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	50	33
Alston Wetland	12	10	11	12	0	0	0	0	0	6	8	11
Brockholes	26	25	14	5	0	1	0	0	0	1	6	8
Seaforth	8	13	61	39	1	0	0	0	0	6	12	29

There was a further reduction in numbers on the Lune Estuary at Glasson. Unlike other sites, Seaforth again recorded its annual maximum in March; there was little change from last year but numbers do remain lower than a few years ago.

Numbers at Alston Wetland were lower than in 2013 while the nearby Spade Mill Reservoirs recorded east Lancashire's largest count of 16 in January. Birds were well spread over the area's numerous rivers and reservoirs, making it difficult to know the true number of birds wintering.

Following last year's late spring record another bird lingered into May, this time at Seaforth where it remained until the 4th. A first-summer male was present on the River Lune during July and August near the Crook o' Lune. The first returning bird was an immature on the River Yarrow near Eccleston on 6 Sept that remained into October.

SMEW *Mergus albellus*

Uncommon winter visitor.

The female or first-winter seen in December 2013 was again at Dean Clough Reservoir on 2 Jan. It is thought likely to have been the same bird seen on the River Ribble at Jumbles from 19 Jan to 16 March. A female or first-winter was at Hesketh Out Marsh on 2-15 Jan.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Fairly common coastal winter visitor. Scarce breeder inland.

International importance 1700; National importance 84.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	44	29	37	15	0	0	4	3	10	27	35	48
Stocks Res	0	2	6	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Morecambe Bay again saw a small decline. There were regular sightings on the Eric Morecambe complex and Jenny Brown's Point throughout the autumn and winter months, with a peak of 26 at Jenny Brown's Point on 24 Sept. Elsewhere, up to 16 were seen off Rossall Point but numbers at Formby Point were disappointing, with a peak of nine in October.

Again the first birds to return to Stocks Reservoir did so well in advance of the start of the breeding season. A pair was seen on 17 Feb and by mid-April this had increased to four pairs. A fall in the number of females seen suggests they may have been on eggs but there was no confirmation of breeding. That said, a female with two fully-fledged juveniles on the River Ribble at Brockholes on 20-22 Aug had no doubt come from the upper reaches of the Ribble catchment. A notable east Lancashire sighting away from Stocks Reservoir came from Alston Reservoirs where there was a female on 29 April.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Fairly common and increasing winter visitor especially in the east. Scarce breeder.

International importance 2700; National importance 120.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	14	5	17	14	14	11	7	13	33	7	13	3
Alston Res	/	13	23	26	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Delph Res	36	32	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	41
Mere Sands	16	16	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	30

There was a slight increase in the Morecambe Bay annual peak. The Dockacres complex is not included in the table this year as the peak count was just five. There were insufficient data to complete the table for Alston Reservoirs; the peak of 26 came on 3 April, later than any other site.

An absolute minimum of three pairs were confirmed breeding in east Lancashire. A female with five ducklings at Calder Foot on 3 April was the first report, followed by females at Altham and Stocks Reservoir in May with ten and eleven ducklings respectively. Juveniles were later seen at Dinkley, Gawthorpe, Grove Lane Marsh and Ightenhill Bridge. Additionally two, possibly three, broods were seen on the River Yarrow near Eccleston. Females with young were seen on the River Lune at Skerton Weir and Aldcliffe in May.

An impressive 41 at Stocks Reservoir on 28 and 31 Aug was the largest count from east Lancashire, followed by 25 at Barnacre Reservoir on 25 Feb. In the West Pennine Moors, the biggest count away from Delph Reservoir was 34 on Yarrow Reservoir on 18 Feb. Birds were also regularly seen on the Ribble at Preston, the largest count being 18 in March.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

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

With twelve singing birds, 2014 was the best year for this species in Lancashire since 2011, although the single-day nature of most of the records would suggest passage birds moving through in the main.

One singing at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 20 and 21 May was the first but was quickly followed by birds near Burscough and on Pilling Moss on 25 May. One singing at Marshside on 31 May and again on 14 June was the only indication of any form of a territory. June brought further singing birds on single dates at Cockerham (5th), Much Hoole (11th), Bone Hill (unspecified) and Formby (26th) with further, more certain migrants away from traditional haunts, in the West Pennine Moors at Winter Hill (two on 1 June) and Edgworth (6 June). Breeding probably occurred at Eagland Hill,

Over Wyre with a bird singing on 20 Aug and four flushed by combines during cereal harvesting there on 7 Sept.

The only other report concerned the remains of a Quail found predated by a Peregrine at St Annes on 29 Oct.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Uncommon feral breeding resident, abundant post-breeding when supplemented by releases in most areas.

2014 was clearly a good year in the county for this non-native species, with the relatively dry summer no doubt responsible for the highest number of successful breeding attempts reported (nine) since 2006. However, the year on year increase both in the number of records received (from 138 to 172) and locations (263 to 390) is due to continual releases of large numbers of birds and should this ever cease, the species would, in all probability, tumble rapidly towards extinction in Lancashire.

The only record of note from the Lancaster area related to three at Silverdale on 30 Dec but further east nine double-figure counts were received, with 18 in Roeburndale on 11 May the largest. The usual strong showing from the Fylde continued with 95 records received from 34 sites, undoubtedly due to the very large numbers released in the Pilling area. Breeding was confirmed at Damside, Pilling with recently-hatched broods of eight seen on both 23 June and 6 Aug, and at Cockersand with a brood of five on 13 Sept. The highest count was 24 from Fluke Hall on 2 Nov with 20 at Aggleby's Pit and twelve at Ream Hills, both on 7 Dec.

East Lancashire had an excellent year with breeding confirmed at Foulscapes, Marl Hill, Middle Lees and Mytton with young seen at all four sites and peak counts of 30+ at Crimpton on 16 Dec, 28 near Newton on 8 Sept, 25+ at Longridge Fell on 21 Jan and 16 at Marl Hill in November. The West Pennine Moors also experienced a good year with 27 on Hoddesden Moss on 14 Jan and 60+ there on 11 Oct. Eight were at Belmont in January with two pairs on territory later and a brood of seven recently-hatched young seen there on 3 July. Releases near Belmont were responsible for 35 in late September and 50 in November. One at Brockholes on 31 March was the first record for the reserve in the period 1998 to 2014. Records from the south-west mooses included 38+ on Downholland Moss on 20 Nov, 30 on Plex Moss on 9 April, and 15 near Rainford on 16 Dec with ten on Croston Moss on 22 Dec the highest count near Chorley.

RED GROUSE *Lagopus lagopus*

Abundant breeding resident. Red List (breeding decline).

The systematic counts undertaken annually by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust on four shooting estates in Bowland indicated that July numbers have nearly tripled in a decade from 75 in 2005 to 212 birds/100 ha in 2014 with a year on year increase from 180 birds/ha in 2013. The mean spring density also showed another increase to 72.5 birds/100 ha (55.5 in 2013) while the mean brood size of 2.2 young/adult was very similar to the 2.3 recorded in 2013. The sustained growth of the Bowland grouse population is attributed largely to the application of modern 'medicated grit' to control the parasitic worm *Trichostrongylus tenuis* present in the gut. This treatment has now almost consigned the quasi-cycles exhibited previously in grouse populations on managed moors to the history books.

Given the high density of breeding pairs and growing July counts, it came as no surprise that numbers present in the county in late summer, particularly in Bowland, were considered higher than at any time since the mid-1990s. The grouse shooting season opened with over 800 shot on just one beat of the Abbeystead Estate on 12 Aug and other Bowland estates also reported improved bags on the opening day including some of the smaller moors such as Hareden Fell that shot 80. The Bowland outlier of Easington Fell, which has been subject to a moorland regeneration project by the Meanley and Browsholme Hall Estates, shot 101 grouse in two days shooting. The large bags continued into September with the Abbeystead Estate shooting over 5000 grouse just on its first eleven shoot days.

Given the substantial numbers present in Bowland it was not surprising that casual records abounded with over 35 double-figure counts and dozens of other records from over 50 areas of fell. Notable were sightings of 50 on Salter Fell on 18 July, 50 in Croasdale in May, August and October, 30 on Hawthornthwaite Fell on 30 March and 20 on Grit Fell on 30 March.

Records were also received from most of the Bowland outlying hills including Longridge, Newton and Easington Fells, with 30 on Waddington Fell on 18 July the largest count. In contrast, numbers reported on Pendle were lower than last year with a peak of just 14 on 24 March and 17 on the adjacent Mearley Moor on 27 Sept. Numbers on the Lancashire part of the South Pennines were, as usual, under-reported with four pairs seen on Boulsworth Hill on 8 June and a count of 30+ there on 10 Feb, while 13 were nearby at Swinden Reservoir on 16 Nov.

Two hundred breeding pairs were estimated for the proposed West Pennine Moors SSSI where gamekeeper counts with dogs realised 218 birds in a post-breeding season sample count on Darwen Moor in early August. Forty-nine seen during a shoot on Belmont Moor on 16 Aug, 20+ on Haslingden Moor on 26 Oct and nine on Hoddlesden Moss on 11 Nov were the only other sightings of note from the West Pennine Moors. The only record received from Rossendale, where the species is scarce, was of a pair at Cowpe on 4 Feb.

BLACK GROUSE *Tetrao tetrix*

Extinct former resident. Now rare vagrant.

A female was seen near Pendle Hill on 24 March (D Cook, B Brown).

From second- and third-hand reports received plus communication with staff from the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, it would appear that this species has been seen in Lancashire on more occasions than those sightings documented in recent county reports (i.e. Pendle 2008 and Bowland 2011). Unfortunately, details have not been forthcoming and, while it is believed that gamekeepers have seen birds in Bowland in recent years, the localities or frequency of sightings have not been established. Further unconfirmed reports relate to a male and female seen in Bowland in July 2011 and a female, which could also have been the March 2014 Pendle bird, reported from the Lancashire section of the South Pennines in early 2014.

Any birds recorded in Lancashire are most likely to be wanderers from the small and fragmented population still extant in the western Yorkshire Dales which, being at very low density, are considered to show different dispersal and territory characteristics to the more established populations further north in that both adult females and males, as well as first-year females, are known to wander widely (Ian Court, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, pers. comm.). It is also worth noting that when resident at very low density, Black Grouse, especially females, can go undetected for inordinate periods of time.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Common but declining breeding resident. Red List (breeding decline).

Nationally, the decline of the Grey Partridge continues unabated despite the good summer in 2014. There are few good news stories concerning this species other than the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust reporting an 18% increase in 2014 nationally on estates and farms where management is specifically aimed Grey Partridge conservation, and seemingly here in Lancashire where we again appear to be bucking the national trend.

The county's Grey Partridge populations would appear to be recovering well from the weather-induced 2012 set-back if one considers the number of records received increasing from 277 in 2013 to 340 and the number of sites rising from 113 to 154 in 2014. Records were received from over 60 sites in the breeding season indicating a very similar distribution to that of the 1250 pairs estimated in the Lancashire Bird Atlas.

In north Lancashire 24 records were received including eleven at Aldcliffe on 3 Jan, nine at Sunderland Point on 21 Nov, six near Nether Kellet on 20 Nov with the two at Middleton being the first there for many years. The Fylde again showed strongly with some 80 records from 30 sites although breeding was only confirmed at Conder Pool and near Newton Marsh. The largest coveys reported were of 25 at Pilling on 12 Oct, 17 on Lytham Moss on 16 Oct, twelve at The Heads on 7 Dec, and twelve at Weeton on 4 Aug, while a pair at Rossall School on 29 March was the first there since the early 1990s. In central Lancashire, seven were on Farington Moss on 25 April while eight were on Croston Moss in October following a brood seen in August, and eight were at Eccleston on 1 Nov.

In the West Pennine Moors, where ten breeding pairs were estimated in the proposed SSSI, five pairs were on territory around Belmont during the breeding season with two broods seen later. Releases at Belmont were responsible for coveys of 19 and 15 on 25 Sept and probably the twelve at

Belmont Reservoir on 20 Dec. The number of reports from east Lancashire fell back from the notable 44 in 2013 to 33 while the locations remained similar at eleven. Breeding was confirmed at Wycoller (17 young on 12 July) and Kelbrook (three young on 26 Aug) and suspected at Sheddon Clough and Swinden Reservoir. Five at Tarnbrook on 20 Sept was the only notable record from Bowland. Rosendale reported pairs at Musbury, Ogden Reservoir and Clowbridge in the spring and coveys of four or five from Holden Wood, Lench and Swinshaw.

While birds are distributed all across the south-west mosses the only large coveys reported were of 20 at Lunt Meadows in September, 18 at Scarisbrick in November and seven on Simonswood Moss in October. Breeding pairs were widespread with at least three at Lunt Meadows, two on Tarleton Moss, one at Marshside, one at MMWWT and two at Hesketh Out Marsh where a brood of ten young was seen on 24 Aug. Further east, nine were on Moss Lane, St Helens on 11 Jan, seven at Parbold on 16 Jan and five at Pimbo on 5 Nov. The strong population in south Liverpool/Knowsley was again evident with 30 records from 16 sites which included a minimum of ten pairs in the Garston, Speke, Oglet, Cronton and Tarbock area. The year started here with a covey of eight at Netherley on New Year's Day and finished with two coveys of six at Speke Hall and Oglet on Christmas Day. In between these dates there were no fewer than five coveys, all of seven birds, in this same area between 4 Oct and 30 Nov.

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

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

The number of records received, including the 2207 from Birdtrack, 260 from east Lancashire and 216 from the Fylde, illustrate the Pheasant's widespread distribution in the county but does little to reflect the vast numbers of released birds present in many areas.

Good numbers are present in the Silverdale area as indicated by 70 at Leighton Moss on 2 Aug, 55 near Gait Barrows on 28 April and 45 on Silverdale Moss from October onwards. Elsewhere in the Lancaster area, 35 were at Whittington in March and April, 28 on Caton Moor on 20 Sept, 24 in Roeburndale on 28 Feb and the species bred at Middleton representing a revival there. The January survey of the LDBWS area located 359 birds.

Only four double-figure counts were received from the Fylde (ten in 2013) with 18 both at Singleton on 1 Oct and The Heads on 10 April and 14 at England Hill in January and September.

A female with eight young was at Brockholes on 30 June while 30 were nearby at Whittle on 1 Dec and seven in a garden at Mellor, Blackburn on the same day. East Lancashire reported breeding at three sites in May and June while counts of 105 in the Langden Valley on 17 March, 43 at Hareden on 5 Jan, 35+ at Stocks Hodder Inlet in October and 33 at Burholme Bridge in January were the largest numbers recorded.

In the West Pennine Moors, 60+ were at Belmont Reservoir on 1 April and the site experienced exceptional breeding success with 13 females all with broods present around the reservoir on 3 Aug. A white male present at Belmont since 2008 was reported to have been killed by a Buzzard on 6 May. On the south-west mosses only counts of 200+ on Croston Moss near Chorley, 68 at Parbold on 6 Jan and 30 at Burscough in March and Dalton in September hinted at the considerable population across the area, while reserves in the area reported two pairs at MMWWT, one at Hesketh Out Marsh and two pairs on Freshfield Dune Heath. 'Lots of birds' were reported present near Ince Blundell on 11 Jan with, on the outskirts of Liverpool, 17 at Aintree on 1 Oct and sightings of up to three regular in the Speke, Oglet, Garston, Tarbock and Halewood areas throughout the year.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

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

International importance: 10000. National importance: 170.

The first winter and spring passage periods produced the best counts. Heysham logged three in January and February, rising to 16 on 24 April before falling to five in May. One was off Morecambe on 14 Jan with one at Jenny Brown's Point at the beginning of March, increasing to six at the end of the month. Rossall Point/Cleveleys featured heavily with monthly peaks of 46, 29 and 37 for January, March and April respectively. Five were off Fleetwood on 6 May.

Ninety-two were off Blackpool on 1 Jan, 50 on the 12th and 22 on the 19th, continuing with single-figure counts into April. Formby reported four birds in January rising to 17 on 18 March, with peaks of ten in April and five in May.

Returning birds appeared in August with mainly single-figure counts at all the usual sites until the year's end. Higher numbers were seen off Blackpool with 16 in October and 35 in November, and 42 off Formby Point on 12 Oct.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica*

Uncommon annual winter visitor, mostly on coast.

It was a typical return with seven records of singles reported this year: at Rossall Point at the end of March and again on 10 & 24 April; and at Formby Point on 15-22 April (which may have involved two birds) and in September and October.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Scarce, less than annual, mostly on coast.

A juvenile was on Southport Marine Lake from 1 Jan to 17 Feb. Offshore singles were seen off Blackpool in January and February, Heysham on 8 April and Rossall Point during April and on 14 May, with three past Formby Point four days later.

At the other end of the year singles were off Blackpool in October and Rossall Point on 17 Nov and 6 Dec. A juvenile was found on Rishton Reservoir on 7 Dec, staying into the New Year.



Juvenile Great Northern Diver, Southport Marine Lake, 9 January (Steve Young)

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Fairly common on coasts in late summer and early autumn during onshore winds.

Eighteen records came from only four sites (Formby Point, Blackpool, Heysham and Rossall Point) with the first of the year at Formby Point on 30 Jan. All records were of ones or twos except for five on 8 April off Rossall and three there on 29 Aug. Formby Point records featured the months January, March, July, August and September; the last was off Rossall on 22 Sept.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

Common offshore in late summer-autumn, especially during onshore winds.

The largest counts came from Formby Point including 90 on 15 June, 1808 on 15 July and 68 on the 30th.

The Blackpool coast reported birds on eight dates between April and September, with peaks of eleven in May, 30 in June and 60 in July. The first was seen off Rossall Point on 8 April and peaks of nine followed in May, 23 in June and 31 in August. Three birds were at Fleetwood on 21 Oct with one at Knott End the same day.

Heysham reported 35 in May, six on 19 Oct and three on the 21st; five were at Morecambe on 5 May and one was in the mouth of the Mersey in September.

BALEARIC SHEARWATER* *Puffinus mauretanicus*

Vagrant.

One off Formby Point during the WeBS count on 10 Aug (S Cross) was the sixth county record.

LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

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

A poor year with only three records. A single off Rossall Point on 3 Jan with others there and off Formby Point on 22 Oct.

GANNET *Morus bassanus*

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

Spring passage at Heysham extended between 8 April and 18 May and produced a total of 158 bird-days with peaks of 40 on 7 May and 62 on the 9th. Single figures were seen there in autumn on five dates between 11 Aug and 19 Oct.

Broadly similar numbers were seen off Formby Point, including 27 on 18 March, 40 on 12 April, 30 on 12 May and 30 on 10 June. In autumn 33 were seen there on 30 July but numbers were lower during the next three months with peak counts 15, ten and eight respectively with the last seen on 9 Oct.

Records from the Fylde coast also ranged from April to October. The largest counts were 117 off Rossall Point on 8 April and 184 on 19 Oct, with smaller numbers there fairly regularly in the intervening months. Peaks off Blackpool were 50 on 27 April, 75 on 9 May, 70 on 11 June and twenty six on 18 Oct. The last of the year was at Rossall on 6 Dec.



Gannet off the Fylde coast, 21 July (Paul Ellis)

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

International importance: 1200. National importance: 350.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	137	135	121	54	45	29	89	89	299	124	456	108
Heysham	/	44	/	/	5	/	/	/	85	60	56	58
Ribble WeBS	2572	547	268	186	317	137	12	200	416	430	974	576
Alt WeBS	668	151	265	237	273	137	136	256	1328	1570	1118	729
Seaforth	375	110	310	110	50	33	80	184	422	450	208	185
Brockholes	19	16	25	10	3	2	9	25	21	21	19	24
Stocks Res	32	37	52	31	6	6	19	88	89	89	40	37

Cormorants were present in large numbers at numerous coastal sites in both winter periods, being recorded at in excess of 100 sites. Numbers were again very high on the Ribble during January, when

around 10% of the British population was present in the county, but much lower at the other end of the year.

Cormorants were reported from over 20 freshwater sites – predominantly as roosts during October to March; Stocks Reservoir held the largest numbers but up to 66 were at Upper Rivington Reservoir in February and 28 at Foulridge Reservoirs in December. Most other sites held fewer than ten but occasionally reached low double figures. Nearly all of the park lakes in Liverpool had birds present at some time of the year.

Probable continental *sinensis* intergrades were reported from Marton Mere during January and March and Brockholes in January, November and December.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

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

Heysham was again the best site, all records were of juveniles or first-winters. Singles were present on 16 & 20 Feb and 9 May with the next on 16 Sept and probably different birds on 3-4 Oct and from 26 Oct into 2015.

Rossall Point recorded single(s) on three dates in January, one on 16 Feb and one to two on five dates from 5 Sept to the end of the year. Elsewhere in the Fylde, singles were seen off Blackpool on 1 Jan and 27 Dec with two there on 16/2, at Stanley Park on 1-3 Jan and Glasson on 2 Feb. Most unusual – in terms of both dates and sites – was what was presumably the same juvenile on the Wyre at Shard Bridge on 14-15 Aug and in a field at Pilling Lane Ends on the 16th.

One off Formby Point on 5 March was the only record on the Sefton Coast.

BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

Rare breeding bird at Leighton Moss, uncommon winter visitor there and elsewhere.

Although only two were reported on any one day at Leighton Moss during the first winter period, it became clear that at least six had been present when on 1 April – an evening of light north-westerlies and clear conditions that had been preceded by obviously unsuitable weather for migration – five were seen ‘gull-calling’ and circling high before leaving the area, while one returned at least temporarily to the reedbed. One was booming at Barrow Scout from 10 March to the end of the month and one was thought to have been present subsequently, but there was no evidence of breeding activity.

Elsewhere, singles were at MMWWT on 2-15 Jan and 30 March, Marton Mere on at least 2-12 Jan, Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on 4-19 Jan and 25 Dec, Fleetwood Farm on 15 Nov, and Brockholes on 19 Jan to 17 March.

NIGHT HERON* *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Vagrant.

A juvenile was roosting in willows at Brockholes on 17 Sept (C Partington) but had probably been present the previous day. It was subsequently seen nearby on 27 Sept then reappeared downstream by the Ribble at Vernon's Lodge, Penwortham on 5 Oct, remaining there until the 10th.

This was the county's 17th record and the first since one at Mere Sands Wood in 2008.



Juvenile Night Heron, Vernon's Lodge, 9 October
(David Talbot)

CATTLE EGRET* *Bubulcus ibis*

Vagrant.

One made a brief but well-watched visit to Leighton Moss on 23 Sept, first reported at Lillian's Hide for three minutes at 13.30, then seen trying to land on the Allen Pool where it was chased off by a Little Egret at 15.20. It reappeared on 25 Sept on the Mersey at Frodsham in Cheshire, where it apparently found things more to its liking, staying until 24 Dec.

Taking account of likely duplications, this was the tenth county record.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Fairly common and increasing visitor, mainly to coastal marshes. First bred in 2014.

National importance: 50

Monthly peak roost counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
EMC/L Moss	24	27	23	28	14	25	55	43	182	103	32	28
Pilling Lane Ends	37	31	41	4	0	0	0	42	15	44	6	7
Ribble WeBS	23	46	23	8	11	22	0	63	68	88	70	23
SML/Marshside	61	41	30	16	4	1	5	2	52	25	44	12

As records continued to increase year long throughout the county, the major event was the long-awaited news of successful breeding in the county. Five pairs nested in the small Ashton Hall heronry on the Lune, all apparently fledging young. Our one previous breeding record was of a lone female at Fluke Hall in 2002 but it seems that its eggs were infertile and it was possibly an escape.

Numbers continued to proliferate in coastal areas from the inner Mersey to the Cumbrian border and there was a record count of 182 roosting at Leighton Moss on 21 Sept. Double-figure counts not in the table included 44 at Freckleton Naze on 25 Aug, 43 at Ashton Hall on 19 Jan, 30 at Warton Bank on 9 Oct, 25 at Cockersand on 22 Sept, 23 at Bank End on 14 Sept, 20 on Hesketh Out Marsh on 13 Sept, 19 at Little Singleton in October, 16 at Thurnham on 9 Feb, 15 at Wrampool on 25 Jan, 13 on Cockerham Marsh on 12 July and at Glasson on 22 Sept, and twelve at Lunt Meadows on 1 April. Two migrant flocks were seen: ten at Lytham on 25 June and eleven at Cabin Hill on 9 Oct.

Although still much less frequently seen at any distance inland, records are steadily increasing. The best indication of this was the number or reports in east Lancashire – 66 in 2014, 44 of them in the first three months of the year, compared with 17 in 2013. One at Holden Wood Reservoir on 15 Oct and 5 Nov (on both occasions in the company of a Great White Egret) was only the fourth record in



Great White Egret with Little Egret, Lunt Meadows, 30 November (Steve Young)

Rossendale. Elsewhere, there were three records at Belmont Reservoir including three on 12 July, one at Anglezarke/Rivington on 14-16 Dec and singles on Croston Moss on 16 Jan and over Ecclestone, Chorley on 8 May.

GREAT WHITE EGRET *Egretta alba*

Scarce visitor, increasing in line with national trends.

Keeping track of the wanderings of Great White Egrets is not getting any easier as records continue to increase; the species has been removed from the list of species requiring submission of a description with effect from January 2015.

None was seen in the north of the county during the first winter period but there were at least two on the marshes on both sides of the Ribble and roosting at Southport Marine Lake from 2013 and possibly staying until early April; one at Marshside on 27 April was probably a new arrival. It is possible, but perhaps unlikely, that singles at Brockholes on 4 & 8 Jan and nearby Fishwick Bottoms on 8 Jan and 8 April involved one or more of the Ribble birds.

There were two spring records at Leighton Moss with two on 5 April and one on the 24th but no more were seen there until two on 19 July, increasing to three on the 21st. These were seen daily but only one remained from 20 Oct until 10 Dec.

Two put in a one-day appearance at MMWWT on 18 July and another at Brockholes on 3-4 Sept, while the first appeared back on the Ribble on 8 Sept. At least two were seen regularly at various Ribble sites until the end of the year, again roosting at Southport Marine Lake and putting in a couple of appearances at MMWWT. One daily at Lunt Meadows from 16 Nov to at least 15 Dec was almost certainly a different bird. The only other record was one at Out Rawcliffe on 19 Dec.

Another wandered throughout the east of the county from late summer, giving many birders an opportunity to add to their local patch lists. It was first seen at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 1 Aug and finally at Brookside Lodges on 16 Nov. Between those dates it was also seen at Rivington Moor, Withnell Fold, Earnsdale, Calf Hey, Ogden, Holden Wood and Wayoh Reservoirs, over Winter Hill and at Wood End Sewage Works.

The likely county total was about 19 individuals but the majority of these were probably returning birds.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Scarce breeding resident.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	31	8	15	24	26	38	36	26	62	48	27	15

Number of active nests

North Lancashire		Chorley	
Tunstall	26	Cuerden Valley Park	1
Centre Farm, Forton	13	West Pennine Moors	
Skerton Weir	11	Delph Plantations	5
Claughton	14	Entwistle (original)	36
Ashton Hall	7	Entwistle (new)	1 or 2
Fylde		Rivington	18
Lea Gate	24	Merseyside	
Lytham Hall	3	Cronton	1
Stanley Park	38	Sefton Park	1
Bispham Marsh	2		
Hackensall	8		

The Cronton and Sefton Park, Liverpool sites were both newly established, while breeding in Cuerden Valley Park was the first there for several years. Other heronries known to be occupied but not counted were Skirden Beck and Winckley in east Lancashire, Millhouses in north Lancashire and Little Crosby in Merseyside.

Larger counts outside the breeding season included 27 on Hesketh Out Marsh in July, 17 at Brookside Lodges in September, 16 at Seaforth in September, 15 at Brockholes in June, on the Eric Morecambe complex in July, at Lytham in October and Upper Rivington in November, eleven at Lunt Meadows in February, and ten at Cockersand in June, Little Singleton in July and Fairhaven Lake in September. Seventy-four were counted during the Lancaster and District January survey.

In addition to the nesting birds at Sefton Park, a juvenile that arrived during the summer became unusually tolerant of disturbance, and even approached people feeding waterfowl and was observed to take bread thrown by members of the public.

One became the unusual prey of a Fox at Seaforth on 8 Sept.



Grey Heron carrying nest material, Stanley Park, Blackpool, 2 February. (Jacquie Moreton)

BLACK STORK *Ciconia nigra*

Vagrant.

One was seen circling high over the Horwich moors in Greater Manchester on 26 May before heading into Lancashire over Rivington Reservoir and continuing in the direction of Chorley (A Makin).

The record has been accepted by the BBRC and becomes the ninth county record and the first since 2007.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

Rare passage migrant and increasingly regular free-flying escapee.

One of unknown provenance – but possibly an escaped bird from Cumbria – flew south down the length of the coast on 26 March. It was first seen at Heysham and subsequently at Fleetwood and Seaforth.

GLOSSY IBIS* *Plegadis falcinellus*

Vagrant.

One was at Thurnham from 16 Jan to 19 Feb and then two – probably including the Thurnham bird – were seen at Glasson on 29 April (D Haywood) and later roosting at Ashton Hall. One at least of these remained in the area until 7 May, being seen at Sunderland Point, Conder Green (S Sweeney) and again roosting at Ashton Hall.

Another, which had been at Milnthorpe in Cumbria since 17 June and may, therefore, have been one of the earlier birds – roosted overnight at Leighton Moss on 5-6 Aug.

There were two records of singles at MMWWT: on 1-3 June and on 5 Aug.

SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

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

One on the Eric Morecambe complex on 9-12 May was the only record, the lowest annual total since a blank year in 2007.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Uncommon but increasing breeding bird. Fairly common in winter.

International importance: 3400. National importance: 160.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	11	11	11	8	8	7	22	23	32	22	39	14
Seaforth	4	2	3	2	0	1	3	8	9	9	6	3

Birds were reported from more than fifty sites. Where counts were provided they were of single birds or low single figures with some sites only reaching double figures in the second winter period: Aldcliffe (12), Thornton ICI (14), Brookside Lodges (15), Condor Pool (23) and Brockholes (24).

Juveniles were reported from only 13 sites (Astley Park, Brookside Lodges, Common Bank Lodge, Fairhaven Lake, Holmes Terrace Lodge, Lunt Meadows, Marshside, MMWWT, Myerscough Quarry, Queens Park Blackburn, Sefton Park Liverpool, Sunderland Point and Wood End Sewage Works) with the final outcome in many cases unknown.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Uncommon but increasing breeding bird. Common in winter with concentrations in Morecambe Bay.

International importance: 4800. National importance: 190.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	24	17	5	6	4	/	7	18	15	9	29	4
Foulridge Res	5	/	/	12	/	11	/	19	10	13	3	/
Brockholes	3	3	10	4	6	13	17	4	4	/	2	/
Carr Mill Dam	41	41	52	40	30	36	41	8	9	12	29	40

Similarly to last year at least 22 sites reported the presence of juveniles, many the result of numerous breeding attempts. Twenty-five pairs attempted to breed at Carr Mill Dam, yielding just nine juveniles, with a similar number of juveniles at Brockholes from five pairs. Three young were seen at Belmont Reservoir, the first successful breeding there since 2009.

Birds were, however, recorded at a further 80 or more sites.

Winter numbers offshore continue to be low with the best away from Morecambe Bay being 36 at Blackpool in January and 18 in February.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce winter visitor.

One was at Rossall Point on 10 March, with another staying from 3-25 March centred on Southport Marine Lake. Another was off Formby Point on 9 Oct.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Scarce visitor, mostly in spring and autumn.

International importance: 2800. National importance: 50.

One was at Leighton Moss for a day on 5 May and a second was at Mere Sands Wood on 4 Aug.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

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

Throughout the county there were about 34 records of Red Kite. This was a slightly lower number than in three of the last four years (see below), the exception being the 'big' year of 2011. The approximate number of records for the previous five years are given below, along with a comparison of the numbers recorded a decade ago:

2004	2005	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
10	11	27	42	70	40	39	34

Considering the successful release programme in Yorkshire and more recently in south Cumbria, it is perhaps surprising and a little disappointing that the number of sightings is not increasing and indeed that there has been no evidence of any breeding attempt. The figures for east Lancashire were deemed to be similar to the previous four years.

A rough breakdown of the distribution of sightings within the regions is given below.

	Records	Birds		Records	Birds
East Lancs	10	9	Fylde	2	2
North Lancs	8	6	Bowland	1	1
Chorley	8	5	W Pen M	1	1
South-west	4	4			

The approximate number of records in each month throughout the year in the county are given below:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	2	9	4	5	7	2	0	3	1	3	1

The scarcity of winter records continued, with just two birds seen in the first period: at Leighton Moss on 3 Feb and the Thursden Valley on 22 Feb, and four in the second period.

The first spring record was one at Silverdale on 10 March with presumably the same bird seen at Leighton Moss the next day and the same or another on the 23rd. One at Hapton on 19 March was seen over Pleasington the same day. On 20 March there were singles between Dunsop Bridge and Newton and north-west of Stocks Reservoir at Cross of Greet. The only other March record was of one at Seaforth on the 26th. The four records in April were widespread within the county, being seen near Formby, Clitheroe and Rivington. In May, there were two records from each of north and east Lancashire. In June birds were recorded from near Eccleston, Chorley and Lancaster University; Fylde birds seen at Kirkham on the 16th and Lytham Crematorium on the 19th were probably the same. The last record of the summer was at White Coppice on 17 July.

In autumn, a juvenile was seen at Rivington, Chorley on 14 & 17 Sept, and one was at Oakenclough on three dates in October up to the 29th. November records from White Greet on the 2nd, Chorley on the 11th and Charnock Richard on the 15th probably involved the same bird. A bird at Croston Moss on 31 Dec rounded off the year nicely.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

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

The small, wintering population was in evidence again, with birds seen at several sites in the south-west; three were at Leighton Moss in both winters. A bird was also seen at Warton Bank on the Ribble Marshes from 17 Jan to 3 Feb, with two there on 19 Jan then a single again from 10 Oct to 31 Dec. There was one winter record in east Lancashire, near Clowbridge on 2 Nov.

The presence of a small wintering population makes it difficult to determine the dates when the first and last migrants appear and, indeed, there were no March records away from the wintering areas. The first was seen on 28 April in east Lancashire, where there were ten records throughout the year, while the Fylde reported records in all months apart from March and June.

The breeding population continues slowly to expand. At Leighton Moss two males serviced at least four females with three successful attempts, one fledging four young. Birds were recorded in every month there with a maximum of eight on one day.

A pair nested on the Formby mosses; early on a male and two females were present but one disappeared. Two immature birds were in the vicinity for a while but also moved on. Four chicks hatched from the successful nest with two young fledging by the end of July which were seen regularly at Lunt Meadows during September. There was thought to be one other possible nesting attempt on the south-west mosses.

Despite two birds being present at MMWWT from January to March, and occasionally during the summer, there was no breeding attempt. Up to four juveniles were seen from July to September, while five on 11-13 Sept included a wing-tagged bird from Norfolk.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

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

Bowland remains the main centre of the English breeding population and, after the absence of nesting on the United Utilities Estate in both 2012 and 2013, it was excellent news that two pairs successfully raised nine young. However, two tagged young birds 'disappeared' shortly after fledging and leaving the area. Outside of the breeding season, one to six birds were seen in this area in January, then September through to December, often in the vicinity of probable winter roost sites.

In the south-west, a ringtail was present throughout the first winter period at Lunt Meadows, an adult male was seen regularly at MMWWT from January to 5 April and up to two adult males were at Marshside from 19-30 Jan. During the first three months of the year, there were also records from Crossens, Bretherton Eyes, Plex Moss, Rufford and Great Altcar.

In the Fylde area there were regular sightings in January, February and March of an adult male which has been present in several previous winters; it roamed between Barnaby's Sands, Pilling Marsh, Winmarleigh and Pilling Mosses and Eagland Hill. Probably a different male was seen at Warton Bank on 17-18 Jan and 1 Feb. A ringtail was found dead at Rossall Point, Fylde on 31 Dec. In east Lancashire one was on Champion Moor from 1-6 Jan and at Stocks Reservoir on 18 Jan and 27 March, while in north Lancashire a male was at Leighton Moss from 3-11 Jan.

There were no April records and those in May were confined to birds seen at Longton Marsh and in Roeburndale, both on the 24th. The one record away from the breeding area in June and July was of a male near Stocks Reservoir in the week beginning 30 June. There were just two records in August and September: at Stubbins, Rossendale on 22 Aug and one around the West Pennine Moors from 22-27 Sept.

Most October records came from the south-west, with a ringtail at Lunt Meadows from 9 Oct to 18 Nov and possibly the same at MMWWT on three days and Crossens on the 16th. The only other record was at Longridge Fell on 29th.

At least three ringtails and an adult male wintered in the south-west, the ringtails all roosting at a favoured site; other records came from Marshside, MMWWT and Croston Moss. One report in east Lancashire in November was followed by six from four areas in December, while singles were seen at Warton Bank and Rivington Moor in November and Belmont on 15 Dec.



One of the successful nests on the United Utilities Estate, Forest of Bowland, June (RSPB)



Ringtail Hen Harrier,
Lunt Meadows, 2 February
(Dave Finnegan)

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus***Vagrant.**

A male flew over the Eric Morecambe complex on 26 April (I & D McGeorge). Although this was the 27th record in Lancashire it was the first in the north of the county since 1980.

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis***Rare feral breeding resident and escapee.**

The Goshawk is presumed to be a breeding resident species in Bowland, though rare and localised. Birds were recorded at a traditional site between 7 and 29 March, with a pair displaying on the 10th, a female was at Whalley on 12 June and a juvenile being mobbed by gulls at Stocks Reservoir on 10 Aug.

Elsewhere in the east of the county one was seen at a Hobby's nest which had already failed.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus***Fairly common breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant.**

Many hundreds of records were received in 2014, Birdtrack alone registering 777 and the Fylde Bird website 700; the ELOC report listed 184 records and there were 96 from the Lancaster district.

Despite the healthy breeding population and the widespread distribution throughout Lancashire, relatively few breeding data were received and it seems rather pointless detailing those that were.

The first records of birds which were presumably spring migrants came from Cabin Hill on 22 March, then from Heysham on the 26th. Four heading south past Rossall School on 23 Aug were thought to be autumn migrants, while the first past Heysham came on 5 Sept and there were three past Seaforth on 10 Sept.

A male dropped a still live Redwing at Lea Town on 14 Jan but perhaps the most surprising record in terms of prey considering the huge size difference involved a male which managed to kill a female Pheasant at Waddington on 27 March.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo***Uncommon breeding resident, fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon passage migrant.**

The east Lancashire report detailed by month the number of records throughout the year, ranging from six in July to 35 in September, with a total of just over 200 sightings. Interestingly, this was substantially down from the figure of 350 in the previous two years, but perhaps this was simply due to 'reporting fatigue'.

In the Fylde area there were 812 records. As an example of breeding, of eight monitored nests in the Pilling/Preesall/Stalmine area, 20 eggs were laid of which 16 hatched and 15 young were reared. Another two unmonitored nests were successful.

In the West Pennine Moors there were an estimated 20 known territories, including three active nests at Belmont, while a minimum of 15 territories were noted in the Chorley area, although breeding was confirmed at only one of these sites.

Heysham is regarded as the only part of north Lancashire where Buzzards are scarce; virtually all records prior to 2012 have been given the status of migrants but recent evidence suggests that 'local' birds are appearing along the eastern side of the recording area.

In terms of migration, watches from Seaforth reported spring figures of one in February, three in March, 15 in April and one in May. In autumn, there was one in August, ten in September and nine in October. Birds passed over Heysham NR on two dates in March, the first on 11th, and on three days in September, also from the 11th.

There were no reports of very large groups, the largest being 14 at Claughton on 19 Aug and MMWWT on 12 Oct, 13 over Warton Crag in August and over Coppull in September, twelve in the air together at Belmont on 2 Sept, ten at Todderstaffe Hall in September and at Rawcliffe Moss in February and March.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Fairly common passage migrant.

The first on 22 March at Carnforth was followed by one near Preston on the 23rd. Then came singles at Arley LNR on the 24th, Freehold on the 25th, Carleton on the 26th and five records from a Fleetwood viewpoint up to 5 April. A bird at Stocks Reservoir on the 26th was carrying a transmitter. Passage continued with singles over Lancaster on the 27th, Knott End and Ballam on the 28th, Marshside on the 29th and Seaforth on the 31st, followed by a total of 13 March records.

Passage increased during April with no fewer than 56 records from all parts of the county. There were just eight May records involving a few late arrivals and no doubt some records involving April birds hanging around to feed. In June one was watched fishing at Brockholes on the 25th and 26th and one or more were at Leighton Moss on the 2nd, 8th and 20th. There were also two July records from this site and one on 7 Aug. Birds continued to fish at Brockholes on the occasional date in July, August and September.

One on 16th at New Laithe Farm in east Lancashire was regarded as being the first sign of autumn passage through that area; also in the east one was at Stocks Reservoir from the 22nd to 31st.

Autumn passage continued into September, including an adult and a juvenile fishing the Cliviger fishponds and Clowbridge Reservoir for several days from around the 9th to 19th. The last September date was the 19th with birds seen at three sites: Crawshawbooth and Cliviger in the east and Altcar Withins in the south-west. None was seen in October but there was an extremely late report of a bird off Rossall Point on 15 Nov.

As usual, the 85 records in spring outnumbered the 35 in autumn; although the difference in numbers was not as stark as in some previous years, it still illustrated the fact that far more birds appear to follow a western route during spring migration than they do on autumn migration.

The approximate number of records in each month are given below:

Spring				Autumn			
Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Nov
13	56	8	6	5	14	20	1

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Scarce resident breeder, common winter visitor from central and eastern Europe.

No breeding survey was carried out at Leighton Moss and the most significant record received from there was of ten calling on 15 Sept.

Peak counts at other sites in the first and second winters were four and six at Marton Mere, three and five at Brockholes, four and two at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, two and seven at Middleton NR and three at Heysham in the second winter period.

Records of ones and twos came from a further 30 sites in the west of the county during the year. Water Rails were, as usual, much scarcer in east Lancashire, being reported from Wood End Sewage Works in the early year and Wood End, the Towneley Scrape and the nearby Deer Pond, and Grove Lane Marsh; one was at Holden Wood Reservoir in Rossendale on 26 Nov.

There were no reports of breeding this year although this almost certainly took place on several of the larger sites, but – remarkably – a pair was confirmed as breeding at Marton Mere for the first time in 2013.

SPOTTED CRAKE* *Porzana porzana*

Rare breeder and passage migrant.

Two were calling at MMWWT on 25 & 27 June (T Clare, K Brides, A Bunting) so were at least possibly breeding. None was heard there last year but two were calling in 2012.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Very common resident breeder.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ribble WeBS	46	39	39	22	21	23	326	28	17	41	45	28
MMWWT	136	115	180	100	150	150	/	/	/	/	/	160

Other large counts included 39 in Sefton Park, south Liverpool on 6 Feb, with 38 there on 31 Dec, 33 at Walton Hall Park, Liverpool in January, 32 at Cleveleys on 21 July, 20 on Marton Mere on 2 Jan, 19 at Brookside, Oswaldtwistle on 4 Nov and 18 in Blackpool's Stanley Park on 12 Oct and at Newton-with-Scales on 25 Nov. One hundred and fifty three were counted during the January survey of Lancaster and District.

Breeding reports were as usual extremely widespread. These included 25 or more pairs in a previously overlooked population on in-bye fields, moorland ponds (at up to 300m asl) and mill lodges in the Belmont area. All other reports of breeding pairs were in single figures, including six pairs at Belmont Reservoir and on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal at Aintree.

One predated the chicks of a pair of Little Ringed Plovers at Alston. Moorhens appear to have changed their nesting habits in Sefton Park in response to increased predation by Lesser Black-backed Gulls, now choosing only inconspicuous sites under cover of trees.

A remarkable event was missed from the 2013 report: a pair of Black-headed Gulls took over an occupied Moorhen nest and went on raise a Moorhen chick, which took readily to the gulls' regurgitated offerings.

COOT *Fulica atra*

Common resident breeder; abundant winter visitor from continental Europe.

National importance: 1800.

Monthly peak counts at sites with maxima over 200

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Leighton Moss	135	275	120	85	45	153	320	320	270	54	18	16
Dockacres comp.	522	270	239	45	23	30	77	98	447	630	570	675
Alston Wetland	30	77	/	4	9	8	4	10	/	/	56	86
Brookside Lodges	56	25	20	16	18	35	47	47	57	65	69	58
Brockholes	225	171	100	45	29	40	200	152	165	203	207	202
Marton Mere	200	160	60	35	8	25	55	100	100	220	194	250
Stanley P. B'pool	155	/	/	20	23	/	160	210	304	380	220	/
Ribble WeBS	78	146	132	100	65	110	32	52	40	35	47	39
MMWWT	255	150	100	20	20	118	/	/	/	/	/	130
Southport ML	155	/	/	/	/	/	/	180	/	/	/	/
Seaforth	20	19	10	15	16	36	75	240	245	120	25	20

Large counts not in the table included 145 in Sefton Park in December, 130 on Croston Twin Lakes in January, 117 at Myerscough Quarry in August, 113 at Marshside in February, 91 at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park in October and 70 at Lunt Meadows in September. The Lancaster and District January survey counted 801 birds, more than half of them in SD57.

Breeding was widespread especially in the western lowlands, the highest totals being 39 pairs at Leighton Moss, 16 at Marshside, twelve at Lunt Meadows, and nine in Sefton Park and at Brockholes. A number of birds were still incubating in Sefton Park on 29 July and one nest-building.

No sites around Belmont were occupied by breeding birds in 2014. When one turned up at Holden Wood Reservoir on 5 March it was described by one observer as a 'mega rarity for Rossendale'; two pairs went on to breed there and one was still present on 26 Nov. A pair at Clowbridge Reservoir on 2-26 August was probably one of these.

COMMON CRANE* *Grus grus*

Rare passage migrant.

Two adults and a juvenile flew south over Sunderland Point at 13.00 on 12 Oct (J Green) and were seen three minutes later over Cockersand (S Piner); it took them a further one hour and 30 minutes to reach Seaforth (AJ Conway, D Nadin), covering the 36.2 miles at 22.4 mph.



Common Cranes, Sunderland Point, 12 October (Stuart Piner)

A record has come to light via Alan Knox of one at Birkdale on 4 May 1888. It was described by the then 16 year-old Daisy Hamilton in her diary as "a bird larger than a Heron, with red on its head, in a swamp." Daisy Hamilton went on to become the country's first female ringer.

Mitchell published a record of two in flight over Bolton-by-Bowland on 25 Aug 1884 but Oakes did not include the species on the Lancashire list, dismissing "most occurrences (as) undoubtedly due to 'escapes'..."

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Recently established scarce breeding bird, uncommon passage migrant.

National Importance: 75

An early return was signalled by one at MMWWT on 9 Feb (the earliest ever there). The first arrived at the Eric Morecambe complex and Warton Marsh on the Ribble on 19 Feb and four at Marshside on the 28th, by which time 60 were already at MMWWT. Numbers peaked at 102 at MMWWT on 7 March, 85 at Marshside on the 28th, 74 on the Eric Morecambe complex on 15 April and 75 on Hesketh Out Marsh on the 21st.

Other spring records were two at Grimsargh Reservoir on 11 April, two past Heysham on the 15th and Marton Mere's first-ever record on the 29th.

Breeding included 13 pairs at Marshside (fledging twelve young), 14 pairs at Hesketh Out Marsh (fledging only six young), 23 pairs at MMWWT and the first-ever breeding pair at Brockholes (fledging one youngster from three eggs). No information was received from Leighton Moss but counts of individuals peaked at 85 at the Eric Morecambe complex on 28 May. On 2 June there were 20 adults and six chicks on Warton Marsh. Unusual records included one at the Yarrow/Douglas confluence in June and two flying over Great Knowley, Chorley on 21 June.

The post-breeding departure saw the last birds at the Eric Morecambe complex on 19 July and on the Fylde at Barnaby's Sands on the 29th. There was one at MMWWT on 11 Aug, three on Hesketh Out Marsh on the 19th and a single at MMWWT on 8 Sept. Four appeared at the Eric Morecambe complex on 21 Sept with nine new birds there briefly on 7 Nov, and a late bird was at Marshside on 2 Oct.

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 WeBS	8652	8497	4621	1285	1202	1268	3325	4224	20796	7776	17234	15310
Ribble	4310	8503	3117	1329	1353	1697	1083	6220	4090	5794	9620	2603
Alt WeBS	432	780	1308	404	312	141	227	841	824	1058	1320	1972

Numbers were low on Morecambe Bay during the first winter period but about average in the second; site counts there included 4030 at Heysham in January. Large counts on the Ribble included 2200 at Birkdale and 1950 at Lytham, both in January. As usual most of the Alt birds were roosting at Seaforth, although they largely feed on North Wirral Shore; numbers were rather low in the first winter but above average in December.

The trends for a few birds to overwintering inland and for an earlier return from the coast continued, with increasing reports early in the year. Birds at Burholme at the start of the year peaked at 34 on 24 Jan and another January gathering site was Sawley with 24 present on the 22nd.

Two were at Belmont Reservoir on 6 Feb, 25 at Alston Wetland on the 8th and 15 by 22 Feb on the River Douglas at Croston. In east Lancashire 100 were at Burholme and 52 at Stocks Reservoir on 19 Feb, while two at New Laithe Farm (Newton) on 8 Feb were the earliest ever there by over a month and a pair near Grindleton Sewage Works were on territory on 16 Feb. Numbers peaked at Stocks Reservoir at 129 on 1 March, at 86 at MMWWT on the 7th and 30 in the Belmont area on the 15-29th.

A pair was with two young at a moorland site at Withnell in May and a pair with two young at Charnock Richard on 7 June. Five pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir with three broods seen and three pairs at Delph Reservoir – one from a nest in the middle of the Sailing Club car park which the members erected a small fence around to protect. Away from waterbodies, breeding is still unusual in the West Pennine Moors, so a pair nesting on a farmland site near Belmont was noteworthy; four pairs bred with mixed results in the Rivington/Anglezarke area. At Alston Reservoir a pair fledged two young – the first successful breeding at this site; 72 pairs were reported from 27 Bowland farms. Breeding was reported from a range of other east Lancashire sites, including Bottoms Beck (Gisburn Forest), Hall Hill (above Whitewell), Hurst Green, Mellor, Parsonage Reservoir, Slaidburn, Stocks Reservoir, Whalley and Wycoller. Thirty-three pairs bred on Hesketh Out Marsh and 19 pairs at Marshside.

Post-breeding gatherings included 13 on 26 June at Parsonage Reservoir and twelve at Alston Wetland on 13 July. On the coast numbers at Lytham reached 1432 on 13 July and 2500 in August.

There were no notable counts in September other than those covered by the WeBS counts (see table), while in November inland reports included birds at Alston, Altham, Chatburn Sewage Works and Parsonage Reservoir; most inland sightings in December were at Alston. In south Liverpool, a coastal count of 478 along Garston shore on 29 December was notable.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

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

International importance: 8000. National importance: 4000.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	1154	655	111	0	0	0	2	43	72	1281	1353	6
Ribble WeBS	3489	3491	650	0	2	0	0	0	0	621	2579	2278
Marshside	1200	4000	2000	1888	0	0	0	0	0	90	/	/

Some of the largest numbers at the start of the year were at Glasson and Cockersand with up to 3000 reported in January and 1500 in February; the 4000 at Marshside in February was a fairly typical peak count there.

Birds were present on several moorland sites in January, including Haslingden Moor, above Belmont, Champion Moor, Pendle Hill and Weets Hill. Numbers increased during February with 89 near Champion Moor on the 3rd, 40 on Haslingden Moor on the 10th and 20 on Pendle Hill on the

19th. Peak inland spring passage counts included 150 at Wycoller Lane, Trawden on 23 March, 220 near Stocks Reservoir on 4 April, 120 on Twiston Moor on 20 April and 16 at Oswaldtwistle Moor Edge on 6 April and at Lower Black Moss Reservoir on the 27th.

In the lowlands the first migrants were at MMWWT on 8 Feb, 30 flew downriver past Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on the 10th and 300 were at Lunt Meadows on the 28th.

Eight pairs were on territory on the West Pennine Moors around Belmont with others on Entwistle and Darwen Moors. Five pairs on Boulsworth Hill, two pairs on Pendle Hill and at least two pairs on the Grane moors in Rossendale were the only other breeding records received.

Post-breeding congregations inland included 20 at Swinden Reservoir on 30 Aug, 80 at Ling Hill Farm, Champion Moor on 29 Sept with 290 there on 31 Oct, 200 at Whitemoor Reservoir on 12 Oct, and 194 at Stocks Reservoir and 150 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on the 31st; 33 on Haslingden Moor on 26 Nov was the largest flock in Rossendale.

Coastal numbers began to increase from the end of June, with up to 90 at Cockersand by 7 July and 250 on 28 July. Numbers peaked at Glasson at 1550 on 19 Nov and 1000 were on Hesketh Out Marsh on the 30th; 160+ flying west over Champion Moor on 16 Dec was very unusual for the time of year.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

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

International importance: 2500. National importance: 430.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	365	614	288	0	0	0	0	42	97	195	147	397
Ribble WeBS	5219	593	912	1188	309	14	17	288	864	389	418	46
Alt WeBS	240	1480	1290	1516	470	6	127	650	686	474	692	900

Although the Morecambe Bay February WeBS total was the highest there in any month since 2010, numbers throughout the rest of the year were a little below par. As usual, the vast majority of the Alt WeBS totals came from Formby Point; late winter and spring passage numbers there were a little above average. The Ribble, however, remains the county's most important site in winter.

Three summering birds were at Cockersand in June and July but high numbers were at Formby Point, presumably non-breeding birds, including 66 on 23 June, 75th and 201 on the 30th. High numbers continued into July with up to 80 there but almost none reported elsewhere in the county.

Forty-two at Pilling on 9 Aug may have been summering birds but 650 were at Formby Point on the 29th, with numbers remaining fairly steady there until 900 were present during December.

The only inland record was one at Yarrow Reservoir on 26 April.

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	14196	4789	125	84	79	220	1427	1404	3571	5731	10042	3767
Ribble WeBS	16861	8427	331	139	807	281	472	1857	2184	4782	8850	7059
Marshside	4000	1700	29	40	53	43	41	35	30	254	300	1500
MMWWT	4400	3000	200	110	100	250	500	400	4450	1300	1500	1000
Alt WeBS	74	13	5	2	10	60	166	185	42	269	216	5

Some of the largest site counts at the start of the year were on the Fylde with 4000 at Glasson on 5 Jan and 5000 at Winmarleigh on the 8th; 3400 were at MMWWT on 17 January, rising to 4400 on the 29th, and 3500 were at Hundred End on 28 Jan. Elsewhere inland, 450 were at Brockholes, 500+ at Burholme Farm, flocks of 200+ were recorded in Clitheroe in January and 370 were at Stocks Reservoir on 18 Jan. In February 360 were at Belmont Reservoir on the 19th and 600 at Barnacre Reservoir on the 23rd.

Sixty-five pairs bred at Marshside (fledging 54 young), a record 55 pairs (fledging 49 young) on Newton Marsh as a result of the installation of 3km of electric fencing, 27 on Hesketh Out Marsh and 21 at MMWWT.

In the West Pennines 29 pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir, enjoying excellent success with at least 13 broods seen and young fledging from 8 June onwards. Breeding on moorland blanket-bog (up to 430m asl) is increasing in the central West Pennine Moors – probably in response to increased *Juncus* infestation of in-bye fields making them less suitable; the increased presence of Buzzards at lower altitudes may be an additional factor. The 15 pairs on Withnell Moors, 13 on Turton/Longworth Moors, ten on Belmont Moor and five on Turton Heights now probably outnumber those breeding on the traditionally occupied, lower altitude, in-bye.

In east Lancashire Lapwings bred at Alston Wetland (where there were 14 nests and the first brood hatched on 25 April), Bashall Town, Boulsworth Hill, Calder Foot, Champion Moor, Green Haworth, Grimsargh Wetland, Hapton, Marl Hill Moor, Newton and Swinden Reservoir, while 279 pairs were reported from 27 Bowland farms.

Early post-breeding gatherings included 500 at Brockholes on 17 July, 117 at Delph Reservoir on the 18th and 230 at Shard Bridge on the 20th. Numbers gradually increased throughout the lowlands and on the coast with many three-figure and several four-figure flocks recorded; notable site counts included 1184 at Freckleton Naze on 25 Aug, 4450 at MMWWT on 16 Sept, 1180 on the Formby mosses on 1 Nov, 4600 at Glasson on the 9th and 7000 on Banks Marsh on the 30th. Further inland 800 were at Whitemoor Reservoir on 12 Oct, 675 at Stocks Reservoir on the 17th, while 370 at Belmont Reservoir during snow on 28 Dec was the largest count in the West Pennine Moors since 1982 – Lapwings were, until the last decade, largely absent from the Belmont area during midwinter. A hundred or so were seen around the Tesco store in Haslingden throughout November and December.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Fairly common on passage. Scarce breeder.

After the first on 21 March birds began to arrive throughout the county with records received from at least 30 breeding and passage sites up to late April with one late newcomer at Heysham on 6 May.

At Brockholes, the county's main site, nine pairs nested but success was very poor. The pressure of competition from increasing numbers of breeding Ringed Plovers was considered to be a key factor as well as habitat degradation due to increasing vegetation on the nesting island. One pair did reach the hatching stage on the very late date of 13 July but the young did not survive more than 24 hours. Further up the Ribble valley two pairs fledged two chicks each at Alston Wetland,

A pair were on eggs at Rishton Reservoir on 19 May but unfortunately deserted when an fisherman (hopefully inadvertently) placed his bivvy over the nest. Elsewhere in east Lancashire breeding was probable at eight or more sites including Parsonage, Stocks and Sunnyhurst Hey Reservoirs, Hapton and the Lower Towneley Scrape.

Two pairs bred at Holden Wood Reservoir in Rossendale, at least one of them successfully and another pair was in the 13 Stone Hill area on 1 May.

Two pairs were on territory at Belmont Reservoir but only one definitely bred (unsuccessfully, despite two attempts), while single pairs bred at Myerscough Quarry and Charnock Richard. In the south-west three pairs nested at MMWWT and one unsuccessfully at Lunt Meadows.

Post-breeding dispersal and migration began in July although



Juvenile Little Ringed Plover, Newton Marsh, 24 July (Frank Bird)

some birds and their young – presumably from second clutches – remained on breeding sites into early September. The last was a migrant at Marshside on 16 Sept.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

International importance: 730. National importance: 340

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	105	89	33	115	517	0	16	183	129	126	109	143
Ribble WeBS	0	13	10	759	1398	74	16	667	212	175	0	0
Alt WeBS	0	1	0	18	500	0	0	351	35	4	24	3

As usual Fleetwood supported the majority of birds in Morecambe Bay, where passage numbers continue to be of national importance with a five-year mean peak count of 501; the five-year average of 413 passage birds also means that the Alt Estuary retains the same status. However, as usual, the majority of Lancashire's Ringed Plovers were found on the Ribble where a good spring passage ensured the site retains its international importance. No site holds significant numbers in winter these days.

Site counts received from the Ribble included 60 at Lytham/Fairhaven on 29 March with 230 there on 26 April, 450 on 10 Aug and 212 on 7 Sept, and an estimated 1000 at Birkdale on 21-22 May. The most significant count missed by the monthly counts on Morecambe Bay included 900 at Cockersand on 12-14 May.

Inland arrival dates (and peak counts) were: Brockholes on 9 Feb (20 on 7 March), Alston Wetland on 26 March (six on 7 May), Stocks Reservoir on 4 April (eleven on 10 May), Rishton Reservoir on 7 May (four on 22 May), Belmont Reservoir on 6 May, MMWWT on 6 Feb (14 on 18 May) and Lunt Meadows in mid-April (18 on 16 May) – many of the larger May counts presumably related to migrant 'northern' birds.

Breeding information was rather limited. Ten pairs bred at Brockholes, which is now by far the most important site in the county. Elsewhere, there were two pairs at both Rossall Point and MMWWT, and single pairs at Cockersand and Lunt Meadows; no breeding information was received from the Sefton Coast.

Autumn passage inland included one at Belmont Reservoir on 28 July-1 Aug, three at Parsonage Res on 6 Aug, singles at Alston Wetland on 6 & 17 Aug, Anglezarke Reservoir on the 17-20th and Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 11 Sept and two at Stocks Reservoir on 15 Sept with one there on the 19-24th. Late birds were Whitemoor Reservoir on 4 Oct and Parsonage Reservoir on 30 Nov.

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Uncommon, but regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn.

A good year for this species started with one on Pendle Hill on 11-14 April; another there on 29 April increased to two the next day, while three there on 3-5 May increased to four on the 6-13th. A female on Pendle Hill on 29-30 June was unusually late – had she wandered there after laying elsewhere?

One was on Fair Snape Fell on 3 May and two flew north-east over Worsthorne, Burnley on 18 May – an unexpected addition to one birder's garden list.

In the south-west two were present for just 1.5 hours in fields at Town Lane, Birkdale on 16 May and one made an equally short stay at Little Altcar on 17 May; the emaciated remains of a long-dead juvenile were discovered on the beach at Cabin Hill on 4 May. A late report was received of six at Calcad's Farm, Stake Pool sometime in spring.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Common passage migrant, especially in spring.

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

Evening Roost Counts	21	24	26	28	29	30	1	4
	April	April	April	April	April	April	May	May
Longton Marsh	2	72	54	171	254	57	63	
Brockholes Wetland	30		179	228	112		187	115
Barnacre Reservoir	97			507	654	498		566

The coordinated evening roost count was carried out this year on 29 April and, in addition to the counts in the table, 93 were logged at Grimsargh Wetlands, 32 at Alston Wetland, 16 at Windy Harbour on the Wyre Estuary, five at Langthwaite Reservoir near Lancaster and seven at Hightown, indicating that an absolute minimum of 1173 were present in the county that day.

The earliest was one past Rossall Point on 12 April, followed by arrivals at Brockholes the next day and Alston on the 14th. Birds appear to have moved north rapidly at the end of the first week of May with the last spring records at Brockholes on the 13th.

Double-figure counts of birds – mostly flyovers – during late April and the first week of May were recorded at a further dozen or so sites, the largest 80+ over Barnsfold Water, Goosnargh on 25 April, 58 at Alston Wetland on 2 May, 48 at Eagland Hill on 7 May, 35 at Little Singleton on 29 April, and 25 over Croston on 27 April and Plex Moss on 3 May. Several parties of 20-30 birds fed in fields in the Croston, Euxton, Eccleston and Heskin areas. Thirteen on Garston Shore on 29 April were fairly unusual for the inner Mersey Estuary.

Typically far fewer were seen in autumn. The first was at Lytham on 8 July and single figures were seen regularly in the Fylde until the county's last at Cockersand on 19 Sept; larger counts were 15 at Cockersand on 28 July and 18 past Blackpool on 1 Aug. The only two autumn records in east Lancashire were singles at Parsonage Reservoir on 26 July and Alston Wetland on 7 Aug. In the north seven were at Hest Bank on 17 Aug and four off Heysham on 11 Aug, while one at Belmont Reservoir on 25 Aug was an extremely unusual autumn record for the West Pennine Moors.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Abundant winter and breeding bird.

International importance: 8500. National importance: 1400.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	5937	5775	1704	1430	205	484	2989	1722	3677	4996	2756	1430
EMC	1125	1848	3932	339	122	284	906	1952	925	3081	1074	536
Ribble WeBS	1495	1726	544	119	81	148	902	923	412	767	386	408
Alt WeBS	970	853	582	71	26	425	955	1012	856	1292	943	215
Mersey WeBS*	1	1	111	15	/	/	12	/	33	150	180	/

* Liverpool section only

Large site counts captured by the Morecambe Bay WeBS included 1650 at Bank End on 16 Feb and 1669 at Fluke Hall on 10 Oct; as usual virtually all the Alt birds were at Formby Point. A flock of 105 at Aintree on 17 Dec was the largest winter count reported away from the coast.

Only one was in east Lancashire in January but birds began moving back to the breeding grounds in the first few days of February. They gathered at favoured locations before moving on, with February peaks of 186 at Alston Wetland and 170 on Chipping Moss on the 26th, and in March 100 at Alston on the 2nd and 113 at Jumbles on the 16th. Most had dispersed by mid-March.

The picture was similar in the West Pennine Moors with the first back on 9 Feb and a peak of 143 at Belmont Reservoir on 12 March, while in Chorley the first appeared on 19 Feb and 40 at Euxton on 25 March was the largest flock.

The peak in the lowlands at MMWWT came significantly later – 115 on 16 April – suggesting perhaps that these birds were headed further afield.

One pair nested for the first time at Brockholes and another possibly bred at Alston Wetland. Breeding was widespread in the uplands and included 133 pairs on 27 farms in Bowland and eight

pairs on Boulsworth Hill. The population of the proposed West Pennine Moors SSSI has been estimated at 100 pairs and breeding densities on sample plots there in 2014 were six pairs in 1km² on south Darwen Moor, five in 1km² of Belmont Moor, eleven in 3km² of Withnell Moors, two in 1km² of Winter Hill and 13 pairs in 3km² of Turton/Longworth Moors.

Post-breeding gatherings inland were, as normal, far smaller than in spring and most had departed from the environs of the breeding grounds by early September.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare breeder.

International importance: 470. National importance: 430.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	7	4	740	2689	94	0	315	128	159	748	1235	2353
LM/EMC	60	160	620	2100	240	242	370	580	940	1262	660	464
Conder/Glasson	700	320	320	900	75	0	2	1	7	60	125	160
Ribble WeBS	5213	4393	1402	113	25	168	166	46	33	2035	700	1329
Marshside	5000	4351	663	2777	65	155	350	250	55	1650	1200	2000
MMWWT	90	260	43	300	30	57	10	10	10	/	6	300
Seaforth/Alt WeBS	1	10	97	97	4	1	204	295	107	70	85	11
Mersey WeBS*	0	0	86	27	0	0	327	/	109	6	0	0

* Liverpool section only

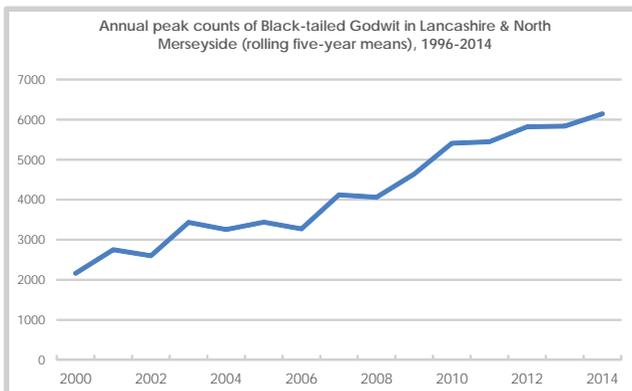
The huge recent increase in the Icelandic breeding population continues to be reflected in Lancashire, especially in coastal areas; numbers have trebled during the present century (see graph). Particularly noteworthy has been something of an upsurge on the inner Mersey Estuary, where counts of 155 at Oglet and 225 at Garston were missed from the March and April WeBS counts respectively.

Our 'Blackwits' are, however, found almost exclusively on coastal and estuarine marshes rather than mud- and salt-flats, so singles at Formby Point in April and August were unusual. One observer described seeing a flock of 250 at Birkdale shore on 4 Jan, thinking about roosting before heading back towards Marshside – his first ever sighting of the species there.

The largest site counts away from Marshside and the Lune Estuary included 608 at Nateby on 15 March, 512 on Freckleton Marsh on 16 March, 450 at Newton-with-Scales on 14 March and 449 at Granny's Bay on 31 Aug.

Inland records also continue to proliferate. MMWWT remains the most consistent site (see table) but birds were also seen at another dozen or so sites, including Dockacres, Belmont, Barnacre, Parsonage, Cant Clough and Upper Foulridge Reservoirs, and Brockholes, Alston and Grimsargh Wetlands; the largest count in the east was 87 at Stocks Reservoir on 24 April.

One pair of nominate race birds nested on Newton Marsh, hatching four eggs and fledging one young. This was the first definite nesting attempt on the estuary in six years and the first chick to fledge in eight years.



BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor

International importance: 1200. National importance: 380.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	2369	3094	485	1	3	0	3	1	421	176	1186	1633
Ribble WeBS	151	4374	529	199	621	261	473	1855	214	634	974	97
Alt WeBS	1481	2131	3500	1182	98	0	1500	16	3787	2319	4290	3943

A couple of counts missed by the Alt WeBS came from Cabin Hill: 280 in May and 110 in June. Nonetheless, it does not appear that any significant numbers of first-summer birds were present anywhere in the county this year, certainly none was seen at Seaforth, one of their usual summer haunts.

Morecambe Bay also registered a couple of counts in excess of the monthly WeBS: 600 at Fluke Hall in March and 550 at Glasson in October.

There were just two inland records: one at Stocks Reservoir on 26 April-10 May and four at MMWWT on 11 Aug.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

International importance: 1500. National importance: 480

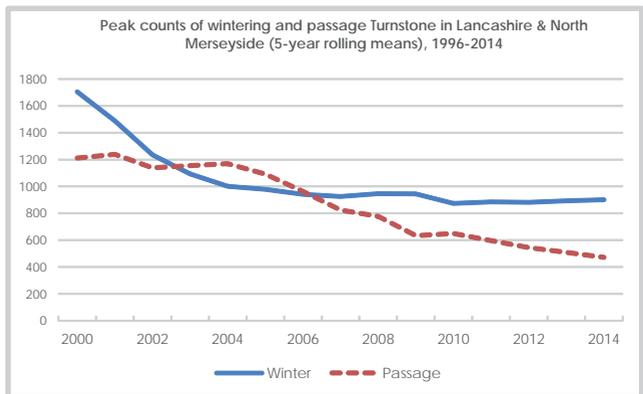
Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	472	424	348	409	12	1	1	270	289	368	403	333
Fleetwood	200	300	285	85	63	5	5	215	200	335	300	240
Cockersand	145	100	82	60	4	0	7	15	50	275	120	30
Lytham	200	/	56	250	252	15	102	175	158	160	140	120
Ribble WeBS	58	6	97	215	65	15	0	121	60	1	140	120
Alt WeBS	9	88	67	54	3	4	5	36	0	32	15	1

Birds were present on the Mersey Estuary throughout the non-breeding season with seasonal peaks of 34 at Dingle on 8 March and 69 there 31 Aug. Birds were also regular at Blackpool, including 100 on 8 Jan and 82 on 10 Nov. Even less of the Heysham wooden jetty was available to roost on or feed around this year, and numbers were unremarkable with peak winter counts of 70 in January and 62 in November and a peak spring passage, when the species is always at its most numerous, of just 184 on 23 April.

Peak numbers in the county during passage periods have fallen by more than 50% during this century while a large fall which occurred up until about 2005 has now bottomed out (see graph).

As always, Turnstones were a rare sight inland; the only records were singles at Brockholes on 11 May and 19 July, Alston Reservoir on 7 May and Parsonage Reservoir on 6 Aug, and three at Stocks Reservoir on 11 May.



KNOT *Calidris canutus*

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

International importance: 4500. National importance: 3200.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	8743	8944	995	12	0	0	0	1	11	433	1824	7353
Ribble WeBS	2067	6360	10753	6642	741	1535	1438	9048	4610	7099	4634	266
Alt WeBS	856	9000	19000	7000	12	31	520	196	7500	7076	24300	24706
Seaforth	1	1	1	1	0	0	11	105	188	1050	1300	25

Counts on the Ribble and Alt Estuaries in March and on the Alt at the end of the year confirmed the county's huge importance for this species. Significant counts missed by the Morecambe Bay WeBS included 2200 on 2 March and 2000 on the 8th at Knott End, 1750 at Heysham on 4 Oct with 5500 there on 27 Nov and 12000 on 3 Dec, and 12000 at Sunderland Point on 30 March with 5000 there on 8 Oct. The largest roosts reported on the Ribble were 1020 at Fairhaven on 16 Feb, 3000 at Granny's Bay during September, and 3500 at Marshside on 10 Aug.

As with Bar-tailed Godwits, there were no substantial numbers of summering birds and no first-summers were seen at Seaforth, where virtually all autumn birds appeared to be juveniles after the first arrived on 27 Aug.

A handful were seen in east Lancashire in autumn: five at Stocks Reservoir on 21 Aug, three at Alston on 3 Oct and one at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on the 24th. The only other inland records were singles at Brockholes on 23 March and 13 Aug, and Lunt Meadows on 17 Aug.

RUFF *Calidris 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
L Moss/EMC	4	4	8	5	0	1	2	7	17	8	2	1
Marshside	72	15	22	40	36	/	6	/	1	2	/	/
MMWWT	80	92	81	40	/	4	28	35	96	50	53	74

Ones and twos were recorded at a dozen or so sites in the Fylde with the only larger counts three on the Conder Estuary in January, four on Newton Marsh and seven at Freckleton Naze in August, and three at Cockersand on September. The only report received from the south Ribble marshes away from Marshside was of three on Hesketh Out Marsh on 2 Sept. Seaforth recorded one on 19 May then up to three juveniles regularly between 26 Aug and 21 Sept.

A male was seen with three females at MMWWT on 13 June and possibly into July, while at Marshside twelve males and three females were lekking on 29 April.

Always scarce inland away from MMWWT, there were singles at Brockholes on 27 Jan and 9 Aug, at Alston on 18 Feb and 11 Aug, Whitemoor Reservoir on 20 Sept and Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 13 Dec.



Juvenile Ruff, Seaforth, 17 September
(Chris Gregson)

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Fairly common passage migrant.

The first at Alston Wetland on 15 May was followed by singles at Marshside and MMWWT on the 17th and then up to four at Marshside from the 21st to 26th. The only other spring records were

singles at Cockersand on 25 May, 30 May to 1 June and 13 June, and on the Eric Morecambe complex on 26 May.

The autumn passage began with singles on the Eric Morecambe complex on 23 and 29 July; numbers increased during August and peaked in September with the last on 1 Nov on Banks Marsh. Around 100 were seen during autumn with most records involving one to three birds. The largest counts were seven at MMWWT on 12-14 Sept with six there on the 8-9th, six on Hesketh Out Marsh on 30 Aug and five at Bank End on 12 Sept and Banks Marsh on 3 Oct.

A juvenile at Stocks Reservoir on 6 Oct was the only record at any distance inland.



Juvenile Curlew Sandpiper, Leighton Moss, 9 September (Meurig Garbutt)

TEMMINCK'S STINT* *Calidris temminckii*

Scarce passage migrant.

The only record was of two at Lunt Meadows on the typical dates of 17-20 May (I Hadwin).

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Abundant passage migrant and common winter visitor.

International importance: 1200. National importance: 160.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	200	155	73	82	175	2	3	120	155	310	165	200
Ribble WeBS	494	299	491	391	6084	77	14	2766	60	700	1003	192
Alt WeBS	418	1583	1333	2070	2629	0	50	2500	743	971	925	/

The county's third highest count ever was recorded on 13 Aug when 8000+ were estimated at Ainsdale. The previous high totals were also on the Sefton Coast: 8250 in August 1998 and 8737 in May 1992. Counts on the Ribble in addition to the Ainsdale record included 1240 at Birkdale on 27 April

with 5655 there on 18 May. Numbers on the Alt were unexceptional but slightly higher than for the past couple of years.

In contrast to further south, the largest numbers on the Fylde coast occurred mostly during winter and included 250 at St. Anne's on 2 Jan with 500 there on 22 Feb, 250 at Rossall Point on 4 Feb with 450 there on 8 Nov, and 200 at Knott End on 21 Oct.

Passage numbers in the county have declined by 40% during the present century but appear to have bottomed out during this decade; winter numbers on the other hand have increased substantially, despite falling over the past few years (see graph).

Four turned up at inland sites: singles at MMWWT on 1 & 10 May and Rishton Reservoir on 22 May, and two at Stocks Reservoir on 20 May.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor. Scarce breeding bird.

International importance: 9500 (schinzii); 13300 (alpina). National importance: 3500.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	4013	4862	622	754	1288	2	79	2041	846	524	2693	4129
Ribble WeBS	10461	2619	5665	10507	10362	215	4653	22907	2700	3425	11754	1957
Alt WeBS	1100	7462	2005	3636	3555	0	1800	4123	211	676	2043	1707
Mersey WeBS*	2500	1200	19	196	2	0	0	/	11	/	/	/

* Liverpool section only

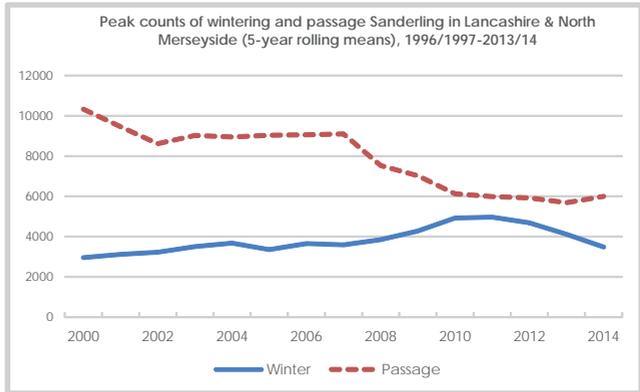
Typically, most were seen on the Ribble. Numbers were substantially below the five-year average on both Morecambe Bay and the Alt during both winter periods. Passage numbers on the Alt were fairly typical but lower than average on Morecambe Bay, despite a count of 2200 at Cockersand being missed in May.

The largest site counts received from the Ribble included 10000 at Marshside on 1 Feb, 4650 at Blackpool on 27 April and peaks at Lytham of 6500 in July and 7300 in August; the largest flocks reported elsewhere were 2255 on the Eric Morecambe complex on 7 Aug, while an influx of 2300 at Seaforth on 28 July to 1 Aug equalled the record count there.

Apart from one or two at MMWWT at both ends of the year and one at Lunt Meadows on 3 Dec, singles at Belmont Reservoir on 2 Feb, Barrowford Reservoir on the 20th, Chipping Moss on the 26th and Alston Reservoirs on 26 & 28 March were the only inland records during either winter period.

Movement back to the breeding grounds began in mid-April and continued throughout May; peak counts included 40 at MMWWT on 17 April with 33 there on 7 May, 13 at Alston Wetland and six at Belmont Reservoir on 6 May, and 29 at Stocks Reservoir, 15 at Lunt Meadows and eight at Brockholes on the 7th.

The only breeding season report from east Lancashire was of one in Croasdale in late May, while in Rossendale there were three territorial males on Wet Moss on 6 June, a pair plus a displaying male on Cowpe Moss on the 13th and a female was flushed from a nest on Knowl Hill on the 17th. The breeding population of the proposed West Pennine Moors SSSI is estimated at ten pairs, while in 2014 birds were on territory and 'trilling' at two traditional and one occasional breeding site above Belmont.



PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Rare winter visitor.

Two at Garston on 16 Feb were an unusual sighting on the inner Mersey Estuary.

None was seen at Heysham in the first winter period and one on 28 Sept was probably on passage; another arrived on 8 Nov and was seen intermittently into 2015.

The four that had been present at Fleetwood at the end of 2013 remained until at least 23 March and one returned on 14 Sept, increasing to three during November and four on a couple of dates to the end of the year. Almost identical numbers were seen at Blackpool at both ends of the year: up to three from 2013 until 23 March and up to four from 9 Nov into 2015. The coincidence of these numbers and dates might suggest that the same birds were involved at these two sites but they were recorded several times at both on the same day, so this is unlikely.

The only other record was one at Granny's Bay on 14 Sept – perhaps one of the above birds.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Fairly common passage migrant. Scarce winter visitor.

Very few appeared in the first half of the year with one at Marshside on 28 Feb the only winter record, and singles there on 29 April and 21 May and at MMWWT on 21 May with three there on the 18th the only clear-cut spring records. One at Cabin Hill on 21 June was probably a non-breeding bird.

After the first autumn arrival at Fleetwood on 14-15 July another six were seen in August but the overwhelming majority of records – involving at least 100 individuals, almost all of them juveniles – came during September. Unusually, far more were seen on the main Leighton Moss reserve than the Eric Morecambe complex due to the muddy, low water conditions at the former. Peak site counts were twelve at Leighton Moss, five on the Eric Morecambe complex, four at Marshside, MMWWT and Skippool Creek, and three at Seaforth. Five remained at Leighton on 1 Oct, two were at Seaforth on the 5th and the last was at Rossall Point on the 10th.

There were no inland records away from MMWWT.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER* *Calidris melanotos*

Rare passage migrant.

A juvenile was at MMWWT on 11 Sept (AS Disley) and up to two juveniles at Leighton Moss in front of Lillian's Hide as masses of mud were exposed by the low water levels on 13-19 Sept (finders unknown).

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Scarce passage migrant.

One off Morecambe on 15 Nov was the only record.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

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

The only winter records were what was presumed to be the regular bird on the Conder Estuary from 2013 until at least 10 April and one at Little Singleton on 27 Jan and 7 Feb.

The earliest spring arrivals were at Altham on 8 April, Brockholes on the 12th and Belmont Reservoir on the 14th. Passage accelerated towards the end of April and early May; migrants were recorded at 20 sites in the Fylde with the largest numbers seven on the Conder Pool on 23 April and three at Fleetwood, Marton Mere and Skippool Creek. Peak spring counts of migrants in east Lancashire were six at Swinden Reservoir on 21 April and Alston Wetland on the 23rd.

Seven at Brockholes on 20 April and 1 May were perhaps the four pairs that went on to breed there. In the West Pennine Moors there were four or five pairs at Belmont Reservoir, five pairs on Delph Reservoir, one or two pairs on Springs Reservoir and single pairs on Dingle and Wards Reservoirs; the population of the proposed SSSI there was estimated at eight pairs, rather lower than this year's figures, since Delph, Springs and Dingle Reservoirs have been excluded from the pSSSI.

In east Lancashire there were six pairs on a 7km stretch of the Hodder between Lower Hodder Bridge and Arkholme Beck near Cow Ark, three on the Ribble between Hurst Green and Hodder Foot, five on the Calder between Altham and Martholme, and a minimum of ten territories around Stocks Reservoir – together with numerous other reports throughout the region, including a family



Juvenile Common Sandpiper, Seaforth,
30 July (Chris Gregson)

group of six at Dunsop Bridge on 4 June. Small numbers nested alongside all the Haslingden reservoirs in Rossendale. One or two pairs at Crook o' Lune were the only ones reported in north Lancashire but breeding was presumably much more widespread; 22 at Arkholme on 25 June, for example, must have indicated successful breeding there.

The first to return to the coast was at Shard Bridge on 15 June but, as usual, the main passage movement took place in July, tailing off in August and September with the last at Sunderland Point on 16 Oct and Little Singleton on 25 Oct; the latter and one at Barrowford Reservoir on 9 Nov may have been wintering birds.

Typically, the largest autumn numbers were in the Fylde: 15 on the Conder Pool on 29 June, in July 20 at Shard Bridge, 19 at Lytham and 16 on the Conder Pool, and in August 21 at Shard Bridge. Peaks elsewhere included eleven at Seaforth on 19 July and eight at MMWWT during July.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

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

Evidence is building of increasing numbers wintering in the county. In the first winter period there were singles in the Fylde at Little Singleton, Rawcliffe Moss, Ratten Row, Conder Pool, Carr House Green Common, Mythop, Todderstaffe Hall, Rawcliffe Hall, Out Rawcliffe and Ribby – although clearly there was more than a possibility of some duplication in these records. The last was at Woodplumpton on 18 April.

Elsewhere, up to three were at and around Brockholes from 2013 until 22 April and singles at Ewood Bridge Sewage Works between 5 Jan and 29 March, Carnforth Slag Tips on 12 Feb, Aldcliffe from 12 Feb to 29 March with two there on 1 April, Heysham on 24 March, Bow Laithe near Sawley on 10 March, Croston Twin Lakes occasionally between 30 Jan and 2 March and at various sites in Eccleston, Chorley between 22 Feb into April.

At the other end of the year three were at Brockholes in November with two remaining at the end of December and one or two at five of the early year sites in the Fylde from early November. One at Lunt Meadows on 2 Dec was the only one in Merseyside in either winter period. One was again at Sawley on 13 Oct and 30 Dec, while singles at Sunderland Point on 5 Nov and the Eric Morecambe complex on the 17th were also potentially wintering birds.

The first to return were singles at MMWWT on 2-5 June with another three there that month. Roughly another 60 birds were seen during autumn, more than half of them in the Fylde and mostly between mid-July and mid-September. All were of ones and occasionally twos with the exception of three on Hesketh Out Marsh in August. Away from their more usual haunts there were seven records in east Lancashire, ten in St. Helens, one at Belmont Reservoir on 12 July and one in flight over Speke on 9 Sept.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Fairly common passage migrant.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EMC/L Moss	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	6	4	3	1
Conder/Glasson	2	2	2	2	0	1	3	4	4	3	3	3

The only other winter records were singles at Skippool Creek until 19 April, Barnaby's Sands on 16 March, Thurnham on 18 Feb and 4 March, and Hesketh Out Marsh on 1-13 March.

Spring produced singles at Marshside on 21 & 27 April and 22 May, one at Little Singleton on 3-5 May and one at MMWWT on 1 June.

No more were seen away from the two main sites until one at Fleetwood on 1 July but another 30 or so were recorded until the last at Cockersand on 4 Nov, all either in north Fylde or on the south

Ribble Marshes except for one at MMWWT on 21 Aug. The largest counts were four juveniles at Marshside on 16-18 Sept and four on Hesketh Out Marsh on 3 Oct.

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
EMC	1	1	1	3	1	2	14	16	12	8	5	1
Conder/Glasson	0	1	0	2	1	0	8	4	6	9	2	0

All other early winter records were in the Fylde: two at Little Singleton until mid-April, one at Skip-pool Creek on 3 Jan. Later in the year there were two at Wardley's Creek on 7 Dec and at Stanah on the 15th, and singles on Hesketh Out Marsh on the 25th and Warton Marsh on the 26th.

Possible passage migrants were seen at three other sites on the Wyre during April but the only definitely new arrivals were singles at Seaforth on 6 April, Alston Wetland on the 8th, Aldcliffe on the 10th, Croston Moss on the 16th, Altham on the 15-20th, MMWWT on 5 May and finally Newton Marsh on the 11th.

No more were seen until singles on Crosby Coastal Park on 29 June, at Belmont Reservoir on 12 July and MMWWT the next day. Passage arrivals then increased markedly from late July with regular sightings on the south Ribble marshes and in the Fylde until late October and a scattering of others throughout the county. Peak counts away from the sites in the table included 18 on Hesketh Out Marsh on 24 Aug, eight at Wardley's Creek on 12 Oct, six at Freckleton Naze on 26 July with seven there on 25 Aug, and five at Little Singleton on 5 July and MMWWT on 7 Oct.

In east Lancashire all autumn records were at Lower Foulridge Reservoir with one there on 9-10 Aug, up to three on the 17-19th and two on 24 Aug and 1 Sept. One flew over Clowbridge Reservoir on 3 Sept and the only others any distance inland were singles at Arkholme on 18 Aug, Anglezarke Reservoir on the 20-26th and Brockholes on 20 & 24 Aug and 22 Sept.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Uncommon passage migrant.

A fairly typical year began with one at Alston Wetland on 6-7 May and further singles at Fleetwood on the 10th, MMWWT on the 17th, Newton Marsh on the 19th and Lunt Meadows on the 26th.

The return passage began with one at MMWWT on 2 July; two there on 6-13 Aug and at Brockholes on 9-10 July were the only multiple records. A further eleven followed until the last, a juvenile, at Seaforth on 27 Sept: on the coast at Cockersand, Pilling, Conder Pool, Newton Marsh, Heysham and the Eric Morecambe complex, and inland at MMWWT and Alston.



Juvenile Wood Sandpiper, Seaforth,
27 September (Chris Gregson)

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Abundant passage and winter visitor. Fairly common breeding bird.

International importance: 2800. National importance: 1200.

The September total on Morecambe Bay was a little higher than last year and there is no clear trend in passage numbers there; peak counts in both winter periods were the lowest since 2002. The picture was similar on the Alt with low winter numbers after two good years but little change during passage periods. Large site counts captured in the MBS totals included 750 at Fleetwood Marsh in January, 894 at Barnaby's Sands in February with 858 there in September, and 950 at Skip-pool Creek in August.

Typically few were seen in the east during either winter period: one at Barrowford Reservoir on 13 Jan and 6 Feb and again on 13 Dec, and one at Alston Wetland on 17 Dec. The first returned to Altham on 2 March and to other six east Lancashire sites by the end of the month, to Belmont Res-

ervoir on 12 March and the Haslingden Grane reservoirs on the 23rd. One was at MMWWT during December.

Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	3885	3408	2779	964	78	74	667	2210	4591	3891	3185	2088
EMC	246	334	608	725	18	48	410	630	604	1032	757	302
Conder/Glasson	650	700	450	450	3	150	620	600	400	85	150	250
Ribble WeBS	1409	1265	1446	126	125	262	385	1008	805	619	608	441
Marshside	122	882	492	228	20	40	35	/	/	60	270	10
Alt WeBS	297	800	707	7	3	14	235	690	385	560	528	475
Seaforth	660	510	400	220	1	66	246	650	180	300	241	475
Mersey WeBS*	78	170	258	59	0	11	/	/	200	342	130	250

* Liverpool section only

Sixty-seven pairs bred on the saltmarsh at Marshside, fledging 0.58 young per pair, 36 pairs on the grazing marsh there, fledging 1.28 per pair, and 37 pairs on Hesketh Out Marsh with 0.45 productivity. Thirty-one pairs were on Newton Marsh, fledging 29 young. Six pairs nested at MMWWT where the first young were seen on 18 May, eleven pairs at Brockholes, at least four pairs at Alston Wetland, one or more at Grimsargh and 23 on 27 farms monitored in Bowland. Four or five pairs were on territory around Belmont Reservoir, where the first young fledged on 8 June, and a further two pairs bred on adjacent moorland (one at 380m asl).

JACK SNIBE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

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

It was an unexceptional year throughout the county. Jack Snipe were reported from 15 sites in the Fylde during the year, 14 in east Lancashire, seven in north Lancashire, four in Rossendale, two in Chorley and a dozen or more elsewhere.

Limital dates were 6 April on moors above Grane and 10 April at Inglenook Farm, Rainford in spring and 27 Sept at Seaforth in autumn. Most records were of singles or occasionally twos with larger counts including six at Jameson Road Landfill, Fleetwood on 19 Jan, five at Brockholes on 6 Feb and Grove Lane Marsh on the 19th, and four on Reaps Moss, Rossendale on 19 Jan, at Cabin Hill on 21 Feb, on Fairhaven beach on 30 March and Belmont Moor on 18 Oct.



Jack Snipe, Seaforth, 1 October (Steve Young)

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Common winter visitor and fairly common breeder.

Birds were reported in winter from 23 sites in the Fylde, 18 in east Lancashire, 13 in Merseyside, twelve in north Lancashire, seven in Rossendale, three in the West Pennine Moors and two in West Lancashire, but this undoubtedly underestimates their distribution by some considerable margin.

As is always the case the largest count was the result of flushing by pheasant-beaters: 25+ at Belmont on 31 Jan and seven there on 27 Dec. Most counts were of singles and more rarely twos, exceptions being seven in fields near Belmont on 28 Nov, four at Eagland Hill on 25 Jan and Carr House Green Common on 16 Feb.

Four at Moor Piece on 1 March and Hindburndale on 8 March, together with seven on Warton Crag on 12 April were more likely to have been breeding birds. The first roding male at Belmont was seen on 31 March. The few other breeding reports received came from Black Coppice, two sites in the Gisburn Forest and Moor Piece – a very considerable under-representation of the full picture.

Although records of migrants in urban areas are moderately frequent, the sight of one weaving between the traffic at Liverpool's Pier Head at midday on 18 Feb was distinctly unexpected.

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Common but declining wintering and breeding bird.

Wintering Snipe were recorded at 54 sites in the Fylde with counts of 40 or more at Cottam Brickworks, Marton Mere, Preesall Sands, Glasson and the Conder Pool. Reports came from 13 sites in east Lancashire during the early year, including 115 at Grove Lane Marsh on 15 Jan and 35 at Chipping Moss on 11 Feb; numbers were lower in the second winter period, 59 at Grove Lane and 33 at Stocks Reservoir the highest. The largest counts from the seven sites reported upon in Rossendale were 68 at Edge Cote on 16 Nov and 60 on Haslingden Moor on 11 Oct.

Chorley sightings included 31 at Buckshaw Village on 7 Jan and over 50 flying over Croston Twin Lakes on 16 Feb, while the largest counts in the West Pennine Moors were 160 on Belmont Moor on 18 Oct with 60 there on 29 Nov, and 70 on Hoddlesden Moss on 25 Oct. Forty-three at Leighton Moss on 5 Dec and 41 at Middleton NR on 13 Jan were the only large counts received from north Lancashire. Brockholes experienced a sudden influx of 104 on 4 April while numbers at Lunt Meadows peaked in early autumn with 150 on 14 Oct; 45 were at Cabin Hill on 18 Jan.

The first reports of drumming in east Lancashire were from Swinden Reservoir and Wycoller, both on 1 April. Drumming and/or 'chipping' calls were also reported in the April-June period from Boulsworth Hill, Coal Clough Wind Farm, Champion Moor, Croasdale, Green Haworth, Hall Hill (Whitewell), Leagram, Marl Hill Moor, Twiston Moor and Waddington Fell. Proof of successful breeding, shown by the presence of young, came from Alston Wetland, Swinden Reservoir and Wycoller.

Only eight pairs were found on 27 Bowland farms surveyed. In contrast, the breeding population in the central West Pennine Moors is at least holding its own, if not increasing, in response to the increasing encroachment of *Juncus* onto wet in-bye fields. A record ten 'pairs' were on territory around Belmont Reservoir, where, remarkably, three successful broods were confirmed; a minimum of a further 19 'drummers' were recorded on in-bye fields/moorland elsewhere in the central West Pennine Moors including one at over 425m asl. The population of the proposed West Pennine Moors SSSI was estimated at 60 pairs.

The only other breeding reports were of one pair at MMWWT, one drumming at Marshside in June and chipping birds in Rossendale at Holden Wood and Thirteen Stone Hill, Haslingden in April and May.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

Morecambe Bay

There were just two records of four individuals in rather limited seawatching effort: a single light morph north off Heysham on 4 May and a flock of three light morphs heading inland over Heysham Head on 6 May. These were almost certainly part of the eight seen from Rossall (see Liverpool Bay). A skua sp., probably a juvenile of this species, off Heysham on 21 Oct was the only semblance of an autumn record.

Liverpool Bay

Eight flying north-east into Morecambe Bay on 6 May as seen from Rossall, were followed by singletons heading north past Blackpool on 9 May and 4 June, and one past Rossall on 4 June. Further south, a light morph flew north past Formby Point on 11 May. The only autumn record was a light morph adult past Rossall on 25 Oct.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Fairly common passage migrant with rapid transit in spring and many lingering during prolonged autumn passage. Rare in winter

Morecambe Bay

Twenty-two flew north east past Heysham between 9 April and 11 May of which 20 were dark morphs, one intermediate and just the one light morph. In the balmy September weather there were no autumn records.

Liverpool Bay

Forty-two unduplicated individuals flew north past various Fylde coast sites, mainly Rossall Point, between 4 April and 11 May with peaks of six on 6 May and 7 on 11 May. As with Morecambe Bay, their absence after 11 May was surprising and probably accounted for the very high ratio of dark morph birds which dominated the earlier records. Singles were seen off Formby on 17 & 23 April and 11 May.

The first in autumn was off Formby on 30 July and passage was subsequently very sparsely recorded in the unfavourable weather with two off Formby on 12 Aug, two off Rossall on the 17th, two off Formby on the 19th, and singles off Blackpool on 26 Aug, Formby on 24 Sept and Rossall on 18, 19 & 22 Oct.

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Very rare spring passage migrant. Irregular storm-blown autumn passage migrant, especially to the Mersey mouth

An off-passage adult or near-adult was first found at Formby Point on 1 Sept (R Jones), allowing a close approach on the beach before flying off. It was relocated a little way off on 4 Sept and remained in the area until the following day.



Long-tailed Skua, Formby Point,
5 September (Tim Vaughan)

GREAT SKUA (BONXIE) *Stercorarius skua*

Fairly common passage migrant.

Morecambe Bay

See below for a wintering bird which entered Morecambe Bay at least once! Two northbound birds on 7 May and two similarly on the 9th, together with and a singleton on the 10th represented a poor spring at Heysham.

The only autumn record was one on 11 Aug.

Liverpool Bay

A wintering bird was along the Blackpool/Rossall coast from 1 Jan to 15 Feb, visiting Knott End on 13 Feb.

Conventional spring passage birds were at Rossall on 7 and 11 May with one of uncertain status off Blackpool on 11 June. There is a possibility that this latter bird was the ringed individual later found moribund at Preston Dock on 14-15 June.

An extremely poor autumn passage consisted of singles off Formby on 11 Aug, Rossall on 17 and 29 Aug, and Formby on 24 Sept and 22 Oct.

PUFFIN* *Fratercula arctica*

Scarce passage migrant.

One was taken into care at Rossall Point on 7 Feb (Wyre Rangers) and another flew south past Blackpool on 21 May (S Dunstan).

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cephus grylle*

Scarce passage migrant; rare winter visitor. Amber List (Species of European Conservation Concern).

It was quite a good year for what remains a scarce species in Lancashire. Two – possibly the same bird – were seen offshore in February, singles at Morecambe on the 1st and Heysham on the 13th; and two in May, off Rossall Point on the 24th and Formby Point on the 27th.

Another flew close inshore at Formby Point on 10 July but no more were seen until singles off Blackpool on 7 Nov and Rossall Point on the 30th.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Common passage migrant; uncommon winter visitor.

All but a handful of records came from the Fylde coast, principally off Blackpool and Rossall Point. There were at least two at each of these sites in January but numbers increased during February with peaks of nine at Rossall and five at Blackpool on the 13th, when four were also seen off Knott End. Up to three were seen during March but a small flurry of passage occurred in late April with 16 off Rossall and three at Blackpool on the 23rd.

One or two appeared during June but there were no further records until early October when numbers peaked at seven at Blackpool and three at Rossall, after which only singles were seen until the last on 17 Nov.

In north Lancashire one on 12 Feb was found dead the following day at Heysham, where there were two on 9 & 11 May and three on 26 Oct; one was at Aldcliffe on 22 Sept. Two found dead at Marshside on 15 May and one off Formby Point on 27 April with eleven there on 9 Oct were the only records on the Sefton coast.

LITTLE AUK* *Alle alle*

Scarce passage migrant.

One landed on the water close inshore at Half Moon Bay, Heysham on 12 Dec and remained there for five minutes before flying off. (T Walkington, PJ Marsh).

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Common passage migrant; uncommon winter visitor.

It was a slightly more productive year than recently. As with Razorbills the Fylde coast dominated the record books at both ends of the year.

One or two and occasionally three were seen fairly regularly off Rossall Point and Blackpool in January and February with five at the latter site on 18 Feb. In north Lancashire at least ten remained in Heysham Harbour following the storms of December 2013 with the last there on 2 April, while single(s) were at Leighton Moss on 8-11 Feb and Jenny Brown's Point on the 14th. One was on Southport Marine Lake on 14-16 Feb another was taken into care at Hightown on 16 Feb and one was off Formby Point on 5 March.

Spring passage was uneventful with single figures offshore through to June and a peak of six at Rossall on 23 April.

A handful appeared in July but there was no real hint of return passage until four off Rossall on 4 Sept; single-figure counts continued to be registered off the Fylde coast until 50 flew past Blackpool on 18 Oct, followed by 14 there on 7 Nov and eleven on the 21st. In the north the only records were four at Heysham on 4 Oct and singles at Sunderland Point and Teal Bay on the 7th and 22nd respectively, while one off Formby on 8 Oct and eight there the following day were the only records off the Sefton Coast.

UNIDENTIFIED LARGE AUKS

As usual distant birds were seen throughout the year with peak site counts of 36 off Rossall Point on 19 Oct, 30 off Blackpool on 11 June and 27 off Formby Point on 10 May. A total of 337 were recorded at Rossall during June.

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

Fairly common passage migrant on coasts, rare inland.

A reasonably productive year began with the county's earliest ever at Formby Point on 10 April and another there on the 26th. Birds were seen on three April dates off Rossall Point including 19 on the 26th with one there on 14 May and three on the 19th, when one was also seen off Blackpool. Singles were at Marshside on 5 May and Marton Mere on 7, 9 & 27 May and the last of spring was off Blackpool on 3 June.

Autumn passage began with four off Blackpool on 9 July, followed by singles at Rossall on the 13th and 23rd, and the largest count of the year, 17 roosting at Formby Point on the 14th with another on the 27th. August produced two at Rossall on the 8th with singles there on the 17th and 27th, six at Formby on the 10th with singles there and at Marshside the following day, and a juvenile on the Heysham outfalls on the 12th. No more were seen until the last at Blackpool on 1 Sept.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

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

Reasonable numbers were seen at coastal sites in spring, beginning with two off Rossall Point and one at Leighton Moss on 23 April. Further records at Rossall were four on 26 April, singles the next day and on 7 May, eleven on 20 May and four on 10 May and 7 June. Leighton Moss produced four on 26 April with one remaining until the 28th, followed by singles on 4 & 20-21 May, while Heysham logged three on 26 April, ten on the following day, one on the 28th five on 2 May and singles on the 4th and 10th. Elsewhere, three were off Knott End on 27 April when one was also seen at Blackpool with singles at the latter site on 4 May and Preston Dock on 26 May. One at Seaforth on 28 May was the only spring record on the Sefton Coast.

Singles at Knott End on 13 July and Brockholes on the 19th were the first autumn records. A moulting adult was at Heysham on 10 Aug with a juvenile there on the 25th and other coastal records at Seaforth on the 12th and the Conder Estuary and Rossall Point on the 29th. A juvenile at Heysham on 19-23 Nov was the latest ever recorded in Lancashire by eleven days.

There were three inland records: singles at Eccleston Mere on 27 April and 27 Aug, and two at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 21 April.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN*

Chlidonias leucopterus

Vagrant

One in summer plumage was at Seaforth on 18 June (D Hardaker). This was the 25th county record, eight of which have been at Seaforth.



White-winged Black Tern, Seaforth, 18 June (Steve Young)

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Common spring and autumn migrant on coasts, rare inland.

Morecambe Bay

One at Heysham on the 24th – a typical first date – was the only March record anywhere in the county. A low total of 82 bird-days were then recorded there until 13 May with a daily maximum of

20 on 24 April and just two other double-figure days. Spring passage on the north Fylde coast was a non-event with four at Knott End on 27 April and one at Cockersand the only records.

Autumn saw an increase in records. Birds were recorded at Heysham between 11 Aug and 24 Sept with the vast majority of the records comprising a roost of 82 on Red Nab on 8 Sept; 25 were off Morecambe on 6 Sept. In north Fylde one was at Barnaby's Sands on 15 June and the next on 19 July at Knott End where 731 bird-days were reported up until 13 Sept with peaks of 219 on 25 Aug, 117 on the 26th and 86 on the 30th. Eighty were near the Wyre Light on 5 Sept and single figures were seen very occasionally at Barnaby's Sands and Cockersand.

Liverpool Bay

After the first off Blackpool on 2 April and Formby Point on the 5th an unremarkable passage ensued on both the Fylde and Sefton coasts. Peak counts were 40 at Rossall on 23 April with 67 there on 6 May, 60 at Formby on 19 April and 80 on the 27th, 48 at Blackpool on the 23rd and 32 at Seaforth on the 26th.

Small numbers lingered throughout June. Birds began to return in mid-July and large numbers had been seen by the end of the month, including 282 roosting at Formby on the 23rd and 100 on the 25th. Numbers peaked there at 600 on 1 Aug but remained high for a week or two including 143 on the 10th. Other sizeable counts on the Sefton Coast included 265 at Ainsdale on 13 Aug and 62 at Seaforth on 13 July.

Although seen regularly in autumn, birds were less numerous on the south Fylde coast where 173 at Rossall on 28 Aug and 106 the next day were the only three-figure counts. Fifty at Blackpool on 26 July and 28 at St. Anne's on 15 Aug were unusually low peak counts.

The last were seen at Formby on 12 Oct.

Inland

The only record was one at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 18 Aug.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

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

Morecambe Bay

Common Terns have been scarce in Lancashire anywhere north of the Ribble for some time, especially so in Morecambe Bay, where this year numbers were on a par with those of Black Terns.

All records as follows. Singles at Heysham on 18 & 28 May, two there on 12-13 Aug and one on the 29th; two at Sunderland Point and Aldcliffe on 7 Aug; singles at Skippool on 5 Aug and Ramper Pot on the 23rd; and one at Cockersand on 10 Sept with three there on 13-14 Sept.

However, this gloomy picture was brightened by the news of the first successful breeding north of the Ribble since the demise of the Lune colony on Colloway Marsh, when a pair successfully raised two young on the Conder Pool.

Liverpool Bay

The first arrived back at Seaforth on 12 April and numbers built rapidly towards the end of the month and throughout May; 156 pairs went on to breed, hatching 138 and fledging 104 young (yielding a rate per pair of 0.88 and 0.67 respectively) and making this the most productive year at Seaforth since 2003.

Six or more were seen on Banks Marsh but no breeding was confirmed there; one pair possibly nested on Hesketh Out Marsh but no information was received from Longton Marsh.

Monthly peak counts at Seaforth

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
70	520	420	650	800	5	1

Numbers at Seaforth were swelled by the addition of migrants and birds wandering from other colonies – Shotton Steelworks on the Welsh Dee was occupied again this year – throughout the spring and summer. It is likely that significantly more than 1000 post-breeding birds were present in the south-east sector of Liverpool Bay in autumn, as indicated by a simultaneous count of 505 at Formby Point and 450+ at Seaforth on 10 Aug.

The largest other roost counts at Formby Point were 356 on 14 July, 432 on the 24th, 490 on the 27th and 400 on 1 Aug and 3 Sept.

Although birds were seen on the Fylde coast regularly throughout the season almost all counts were in single figures, the main exceptions being 91 on St. Anne's beach on 31 July, 30 at Blackpool on 31 Aug, and 15 at Lytham on 7 & 9 June and Rossall Point on 28 Aug.

The last was at Seaforth on 1 Oct.

Inland

At least 140 pairs nested at Preston Dock (120 pairs in 2013). The peak number of chicks seen there was 104 on 13 July but nine were known to have died before this date and 54 hatched subsequently, giving a hatching rate of 1.2 per pair. Although the number fledging was not known, this points to a good level of productivity, perhaps suggesting that the Preston colony may outstrip Seaforth's before too long.

Elsewhere, five pairs nested at Mere Sands Wood, one pair at Yarrow Valley Park (fledging three young) and a pair failed at Delph Reservoir.

The first in east Lancashire was at Stocks Reservoir on 27 April; one or two birds were present daily from 9-16 May at Lowerhouse Lodges and on three dates at Stocks Reservoir; a pair was at Gawthorpe on 6 May. After 13 records in May there were three in June, three in July, none in August and two in September - all of just one or two birds. One was seen fairly regularly in Rishton between 4 May and 3 July. The last was an adult on 4 Oct at Foulridge Reservoir - the latest anywhere in the county.

Other non-breeding records were up to four regularly at MMWWT (perhaps breeding birds from Mere Sands Wood), singles in Chorley at Croston, Crosse Hall, Withnell Fold, Eccleston and Mawdesley Moss, one at Brockholes on 27 April and up to three on nine dates between June and August, three at Wayoh Reservoir on 15 July and three at Eccleston Mere, St. Helens on 25-28 April.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

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

Morecambe Bay

Heysham reported a poor passage during limited coverage with just 593 individuals seen between 20 April and 20 May, 337 of these on 27 April and 145 on 2 May. The only other spring flocks were 40 over Leighton Moss on 21 April and 65 past Knott End on the 27th. Singles were on the Dockacres complex on 22 April, at Aldcliffe on 5-6 May, Leighton Moss on the 9-11th and two at Colloway Marsh and Glasson on the 27th.

There were only two definite autumn records: a juvenile at Heysham on 11 Aug - although distant juveniles there on 13 Aug and 21 Oct were described as almost certainly this species - and two at Knott End on 21 Oct.

Liverpool Bay

The first were seen off Rossall Point and Blackpool on 20 April, the same day as at Heysham.

As usual, the bulk of records and the largest numbers came from the Fylde coast with relatively few further south. Much more unusual, though, was that the total numbers far exceeded those seen in Morecambe Bay, almost entirely due to two very large movements off Rossall, 800 on 27 April and 109 on 6 May. The largest spring count off Blackpool was 43 on 7 May, and on the Sefton Coast a mere eight at Formby Point and at Seaforth.

Ones and twos seen during June and early July probably related to birds breeding or prospecting on the Ribble; one pair is thought to have nested on Hesketh Out Marsh but no information was received from Longton Marsh.



Newly-fledged Common Tern, Seaforth, 11 August
(Chris Gregson)

Autumn passage was barely discernable with twelve off Rossall on 29 Aug the only double-figure count and seven at Formby the highest further south.

Inland

Two pairs nested at Preston Dock, hatching two chicks and fledging one, and at least two more pairs were present, displaying and nest scraping.

The first migrants were three flying over Stocks Reservoir on 22 April, when eight were also seen at Lower Foulridge Reservoir. All subsequent records in east Lancashire came from these same two sites. Three were at Stocks on 25 April, at least 15 on the 26th, one the next day, two on 9 May and one on the 24th. Foulridge had one on 26 April and six the following day. There was only one autumn record, a first-winter at Stocks on 21 Oct.

The only other records came from Brockholes: five on 25 April, two on 7 May and singles on 11 May and 10 June.

ROSEATE TERN* *Sterna dougallii*

Scarce summer visitor.

Records away from Seaforth are unusual, but a brief appearance by a pair at Preston Dock on 30 July (J Wright) may hopefully presage more frequent visits to this Common Tern colony as well.

The first at Seaforth were a pair on 29-30 May with further records there of four on 17 June, and singles on 29 June and 13 Aug, and two on 1 July (AJ Conway, C Gregson *et al*).

A hybrid Roseate x Common Tern was at Seaforth on 15-16 May. It was photographed and its identity confirmed by Killian Mullarney amongst others; it seems probable that it was the bird that fledged on the nearby Langton Dock in 2010.



Hybrid Common x Roseate Tern with Common Terns, Seaforth, 15 May (Chris Gregson)

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
Rossall Point	10	63	17	42	32	1	2	0	0	2	0	4
Heysham	23	130	31	1	35	0	0	1	0	4	0	3

The year started with up to 23 birds frequenting Heysham Harbour during January and February, elsewhere along the coast single figures were seen off Rossall Point, Blackpool, Formby and Cockerens with a maximum of ten off Rossall Point on 4 Feb.

Spring passage was sparse at Heysham with a total of just 249 between February and May, of which 119 moved through on 13 Feb.; other coastal counts peaked on the same day at Knott End (29), Rossall Point (63) and Silverdale (40). Rossall Point had regular sightings throughout the remaining passage period (see above). Forty were off Blackpool on 4 May and 30 on the 7th.

During the summer months numbers were low everywhere with sightings only at Formby, Rossall Point and Blackpool. A peak count of 14 came from Blackpool on 10 June. In August ten were off Blackpool on the 3rd, four off Formby on the 11th and a single was at Crosby on the 13th.

The remainder of the year was very poor, especially at Heysham with the only records a juvenile on 29 Aug, two sightings in October and three on 11 Dec, followed by a single irregularly at the year's end. The only notable autumn count anywhere in the county was 57 off Blackpool on 7 Nov.

February brought the first records inland with one at Brockholes on the 7th, an adult at Leighton Moss on the 9th, 20th & 22nd, singles at Eagland Hill, Eccleston Mere and over fields at Pilling on the 16th, and one at MMWWT on the 23rd. Two at Marton Mere on 4 April and one on the Conder Pool on 7 May were the only other records away from the coast.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

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

International importance: 20000. National importance: 20000.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	1403	2562	1253	306	713	1619	4258	3535	6093	2463	1866	746
Ribble WeBS	/	13901	/	590	/	/	1165	2007	1676	2637	1883	1283
Marshside	30	5232	300	500	250	100	80	120	67	50	10	15
Alt WeBS	972	1107	518	118	50	191	549	890	865	1134	434	355

January counts surpassing 1000 birds came from Garstang (2000), Rawcliffe Moss (1200), Stocks Reservoir (1500) and Brockholes (1200), while February saw 2000 at Sowerby, 2000 at Belmont Reservoir, 2405 at Lytham, at least 2500 at Glasson, 4000 at Lower Rivington Reservoir, 5232 at Marshside and 10000 at Stocks Reservoir on the 23rd. The January survey of the Lancaster district located 6913 birds.

Birds moved back to the breeding colonies in numbers during March with 20000 at Stocks Reservoir by the 16th and 25000 at Belmont Reservoir by 3 April. With an amazing 10136 apparently occupied nests surveyed from aerial photographs, Belmont Reservoir is now thought to be the largest colony in the UK. The population of approximately 1200 nests at Stocks Reservoir remains stable; numbers dropped to 360 nests at Marshside and there were 679 pairs in two colonies at Leighton Moss with nearby Pine Lake having ten pairs, 58 nests on Banks Marsh and 50 at Ainsdale NNR.

Post-breeding gatherings numbered 1585 at Leighton Moss in August, 7000 feeding on flying ants at Lytham on 2 Sept, 3642 at Leighton Moss by the 8th and 2180 at Skippool Creek on the 10th. Later peak counts included 4400 near Clitheroe on 14 Nov and 10500 flying west at Warton Marsh on the 30th.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Fairly common gale-blown winter visitor, much reduced on spring passage. Small numbers of first-years in summer.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seaforth	1	1	1	25	5	4	0	1	0	3	0	0
Heysham	12	45	4	2	11	1	1	3	1	2	0	1

Onshore gales throughout the first winter period dominated records this year. Sightings were daily from Heysham and along the coast from Fleetwood to Blackpool with notable counts at Rossall Point of 49 on 2 Jan, 130 the following day and 126 on the 16th, while Blackpool had 85 on the 20th. In February 65 were off Cleveleys on the 3rd with numbers off Rossall Point building to 104 on the 13th and 52 on the 26th, while up the coast numbers also peaked at 45 on the outfalls at Heysham. There was a handful of records away from the coast in the first winter period but the only one at any distance inland was of two at Brockholes on 19 Feb.

Spring passage was difficult to differentiate from wintering birds along the coast with peak counts for Rossall Point including 33 on the 23 March, 14 on the 9 April and sightings from Formby peaking at 47 on 23 April. The poor trend over recent years continued at Seaforth with a minimum passage of just 27 birds between 10-30 April. Coastal records were low in May with a peak of eleven past Heysham on the 20th. More unusual was one at Croston on 26 March. A passage adult was at MMWWT on 17-24 April with one or two first-summers there between late April and the end of June, one was at Brockholes on 7 May and up to three were seen at both Leighton Moss and Marshside in late spring and early summer.

Very few were seen in the second half of the year – just low single figures at Seaforth, Heysham, Pilling and Marshside, the only exceptions being twelve past Blackpool on 6 Oct and eight at Rossall Point on 24 Dec. The only autumn record inland was one on Croston Moss with Black-headed Gulls on 20 Aug.

ROSS'S GULL *Rhodostethia rosea***Vagrant.**

An adult was at Leighton Moss in the afternoon of 9 Feb (G Thomas, I Walker). It was feeding on dredged material in the field at the south end of the causeway with Black-headed Gulls while periodically roosting on the stone island from the Public Hide.

The record has been accepted by the BBRC and becomes the eighth for the county (probably involving just five individuals); it was the first in north Lancashire.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

Fairly common all year. Most numerous on the coast but increasing inland. Recently established rare breeder.

Minimum number of individuals

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seaforth	1	2	3	3	5	5	19	8	11	6	1	1
Heysham	3	4	3	/	1	2	43	38	10	6	1	1

The year started with peak counts of four at Knott End and Wesham and five at Alston Wetland in late February. In March five were at Rawcliffe Moss on the 8th, six at Wesham on the 9th, daily records at Brockholes built to a peak of nine on the 17th and five at Marshside on the 29th. Spring passage numbers were low at both Seaforth and Heysham.

Fifty-six were back at Belmont Reservoir on 22 April and this colony, now thought to be the largest inland colony in the UK, saw another increase in size this year with 41-47 apparently occupied nests. Twenty-four fledged young were seen on a single day in July but the true total is likely to have been notably higher. Breeding was also confirmed at Stocks Reservoir with two pairs fledging at least one juvenile. Elsewhere in summer up to four lingered at both Leighton Moss and Marshside.

Post-breeding numbers started to build at Heysham from early June with adults peaking at 15 on 27 July followed by six first-summer and 23 juveniles on 31 Aug. At Skippool Creek numbers increased throughout August to peak at 13 on 5 Sept. Wintering birds were scattered in low numbers mainly along the coast.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant.

International importance: 16000. National importance: 7000.

Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Stocks Res	8800	6000	4500	400	200	12	94	3000	4700	6000	7000	7700

Large concentrations winter in the east Lancashire uplands, mainly recorded around Stocks Reservoir as seen in the table. Notable counts elsewhere were thin on the ground this year until birds started moving north in March with 510 at Rawcliffe Moss on the 1st, 400 at Crosby on the 8th and 520 at Glasson on 17th. The survey of Lancaster and district counted 2937 in January.

Numbers fell away through the summer with birds concentrated at a few coastal sites and Stocks Reservoir, while wintering birds started returning in August but away from east Lancashire numbers were low with the only notable count 350 at Glasson on the 2 Nov.

RING-BILLED GULL* *Larus delawarensis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, mainly in spring.

There were no new birds this year and the species appears to be becoming much rarer.

The regular returning adult wintering at Crosby and Netherton was present from 2013 until 1 April, and the second-winter seen in Liverpool at Walton in 2013 was seen again on 19 Jan.

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: 1200.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ribble WeBS	346	881	8129	12057	15266	15114	/	611	1098	334	261	28
Stocks Res	6	77	1400	170	250	200	500	1900	3200	192	10	2

Although wintering birds are increasing numbers remain low with a peak January count of 41 at Glasson. Breeding birds started to arrive as early as February with 77 at Stocks Reservoir on the 10th, 105 at Marshside and 260 at Lytham on the 16th. March saw a continued increase with 800 at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 16th and 1400 roosting at Stocks Reservoir that evening.

A survey on the Ribble Estuary revealed approximately 9041 apparently occupied nests. No survey was carried out of the Bowland Fells colonies. Around Heysham there were 64 nests on buildings around the harbour, twelve nests on power station non-operational land, ten nests on Ocean Edge and c.40 nests on Middleton Industrial Estate. Two pairs bred successfully within the Belmont Reservoir colony with an additional pair holding territory. Rooftop nesters were recorded throughout Blackpool and Liverpool, including at least 70 birds at the Jaguar Factory, Halewood early in the season.

The post-breeding flock at Stocks Reservoir peaked at 3200 on 5 Sept, while the next largest count received was 400 at Skippool Creek on the same day.



Lesser Black-backed Gull, Fleetwood, July
(Jacquie Moreton)

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

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

International importance: 13000. National importance: 7300.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	531	767	296	668	742	101	585	604	2303	287	211	966
Ribble WeBS	1099	6828	1780	2121	5265	5270	37	806	945	1225	528	368
Alt WeBS	433	1519	1750	705	647	1150	977	1846	5925	2375	735	978

Peak early winter counts included 2000 off Birkdale, 1450 at Lytham and 1000 at Knott End; 153 at Jackhouse, Oswaldtwistle on 1 Jan was the highest first winter period count in east Lancashire.

There were 600 at Rossall Point on 2 June and post breeding gatherings started with 800 at Blackpool on 14 July, 1000 on 6 Sept at Knott End, where numbers increased to 1600 by 4 Oct. Towards the end of the year 820 were at Lytham and 1800 at Knott End. Oswaldtwistle had a high count of 358 at Brookside on 16 Nov.

A survey on the Ribble Estuary revealed approximately 1371 apparently occupied nests. No survey was carried out of the Bowland Fells colonies. Around Heysham there were 30 nests on buildings around the harbour, three nests on power station non-operational land, one nest on Ocean Edge and seven pairs on Middleton Industrial Estate. One pair nested at Stocks Reservoir. Rooftop nesters were recorded throughout Liverpool and Blackpool. One pair held territory at Belmont Reservoir.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahelis*

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

The bulk of this year's records came from Seaforth, where sightings of mostly single adults were made regularly throughout; a first-winter was present there on 15 Oct.

Elsewhere, sightings for the first half of the year comprised adults at Birkdale on 4 Jan & 18 Feb, and one at Carnforth Slag Tips on 4 March. During the summer months Glasson continued to attract

a single bird with a third-summer present from 13 July to 1 Oct. Three individuals were sighted at Formby from June to August. The only other record involved an adult at Formby on 26 Dec.

CASPIAN GULL* *Larus cachinnans*

Vagrant.

A third-winter was present in the evening on Preesall Sands off Knott End on the 30 Sept (CG Batty). The bird was bearing a colour ring from Poland.



Polish-ringed Caspian Gull, Knott-end-on Sea, 30 September (Chris Batty)

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Uncommon visitor, mostly winter.

The regular wintering bird around the Marton Mere area— now a third-winter – appeared on 11 Jan and remained until 23 March.

Elsewhere in the Fylde a first-winter was at Jameson Road Landfill Site, Fleetwood on 13 Jan with probably the same bird at Barnaby Sands on the 19th and again at Fleetwood Marsh on 16 & 18 Feb, while an adult was present at Pilling Lane Ends on 16 Feb and at Fleetwood on the 28th.

The only record in the second winter period was the returning bird in the Marton Mere area, now in adult plumage, present from 23 Dec into 2015.

A second-winter at Formby on 22 March was the only record outside of the Fylde.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

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

January started off with a first-winter at Fleetwood Marsh between the 11th and 15th and a second-winter at Cockersand on the 12th. February brought a first-winter to Morecambe from the 13-15th, with single second-calendar-year birds at Rossall Point on the 25th, Seaforth on 8 April and at Hest Bank on the 30th.

During the second winter period two first-winter birds were seen during December: at Fleetwood between the 10th and 29th, roosting at Knott End on the 26-27th, and the other north over Middleton and Heysham on the 11th.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

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

International importance: 4800. National importance: 760.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	126	154	97	86	64	55	133	72	154	141	139	239
Barnaby's Sands	15	54	21	16	25	13	8	30	32	77	140	106
Ribble WeBS	42	152	17	12	23	36	4	79	93	64	62	24
Alt WeBS	76	101	207	71	97	146	130	160	257	199	140	211

High site counts not in the table included 80 at Birkdale, 59 at Lytham, 46 at Glasson and 45 at Heysham during the start of the year. The largest east Lancashire count was 40 at Fishmoor Reservoir, Blackburn on 12 Jan with three other east Lancashire sites recording low double figures.

A survey on the Ribble Estuary revealed a possible 13 pairs within the large gull colony on Banks Marsh. At Heysham one pair nested on a harbour building and one pair on power station non-operational land. A pair bred in Blackpool on a roof near Clifton Street and fledged three young. Inland, a first ever breeding record for Stocks Reservoir saw three young fledge and a pair also held territory at Belmont Reservoir. A pair bred on the Lower and Public Pools at Leighton Moss.



Great Black-backed Gull, Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, 12 July (Paul Ellis)

FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*

Abundant breeding resident.

Early-year peak counts in coastal regions included 110 at Starr Gate, Blackpool on 5 Jan, 101 at New Lane, Pilling on 16 Feb and 146 in Newsham Park, Liverpool on 27 March; the highest inland count was of c.30 in Blackburn Corporation Park on 1 Jan. The Lancaster & District January 10 km square survey counted 701 Feral Pigeons, all but 79 of them in coastal SD46. Birds were feeding young at Lytham St Annes on 13 Feb and a pair on a moorland farm at 300m asl above Belmont fledged two young on 10 June.

Counts later in the year in the Fylde were very much higher, including c.400 apiece at Singleton on 2 Oct and on Lytham Moss on the 18th; in Liverpool there were 119 in Greenbank Park on 4 Dec and 245+ at Garston Docks on the 29th. Further inland there were 76 on a pub roof in Waterfoot, Rossendale on 21 Sept while ELOC's highest count was of 22 at Brookside, Oswaldtwistle on the 29th.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Common breeding resident. Amber List (important breeding population).

By far the largest gathering in the first winter period was on Croston Moss, Chorley, an exceptional 200 on 30 Jan; 150+ were still present on 4 Feb. All other reports came from the coastal west, with modest peaks of 26 at Cabin Hill, Formby on 27 Jan and 40 on Rawcliffe Moss, Fylde on 1 March; the Lancaster & District January survey located 33 Stock Doves where 21 were counted in 2013.

Breeding reports were unusually widespread this year. In the uplands at least five pairs nested in an unoccupied waterworks building at Belmont Reservoir and there were 32 birds by the reservoir on 15 June; two pairs apiece nested at New Laithe Farm, Newton and in a barn at Roddlesworth. Observers in Rossendale recorded breeding season presence at ten locations and 20 pairs bred in nest-boxes at Arkholme in the Lune Valley. In coastal regions 45 monitored pairs of Stock Doves in the Pilling-Preesall-Stalmine-Out Rawcliffe area in Over Wyre laid 196 eggs in 96 nests and fledged 114 young, 1.2 per nest. Territorial birds were recorded at 15 locations in south Liverpool-Knowsley

and breeding by one or two pairs was recorded at Lytham Moss and Humblescough Farm, Fylde, and at Seaforth, Cabin Hill, Hesketh Out Marsh and Roby Mill in the south-west.

Post-breeding flocks inland included twelve at Jackhouse on 20 July and ten at Alden, Rossendale on 10 Aug; on the Ribble, 16 were on Clifton Marsh on 31 July and there were 15 at Hesketh Out Marsh on 25 Aug. Later in the autumn 70+ were at MMWWT on 9 & 27 Sept and there were 24 at Eagland Hill, Pilling on the 24th. Small-scale passage movements in late autumn included three birds over Heysham on 7 Oct and eleven south over Belmont in the first hour after sunrise on 1 Nov; later that day five flew south-west over Cabin Hill.

Peak counts in the Fylde during the second winter period included 44 at New Lane, Pilling on 17 Nov, 45+ at Todderstaffe Hall on 3 Dec and 35 on Clifton Marsh on the 30th; 50+ were feeding around a pile of rotting turnips at Preston Junction LNR on 16 Dec.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Abundant breeding resident.

Although not quite on the scale of 2013 some large gatherings and movements of Woodpigeons were reported in the early year from both inland and coastal regions. Six hundred moved south over Belmont on 2 Jan followed by 2000 on the 12th; there were 700 on Croston Moss on 4 Jan and 400+ at Rowley Lake in east Lancashire on the 7th. In the Fylde 2268 were on Rawcliffe Moss on 9 Jan and 500+ at Singleton on dates in February and early March; a thousand at MMWWT on 1 Jan had increased to 5000 by the 14th. Further south 460+ were at Tarbock, Liverpool on 15 Feb; the peak count on the north coast was of 500 at Hest Bank on 28 Jan while the Lancaster & District January survey recorded 1297 Woodpigeons, 615 of them in coastal SD46.

Migratory movements on a small scale were recorded over Rossall Point on some 20 dates between 1 March and 16 May with peak counts of 71 on 12 March and 95 on the 24th; 20+ moved north-east over Middleton on 5 April while flocks of 200 at New Laithe Farm, Newton on 16 March, 590+ at Oglet, south Liverpool on the 29th and 1200 on Plex Moss on 5 May presumably included some passage birds.

Although this ubiquitous species is probably our most abundant breeding non-passerine records of nesting were few, as usual: two noteworthy reports were of 75 pairs monitored in Sefton Park, Liverpool where 73% of the eggs hatched with fledging success of 81%, and 13 monitored pairs in the Pilling-Preesall-Stalmine-Out Rawcliffe area that hatched 17 of 30 eggs laid and fledged 16 young.

Post-breeding gatherings included 409 over Speke Hall on 25 July, 200 near Belmont on 3 Aug, 110+ at Singleton on the 5th and a roost of 400 at Aintree on the 27th. Apart from 1000 birds east over Heron's Reach Golf Course, Blackpool on 25 Sept, counts during September and the first half of October were on a very small scale, but the first of two major surges of migration began on 20 Oct with c.1000 north over Longridge; two days later 1220 moved south over Roby Mill in an hour while a flock of 2000 flew north-west over Singleton. On 25 Oct a total of 1097 moved south over Belmont in the first daylight hour; a season's peak count of 1975 flew east at Fairhaven on 29 Oct when 200+ were recorded at Seaforth and at Gorse Hill, Ormskirk. This phase of movements ended in early November with 1160 over Belmont on the 1st, a total of 3100 over Roby Mill during the 4-5th and 1500 going to roost at Marton Mere on the 5th.

A second influx in late November was essentially confined to inland regions: 3000 feeding on beech-mast in Roddlesworth Plantations in the West Pennine Moors on 20 Nov had increased to 5000 on the 30th; there were c.200 at Calf Hey Reservoir, Rossendale on 26 Nov while 600+ roosted in Entwistle Plantations on the 29th. Nine three-figure counts were reported during December, the highest 400 at Stocks Reservoir on 12 Dec, 450 at Leighton Moss on the 20th and 600+ at Oglet on the 25th.



Woodpigeon, Poulton-le-Fylde, August (Paul Slade)

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common breeding resident.

Twelve widespread double-figure counts were reported in the early year: inland there were 40 at Eccleston, Chorley on 7 Feb while 35 were in a tree in Clitheroe on the 22nd; other lowland peaks were 21 at MMWWT on 13 Jan and 17 on Rawcliffe Moss, Fylde on 1 March. Two hundred and twenty-nine were recorded by the Lancaster & District January survey, widely distributed across the region and well down on 2013's total, but around the average since the inception of the project in 2006.

Very slight coastal passage was reported between late March and mid-April: Heysham recorded a total of five northbound on 24 March and 14 April, two moved over Rossall Point on 2 April and three at Cabin Hill on 31 March and 3 April.

Nest-building by this most adaptable of colonists was observed at two sites in Clitheroe on 1 December but a decrease in numbers nesting in Belmont Village may be due to the increase in the Woodpigeon population there.

Autumn passage movements at an above-average level were reported from three coastal sites between late August and mid-October: a total of 19 at Cabin Hill on two dates in mid-September, nine at Heysham between late August and the end of September and movements south at Seaforth between mid-September and mid-October, peaking at eight birds on 12 Oct.

Flocks in the late year were often considerably larger than those reported in 2013, beginning with 62 at Todderstaffe Hall on 31 Aug. Subsequent counts in the Fylde included 45 at Nateby Hall on 14 Oct and 40 at Eagland Hill on 28 Nov; 32 at Roby Mill on 23 Nov and 20 at Scarisbrick on 25 Dec were the highest counts reported from the south-west. There were 34 at Cockden, north-east of Burnley on 23 Oct and the year's largest gathering of Collared Doves was of 80 birds at Glasson Industrial Park on 2 Dec.

TURTLE DOVE* *Streptopelia turtur*

Very rare passage migrant. Extinct breeder. Red List (breeding decline).

One at Seaforth on 30 May was the only record (C Gregson). In former years the south-west was the Turtle Dove's county breeding stronghold but this was the first record in that region since 2009.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Uncommon breeding bird and passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).

The first was well inland at Belmont on 14 April with the next in that region at Roddlesworth on the 22nd; east Lancashire's first arrivals were at Stocks Reservoir and in the Dunsop Valley next day. On the coast a male at Cocker's Dyke, Fylde on 21 April was followed by one on the north coast at Aldcliffe on the 25th. Subsequent arrivals in coastal and lowland regions were both slow and relatively sparse with the first in the south-west at Ainsdale NNR as late as 8 May, followed by only eight more reports in that region during the month, although one or two were regular at MMWWT from 15 May. At least ten Cuckoos were reported in the Fylde in May with another four in early June; seven May birds on the north coast were followed by three more in June.

Meanwhile, as is the norm there was much more activity in upland areas. There was a total of 67 reports from 30 sites in east Lancashire compared with 62 from 26 locations in 2013; four calling males were on Longridge Fell on 13 May and three at Stocks Reservoir on the 30th with calling continuing there to 15 June. In the Chorley region up to five were at White Coppice from 23 April with up to four present throughout May and into June, and a further three in the Rivington area. Birds were calling at nine locations in the central West Pennine Moors from early May to early June; two males were displaying to a female there on 14 June and the proposed SSSI is estimated to hold up to twelve males annually. In the north calling males were recorded at Thrusgill, Roeburndale, Langden Beck, Tower Lodge and Litledale.

As usual, it is impossible to translate most of this activity into confirmed breeding data. A female was carrying an egg, presumed a Reed Warbler's, at MMWWT on 16 June; juveniles seen on 8 & 18 August are highly suggestive of successful breeding there, and records of other juvenile Cuckoos at Cabin Hill and at Eccleston, Chorley in late July and at Briercliffe, north of Burnley and at Cribden in Rossendale in late August are probably only a small sample of successful outcomes within the county. A bird at Stocks Reservoir on 28 August was our last Cuckoo of 2014.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Uncommon breeding resident. Amber List (species of European conservation concern).

2014 appears to have been an excellent year for our Barn Owls across most regions of the county with continuing consolidation of recent range expansions in upland areas. Although no location information was provided, ELOC reported a very good breeding season with broods of up to six juveniles fledged, double broods at a number of sites with a total of nine youngsters fledged at one of these, and young being fed in a barn as late as 5 Nov.

An observer at Oakenclough on the borders of the east and north Lancashire regions reported a clear range expansion of breeding Barn Owls into that district over the past couple of years. Pairs were recorded in north Lancashire at Arkholme, Claughton and Melling.

Further south a pair nested at Brockholes and there were four occupied territories near Belmont with at least two pairs successful (three and six young fledged, respectively). Elsewhere in the Chorley region successful nesting was recorded at Anglezarke, Adlington and on Mawdesley Moss. There were no reports of breeding from the north but sightings were recorded at both Middleton NR and at Leighton Moss in several months.

There were many successful nesting records throughout the Fylde, in the south of the region at Marton Mere, Blackpool Zoo, Ballam, Elswick, Clifton and Inskip. In north Fylde in the Pilling-Preesall-Stalmine-Out Rawcliffe area 37 nests were monitored: of 206 eggs laid 141 hatched and 126 young fledged, 3.4 per pair, and there were five second broods, all successful; a total of 32 pairs was monitored and a minimum of 35 is estimated to be in the area.

As usual reports from the south-west, where Barn Owls are probably most numerous, were much more fragmentary but there were frequent sightings across the region from Hesketth Out Marsh in the north to Tarbock Green in the south and Roby Mill in the west; successful breeding was confirmed at MMWWT and at King's Moss, Rainford.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Fairly common breeding resident.

Sixty-seven reports to ELOC from 20 sites was a considerable improvement on the 49 from 13 in 2013; breeding was confirmed at two locations in the Slaidburn area and sightings of groups of three or four birds in late summer in the Waddington, Burnley and Blackburn areas were also strongly suggestive of breeding nearby. In Chorley nesting was confirmed at White Coppice with one or two fledged young in mid-July and there were other breeding season reports from Croston and Eccleston. Only one pair bred in the Belmont area but birds were present at three other sites in the central West Pennine Moors. Birds were recorded at seven locations in Rossendale with successful nesting at Lee Quarry and Clowbridge Reservoir; in the north there were sightings of Little Owls at three coastal locations and at Arkholme in the Lune Valley.

Records of mainly single birds were reported from all parts of the Fylde, many in traditional breeding locations; seven pairs were monitored in the Pilling-Preesall area, laying 24 eggs of which 20 hatched and 14 young fledged, two per pair, all in nest-boxes. Fifty per cent of last year's nest sites were unoccupied this year, although productivity was much higher than in 2013. Records were received from eleven widespread locations in the south-west, over all months; breeding was confirmed at traditional sites on Churchtown Moss, at Hightown and at Lunt, while a pair at Seaforth hatched two young that did not survive.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Common breeding resident.

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 15 Tawny Owls across the region; birds were reported throughout the year in the Leighton Moss-Carnforth area and a juvenile was at Gait Barrows in June. Elsewhere in the north pairs bred at Halton, Hornby and Whittington in the Lune Valley. Breeding was confirmed at ten locations throughout east Lancashire and was considered probable at seven others; in Chorley successful nesting was recorded at eight sites, with two pairs in Cuerden Valley Park. Observers in Rossendale recorded the species at ten widespread locations.

Calling birds were reported from all parts of the Fylde; in the south of the region breeding was confirmed at Blackpool Zoo, Clifton and Lytham Hall. The nest-monitoring programme in the Pilling-Preesall area reported an excellent season with 21 pairs laying 68 eggs, 51 of which hatched; 43

young were reared, 2.15 per pair. Two other pairs nested early, fledging at least two young each.

Five breeding pairs were reported from the Preston area with young fledged at Red Scar, Haslam Park, Cotnam, Moor Park and Grimsargh. Territorial pairs were recorded at nine widespread locations in the south-west and juvenile birds were observed at MMWWT, Roby Mill, Freshfield Dune Heath and Kirkdale Cemetery, Liverpool.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Uncommon breeding resident.

A pair nested again on Royal Birkdale Golf Course after a lapse in 2013, fledging at least one and probably two youngsters in late June; this was, however, the only breeding report received from the south-west, the species' lowland stronghold.

Elsewhere in the county the scene was little better: once again no breeding records were reported in east Lancashire although two birds were seen at Cross of Greet Bridge in late July; none were reported from the West Pennine Moors, where the proposed SSSI is estimated to hold three breeding pairs. A pair was seen with three juveniles in July at a traditional site near Belmont. A gleam of light came from the far north-east, however, where juveniles were seen at two sites on Leck Fell and at one near Thrushgill in late June. Long-eared Owls are known to nest in Rossendale and on the south-west moors in relatively good numbers but no information was forthcoming this year.

There were two records of probable migrants this year, from Hightown Dunes on the late date of 17 May and Hornby on 3 Sept. The traditional winter roost at Marton Mere contained up to three birds in January and singles in February-March with the last on 5 April; the first returner was recorded on 12 Oct and one was seen intermittently during November and most of December, but two or three birds were present on 29-30 Dec.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Scarce breeding bird, uncommon winter visitor.

Following a very quiet end to 2013 there, only one early-year record in the Fylde was unsurprising, a bird at Barnaby's Sands on 4 Jan. Things were rather livelier south of the Ribble with up to eight birds on Lunt-Sefton Meadows in January and four in February; two were on Marshside-Crossens saltmarshes in January and up to three in February and there were reports of ones or twos from Kew, Hesketh Out Marsh and Cabin Hill during January. No Short-eared Owls were reported from the uplands in the first winter period.

Only four spring migrants were recorded, two at Heysham on 27 March and singles at Marshside on the 31st and at Rossall Point on 22 April.

After a dire breeding season in 2013 this year's was very much better. On the United Utilities Bowland estate six pairs bred successfully, some being double-brooded; at least one and probably two pairs nested in the central West Pennine Moors, where the population of the proposed SSSI is estimated to reach four pairs in some years.

Passage on the coast in autumn was much more noticeable than last year's, beginning with one at Hightown on 11 Sept; in October two seen were in the Fylde, at Fleetwood and Fairhaven, and one each at Seaforth and Sunderland Point. There were four early November singles in the Fylde, at Heron's Reach, Fairhaven, Fleetwood and Pilling Lane Ends; in the south-west two were at Formby Point and one at Tarbock Green on 30 Nov. Further inland singles were on Newton Fell on 27 Sept and on Croston Moss and Adlington, Chorley on 9 & 18 Nov, respectively.



Tawny Owl, Read, 23 April
(Meurig Garbutt)

Apart from a bird at Stocks Reservoir on 27 Dec all the records at the year's end came from the south-west mosses; three were regular on Lunt and Sefton Meadows during December and there was one at MMWWT on the 14-15th.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Common and passage migrant. Amber List (breeding decline).

Spring passage began quite late: the first to arrive was over Brockholes on 20 April followed by one at Seaforth and four at Fleetwood on the 22nd; one at Morecambe on 26 April was the first migrant in the north. Inland, east Lancashire's first two Swifts were over Jumbles in the Ribble Valley on 27 April and the first two in Chorley were at Clayton on 3 May.

Movements both coastal and inland were in full swing by 8 May and continued until the second week of June; passage was particularly heavy on a broad front during 9-12 May, with 300 at Eccleston Mere, St Helens on 9 May, 500 at Ewood Bridge Sewage Works, Rossendale and 100 at Foulridge Reservoir, Colne on the 10th, 300 at Leighton Moss and 200 at Brockholes on the 11th and 150+ at Marshside on the following day. Significant movements later in the month included 350 over Brockholes on 28 May and 110 at Cabin Hill on the 30th. Sixty over Lunt Meadows on 6 June and 45 at Leighton Moss on the 9th were the last noteworthy movements reported.

ELOC reported breeding at Longridge, Ribchester, Myttons near Slaidburn, Clitheroe and Burnley centre, where birds at the Weavers Triangle Mills restoration site chose holes in the masonry to nest in rather than the newly-installed nest-boxes. Swifts bred in at least four properties in Belmont Village, in at least three sites in Chorley Town and Coppull, and at a number of locations in east Speke, Liverpool.

A cluster of reports of sizeable flocks in the last days of June, at Leighton Moss, Blackpool South Shore, Lunt Meadows and Burnley, may have involved early-departing Swifts; 500 over Brockholes on 4 July and 110 there on the 13th, 80 over Coppull Moor on the 18th and c.100 at Freehold, Lancaster on the 21st almost certainly did. Apart from 300 at Cockersand and 135 at Todderstaffe Hall, both on 1 Aug, no further three-figure reports were received but fair-sized movements were widespread to the end of the month, including 40+ at Belmont on 4 Aug, 55 at Leighton Moss next day, 25 at Higher Hodder Bridge in east Lancashire on the 16th and a very late 80 at Pilling Lane Ends on the 29th. By the last date Chorley, the West Pennine Moors and Rossendale had already seen their last Swifts of 2014. The last in east Lancashire was at Dean Clough Reservoir on 1 Sept and in the south-west at Seaforth on the 4th; three September records in the Fylde involved five birds, the last at Rossall Point on the 16th. Long after the rest of our Swifts had made their way southward the last straggler of 2014 passed over Aldcliffe on 19 Oct.

HOOPOE* *Upupa epops*

Vagrant.

One was at Treales near Kirkham from 16 to 18 April (T Ryan), the second year in a row that this southern overshoot has been recorded in spring.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Uncommon breeding resident. Amber List (species of European conservation concern).

As usual single Kingfishers were widespread on fresh and estuarine waters throughout the lowlands in both winter periods; up to three were present at MMWWT from early August and on the River Alt at Lunt Meadows in early December, and there were two in the Conder Estuary-Glasson area in autumn and at Crosby Coastal Park in December.

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded twelve birds across five 10km squares, the highest total since 2008; pairs bred on the Lune at Crook O' Lune, Caton, Hornby and Arkholme.

ELOC received 154 reports compared with 142 in 2013, 29 of these in January; breeding was confirmed at Lower Towneley Pool with two broods at Jackhouse and on the Hodder near Slaidburn, and was considered probable on Sabden Brook. Three pairs were located along c.7km of the Hodder from Arkholme Beck down to Lower Hodder Bridge. In the Chorley region Kingfishers were recorded at six locations in January; pairs bred at Belmont and in Cuerden Valley Park. Observers in Rossendale recorded presence at 14 locations in all months; breeding was considered probable at Waterfoot.

In the Fylde Kingfishers were present in the breeding season on the Wyre west of the A6 bridge and at St Michaels, to the south on its tributary stream the Brock, on the Lancaster Canal at Hollowforth and at Galgate; there were also regular reports from the Savick Brook to the east of Preston. Probable nesting at Paddock Dam, Eccleston, St Helens was the only report of breeding anywhere in the south-west.



Kingfisher, Seaforth, 2 October (Steve Young)

GREEN WOODPECKER

Picus viridis

Fairly common breeding resident. Amber List (species of European conservation concern).

ELOC received only 64 reports this year compared with 113 in 2013, and there is a suggestion that the species' range may be contracting eastwards. There were no records in the Hodder Valley apart from Stocks Reservoir and only two in the Ribble Valley, at Edisford and Hurst Green; most reports came from the Burnley area and the Pennine valleys. There was proof of successful breeding by a single pair, at Wycoller to the east of Colne.

There was no sign of eastward retreat in the north, however; Green Woodpeckers continue to thrive in the Silverdale-Warton-Carnforth area and were reported from at least eleven sites there over all months. Further inland breeding was reported from the Borwick-Capernwray area and in the Lune Valley from Hornby, Docker, Whittington, Gresgarth Hall, Arkholme and Roeburndale.

In Chorley Green Woodpeckers were recorded in four locations during the year, including a juvenile at White Coppice in late July; in the West Pennine Moors one, possibly two pairs were on territory near Belmont. Observers in Rossendale recorded birds in all months at 19 locations with breeding confirmed at Clough Head Quarry, Grane.

Nearer to the coast there were sightings in the Galgate-Ellel Grange area of north Fylde in early April; two were at nearby Thurnham Hall, where one was also recorded in 2013, in mid-month. In the south of the region one was on Lytham Moss on 12 Nov. No reports were received from the south-west this year.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Common and widespread breeding resident.

In north Lancashire 54 were counted during the Lancaster & District January survey, the highest total since 2010 with records in all eleven 10km squares; the species appears to be doing well throughout the region. A similar story applies in east Lancashire where ELOC received 123 reports during the year with drumming recorded from 8 January; breeding was confirmed at nine sites and judged to be probable in at least six others. In the Chorley area, however, the general opinion is that the species is in decline; four pairs nested in Cuerden Valley Park with another pair at Shaw Hill. In Rossendale successful nesting was recorded at Trickett's Memorial Ground, Newchurch.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers were reported from woodlands, parks and gardens throughout the Fylde with very widespread drumming recorded from 22 Feb; successful breeding took place at Blackpool's Stanley Park, Rawcliffe Hall, Elswick, Marton Mere, Thurnham Hall and Kirkham. In the south-west drumming was recorded in Prince's Park from 19 Jan and later in spring from six other locations in south Liverpool/Knowsley, with breeding confirmed at four sites. Elsewhere in the region breeding pairs were located at Roby Mill and at ten sites nearer to the coast from Mere Sands Wood and MMWWT south to Hightown and Aintree.

Reports of autumn migrants were unusually numerous and widespread in 2014, extending from the end of August to mid-November without any marked peaks. In the Fylde eleven passed over

Fairhaven between 27 Aug and 10 Nov; singles were recorded at Marton Mere, Lytham St Annes NR and Fleetwood between 30 Sept and 13 Oct. In the north one flew over Caton Moor on 19 Sept and two over Heysham on 29 Oct, while on the Sefton coast one flew south over Birkdale shore on 2 Oct and eight over Seaforth between 2 Sept and 5 Oct with two on 30 Sept.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER* *Dendrocopos minor*

Rare breeding resident. Red List (breeding decline).

In the species' former stronghold in the Chorley woodlands one was seen and heard in Yarrow Country Park on 2 March with further call records there later in the month and on 6 April, and one was reported from a Hoghton garden on 15 Sept. Elsewhere, there were reports of calling birds in Blackburn on 14 & 25 March and in the Lower Hodder Valley on the 15th. None of these records was supported with sufficiently detailed descriptions.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

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

The Kestrel is the most widespread bird of prey in the region, occurring in about 80% of all tetrads, although the highest densities probably remain in North Merseyside and south-west Lancashire.

Despite the recently documented decline, nearly twice the number of Kestrel records were received compared with Sparrowhawk. For example, Birdtrack alone logged 1420 records compared to 777, and this obviously reflects the more conspicuous behaviour of Kestrels.

Information about only a tiny fraction of breeding pairs was received and it serves very little purpose to give details of individual nests. As usual, details were received from the Pilling/Preesall/Stalmine area, where Bob Danson continued to monitor the fortunes of a number of pairs using nest-boxes. This year, eleven of twelve pairs were monitored and of 60 eggs laid, 54 hatched and a remarkable 53 young fledged, an astonishing productivity rate of 4.82 per nest and easily the highest for years.

There was some evidence of migration with, for example, the following records from Heysham: one northbound on 13 May, two south there on 13 Sept and one on the 18th.

The highest counts involved 15 around Belmont in September and October; nine together at Lunt Meadows on 16 Feb and also nine in the Dunsop Valley on 16 Nov.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

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

There were many records during the first winter period up until 5 March. A female was at Belmont during February but most records came as usual from the coastal lowlands, including 52 reports in the Fylde between January and March – impossible as always to know how many individuals were involved. Further north single(s) were seen at Aldcliffe Marsh and Leighton Moss, while singles were regular at MMWWT and other areas of the south-west mosses. A female at MMWWT on 6 May was presumably a late migrant.

In contrast to other birds of prey Merlin are still faring well in Bowland. Five pairs nested on the United Utilities Estate, fledging 20 young, and elsewhere in the AONB there was at least one other pair breeding with a further ten records of birds seen in suitable breeding habitat between 15 April and 2 July.

In recent years, there have been up to three territories on the West Pennine Moors but none was located in 2014.

Records were relatively numerous and quite widespread during the last four months of the year. The ELOC Report noted 13 reports during this period, mostly on the moors east of Burnley. Birds were seen regularly in both winter periods on Croston and Mawdesley Mosses – more often than not chasing Skylarks – and also at Brockholes. The Fylde Bird Club reported 64 records with a peak of three birds at Warton Bank in November, and there were several sightings throughout the period in north Lancashire, mainly from Leighton Moss. The south-west produced many records with regular sightings from Marshside and Crossens, Hesketh Out Marsh, Southport Beach and MMWWT.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Rare breeding bird and uncommon passage migrant.

The first records of the year were on 19 April, the earliest for some years; the only other April records were singles over Seaforth on the 22nd and one at Darwen Moor on the 24th.

More arrived during May and early June but as usual it was impossible to judge how many were breeding. The pair that have occupied a site in the east of the county for several years returned but were unsuccessful, while a pair on the south-west moor did manage to fledge young.

Regular sightings reported in the Chorley area from three specific sites over an extended period and it is thought that there were possibly up to three territories in the region, including one pair in the central West Pennine Moors that displayed but then relocated to another moorland site. Hobbies were seen at Brockholes on most days from 1 May to 21 Sept, usually singles but with two on occasion. This number and frequency of records again suggests that at least one breeding pair was present somewhere in the surrounding area. Similarly, at Leighton Moss birds were also recorded regularly from 1 May to 18 Sept.

The Fylde Bird Report gave details of twelve records from 19 April to 16 Sept and the ELOC report cited 27 reports for the year, the highest on record. Unlike in 2013, when most reports were from the east of the club's recording area, reports were received from several different locations. Although there was no proof of breeding, locations were withheld to protect possible nest sites.

In June and July, as well as in the areas already mentioned, there were a number of other records, including four from MMWWT and two from St Helens. On 1 June there was a dogfight between Hobby, Kestrel and Sparrowhawk in Speke, and during the first week in July two were seen hunting bats near Brinscall, Chorley.

There were 17 records in August and 24 in September; a migrant was attacking Swallows at Middleton NR on 4 Sept. The only October records were of a juvenile in Rossendale on the 3rd and 10th.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Scarce breeder, fairly common winter visitor.

There were many hundreds of records from all parts of the county and in all months, including 69 from 31 sites in east Lancashire; 282 were reported on Birdtrack and a meaty 370 from the Fylde.

The breeding season produced the usual picture of birds doing well in urban areas but continuing to suffer persecution in the uplands.

In Liverpool, at least three eggs were laid at the Royal Liverpool Hospital, despite very extensive building works, but the outcome was unknown. At least one young was fledged from the Tobacco Warehouse which has been occupied continuously since at least 1985, and a pair once again nested on the Anglican Cathedral. The other Liverpool site was not monitored but elsewhere in North Merseyside pairs nested in Kirkby and St Helens; no reports were received from the usual Southport site.

Pairs on St Thomas Church, St Annes and Heysham Power Station were probably unsuccessful, while one on Morrison's chimney in Chorley, were feeding at least one chick early on but it probably failed to fledge. Birds were present in the Warton Crag area throughout the year.

It was a very poor year on the Bowland United Utilities Estate where just one young fledged from four nests. Nest-robbing continues throughout east Lancashire and Rossendale, so breeding details are not published. On the West Pennine Moors, where up to six territories have been occupied in the past, breeding was proven at only two sites this year.

RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

Rare feral breeder, fairly frequent escape.

There were peak counts from Lytham Crematorium and vicinity of six birds in January, seven in February, three in April, two in May and three in October; further afield in the Fylde one was at Nateby on 17 May. Meanwhile, the colony in south Liverpool centred on Sefton and Greenbank Parks appears to have gone from strength to strength. Early year reports of three in Sefton Park and two each in Greenbank and Princes Parks were far exceeded later in the year: thirteen flew out of Sefton Park towards Aigburth Vale on 24 June, there were 13 in the park on 27 Sept and subsequent counts there reached 20 on 1 Oct and 14 on 14 Nov.

Reports from east Lancashire continued to increase although it is unclear how many of these may be due to the same one or two highly mobile individuals: one was in a Clitheroe garden in August and early September with two there on 8 Sept, two flew over nearby Whalley on 9 Sept and in Burnley on 8 Nov; one was in Towneley in early December. There was one at Ewood Bridge, Rosendale on 23 Sept and in the Chorley region ones or twos were at Whittle and Eccleston in October and in Chorley Town in December. Elsewhere in the county there were two in Preston on 31 July, a group of four at Blundellsands on 6 Aug and one at Brockholes on 1 Oct.

GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*

Vagrant.

2013: A female/immature was seen briefly flying across at Fleetwood Cemetery on 25 Sept (S Eaves). This constitutes the 23rd accepted record for this species and the first since one at MMWWT in May 2008.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were no records in the first winter period but that was more than made up for in the second.

The first was one just south of Haslingden on 28 Sept followed by one at Grove Lane Marsh, Padiham on 27 Oct. These were followed by one at Cabin Hill NNR between 3-11 Nov and two long-staying birds that both remained into 2015: the first was found near Queensway on Lytham Moss on 1 Nov and the second at Grindleton Fell, a particularly fruitful area for this species in recent years, on the 12th.



Great Grey Shrike, Cabin Hill, 4 November
(Steve Young)

WOODCHAT SHRIKE* *Lanius senator*

Vagrant.

A male was located at Aldcliffe Marsh on 8-9 May (P Woodruff *et al*). This was the ninth Lancashire record and the fifth May record in the last eight years.



Woodchat Shrike, Aldcliffe Marsh, 8 May (Joanne Bradley)

MAGPIE *Pica pica***Abundant resident.**

This remains a common species throughout the county with double-figure counts received from many areas. In the east of the county peak counts of over 20 were received from the Jackhouse/Oswaltdwistle area and Towneley with up to 50 roosting in the winter at the latter. Gamekeepers reported the shooting/trapping of 74 birds during the year in the area around Belmont. The numbers at the Egerton corvid roost site held an impressive 340 on 28 Dec while 221 entered a roost at Yarrow Valley Park on 16 Nov.

Other large roost counts in the winter periods were 91 near the M57 at Aintree on 8 Jan, 139 at Liverpool University precinct on 7 March, 63 at Preston Marina on 4 Dec and 40 at Fleetwood WWTW on the 29th.

Breeding information received was rather sparse: there were eleven pairs on EDF Energy land at Heysham and five pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath.

There was some evidence of autumn migration and post-breeding dispersal: 26 south over Cabin Hill on 17 Sept, four high south at Heysham on the 27th, 24 high ESE over Fairhaven on 17 Oct and 30 south there (in addition to the residents) on the 31st.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius***Common resident. Occasional irruptions, some winter dispersal.**

This species is not generally encountered in large numbers but can be seen almost anywhere in the county. There were many reports of 1-4 birds throughout the year from the oak woodlands in the east to the mosses of the west with peaks in the early part of the year of eight at Woodwell in January and Gorse Hill NR in February. Birds were very conspicuous in the Chorley area during April and were noted in 13 of 22 gardens in the Winter Garden Bird Survey there.

Breeding was recorded at Heysham (at least four pairs), Freshfield Dune Heath (two pairs), Hightown, Birkdale, Jackhouse and six sites around south Liverpool.

The number of records increased significantly during the autumn months when dispersal takes place. Indeed, it was a particularly noticeable passage at coastal sites: 57 were counted over Fairhaven between 5 Sept and 29 Oct with a peak of 23 on 5 Oct, 34 over Heysham between 2 Sept and 29 Oct peaking with six on 18 and 27 Sept, 56 at Cabin Hill/Ravenmeols between 9 Sept and 5 Oct with 23 on 5 Oct including a flock of 12, and 23 over Seaforth between 14 Sept and 25 Oct. Twelve birds were reported over Ingol GC and ten over Knott End GC on 29 Sept, 13 at Rossall School on 11 Oct and 14 at Jackhouse, Oswaltdwistle on the 29th. Smaller numbers of migrating birds were reported from a great number of other locations during this period.

Up to seven were seen continuously collecting acorns at Lunt Meadows from September to mid-October. Numbers then dwindled to the end of the year with a maximum of seven at Gorse Hill NR in December.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula***Common breeding resident, some autumn movement.**

In the early part of the year there were several three-figure counts, mainly in the Fylde and Preston area. The largest roost was of 1500 at Cuerden Valley Park during January and large flights were noted going west between J2 and J3 of the M65, probably heading for that same roost. Nine hundred were counted at Fluke Hall, Pilling during January and 400 each at Out Rawcliffe and Brockholes. There were good numbers in the Cabin Hill/Formby area with 720 at Marsh Farm on 3 Jan and 280 at the Range playing fields on 13 Feb. Over 400 were with Magpies in the Egerton roost in February. In the east of the county numbers increased around March with 350 over the causeway at Stocks Reservoir on the 7th and 500 roosting at Padiham on the 11th. Nordic birds were reported at Higher Towneley Playing Fields on 21 Feb and another was at Ightenhill Bridge, on 6 May.

The species continues to increase around Belmont with a resident flock of 50-70 present throughout the year with a maximum of 120 around sheep-feeders in February and five pairs breeding in the church steeple of St Peter's; more than 80 were around the breeding 'cliffs' in both Withnell Quarry and Whittle Quarry. Post-breeding concentrations included at least 700 at Edisford, Clitheroe on 20 July and 250 at Lower Towneley Scrape, Burnley on 12 Aug.

As usual, there was a noticeable autumn passage: 2397 were counted through Seaforth between 10 and 31 Oct with significant peaks of 358 on the 25th and 415 on the 29th. At Heysham, a total of 553 was recorded with a peak of 230 on 12 Oct including one flock of 170. There were also 200 south over Rossall School on the 12th, 200 over Haslingden on the 15th and 270 in four flocks were observed over Champion Moor on the 17th. Smaller flocks were noted at several locations around south Liverpool/Knowsley during this period.

During November there was a large gathering of 1500 roosting at Roughley's Wood, Lunt. Other large counts in the second winter period included 800 at Fluke Hall, 350 at Stocks Reservoir, 300 at Cuerden Valley Park and 250 at Crook o' Lune.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Abundant resident.

Rookery counts were received from many areas and are summarised in the table below. There are the usual ups and down; Chorley Naturalists reported another small increase in their area, as did the rookeries at Turton but the count at Roby Mill was the lowest since 1990.

Chorley region	Nest count	Fylde	Nest count
A49 Euxton	36	Green Drive, Lytham	14
Howard Arms, Whittle Springs	35	Cropper Lane, Marton	1
Railway Road, Adlington	41	Churchtown	140
Prospect House, Wheelton	45	Ellel Grange	46
Lower Wheelton	8	Forton	8
Red Cat, Wheelton	1	Garstang	27
St Chad's Wheelton	8	Little Singleton	16
Croston Bowling Green	88	Potters Brook	20
Croston Town Road	5	Poulton-le-Fylde (two sites)	53
Croston Westhead Road	5	St Michael's on Wyre	23
Town House Farm, Brindle	27	Bartle Hall	92
Brindle Village	3	Clifton	20
Buckshaw Village	4	Knott End	13
		Kirkham	25
East Lancashire/West Pennine Moors		Cockerham	95
Towneley Park, Burnley	27	Eagland Hill	4
Victoria Park, Nelson (new site)	7	Nateby (three sites)	63
Bowland School	4	Myerscough	14
Glebe House, Slaidburn	8		
Langcliff Cross	21	South-west	
High Moor Clitheroe	12	Haydock Racecourse	24
Mearley Hall	7	Scarisbrick (two sites)	19
Mitton Road Whalley	18	Bank Brow, Roby Mill	45
Bowling Green Slaidburn	16	Maghull	40
Brownhill, Blackburn	5	Netherton	10
Brungerley Bridge	6	Fazakerley	7
Turton/Edgworth (two sites)	78		
Irwell Vale	11		

Few large flocks were reported during the winter months. The Upper Rivington roost site held 150 in January and 100 in November, while the Delph and Entwistle Plantations roosts peaked at 150 in October and November. Flocks of 200 were noted in the MMWWT/New Lane area and 110 were at both Cabus and Sowerby during the early part of the year. The species remains rather scarce around

Liverpool. Larger counts from later in the year included 225 at Thurnham on 8 June and 180 at Mythop on 22 Sept.

A few migrants were noted with the most prominent being 13 over Seaforth on 28 Oct, 29 over Heysham on the 30th and seven there on the 31st.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Abundant breeding bird. Some southward movement in October.

Sizeable concentrations of Carrion Crows seem to be on the rise and not always at roost sites, although these normally account for the largest counts such as 300 at Delph Plantations in January, 200 there in February and March as well as at Upper Rivington. There were 210 near a roost at Sefton Meadows on 11 Feb, 174 at Sefton Park, Liverpool on 6 Feb, 150 at Brungerley Bridge on 31 Jan, 60 at Jameson Road Landfill Site on 24 Jan and at least 100 were feeding on recently muck-spread fields near Rishton on 1 Feb.

A couple of migrant flocks were noted in March and April with 54 'vis-mig' records at Heysham, ten at Rossall and 25 in one loose flock heading east over Rishton on the 27 April. There were still 150 in the Delph Plantations roost on 7 April.

Paul Slater reported that feeding of Carrion Crows near Speke Hall has changed their attitudes to people in an area where they were once shot and are now a lot less wary – the attraction of crows to an area of land designated for ground-nesting birds is unwanted side-effect.

A flock of 75 near Glasson on 8 June was unusually high for the time of year. A steady autumn passage was noted with peak daily counts of 42 at Cabin Hill on 3 Nov and 31 at Seaforth on 10 Oct; a flock of 100 was noted at Ewood Bridge SW on 14 Sept. At the end of the year, the West Pennine Moors roosts included peaks of 400 at Delph Plantations in December, 150 at Upper Rivington on 14 Dec and 200 at Entwistle Plantations on 23 Nov. Gamekeepers at Belmont reported shooting or trapping 192 Carrion Crows throughout the year.

Leucistic birds were seen at Clitheroe on 10 March, Sawley on 13 Oct and on Belmont Moor during November and December.

HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix*

Scarce winter visitor or early spring passage migrant; has bred with Carrion Crow.

Single birds attributable to this species, or possibly hybrids with Carrion Crow, were recorded at several lowland locations in the first winter/spring period. The first at Sefton Meadows on 11 Feb was followed by singles over Rossall Point on 19 March and 12 April. Two were reported in Stanley Park, Liverpool on 26 March and a single was at Cabin Hill on 30 April. One flew north high over Heysham on 24 April.

The sole record in the latter half of the year was again of an apparently migrating bird at Rossall Point on 10 Nov.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Scarce resident.

Though still classed as a scarce resident, the propensity for this species to travel some distances in its daytime activities results in it being reported in small numbers from a great many sites across the whole county.

The most regular sightings of more than just a couple of birds came, unsurprisingly, from Bowland and Warton Crag. The largest count was a total of 15 flying north at Stocks Reservoir on 22 Nov with six at Champion Moor a week earlier. Eight were at Hornby on 20 Feb and up to eight were reported from Warton Crag/Silverdale Moss early in the year. Family parties of six or more were noted at Whitworth, Rishton Reservoir, Warton/Freckleton, Pollard Moor and Shedden Clough in late spring and summer. Six birds flew north-west over Bispham on 27 Dec.

The pair at Warton Crag was carrying food to young in the nest on 22 March while another pair was swapping incubation duties at a nest site near Nateby on the 27th. Two pairs nested on the West Pennine Moors with at least three fledged young. Birds were seen fairly regularly around Sefton Park, Liverpool and Speke; a bird calling from the gasometer at Garston in December could be the prelude to breeding there in 2015.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Common breeding bird, especially in the east. Common double passage migrant and winter visitor in variable numbers.

Goldcrests were reported more widely than last year in both winter periods. Records at Cabin Hill in January were described as unusual as were four overwintering birds at Heysham which made the start of spring migration difficult to determine. There were counts of ten at Mere Sands Wood in January and twelve at Leighton Moss in March. Sixty-nine were found during the LDBWS January survey.

There was a small but steady spring passage: 156 bird-days were recorded at Fleetwood with a maximum of 18 on 30 March and a similar number the same day at Heysham.

The first record of song was at Poulton-le-Fylde on 11 Jan but more records started to arrive from mid-February. Singing males were in evidence around south Liverpool/Knowsley from 19 Feb and recorded at 15 sites there during the spring. Singing males were more difficult to come by on the Fylde but were recorded at eight sites. Up to ten singing males were at the Hermitage Estate, Crook o' Lune. During April, good numbers were present at Langden Intake in Bowland and there were five singing males at Calf Hey Reservoir. There seemed to be good numbers in Rossendale with several family parties reported there and also in east Lancashire during August.

Autumn passage reflected the successful breeding season with very good numbers seen at several locations; 312 were trapped on Billinge Hill between 25 July and 16 Nov with 19 ringed on both 21 Sept and 2 Oct. At Heysham there were daily double-figure counts during September which then dropped through October until the last week when there were peaks of 20 on the 30th and 30 the following day. Birds continued to move through until late November there. One hundred and twenty-nine were recorded through Fleetwood and Marshside had a relatively good passage with peaks of over 15 on 16 Sept and 25 on the 30th. There were also good autumn counts in the east with 28 around Whalley on 29 Oct, 45 at Jackhouse Reservoir on the 31st and 20 in Grindleton Forest on 18 Nov. Only a light passage was noted from Birkdale, Seaforth and Cabin Hill.

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

Uncommon passage migrant, scarce in winter.

An overwintering bird, originally reported on 12 Nov 2013, was seen irregularly at Leighton Moss between the Causeway and the Lower Hide until 29 March.

There were two records later in the year: one at Fleetwood on 6 Oct and one in Southport on 14 Nov.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant breeding bird. Marked autumn passage.

Early in the year there were counts of 50 at Challan Hall, near Silverdale and 35 at Arkholme.

The species seemed to have a good breeding season in contrast to the past few years. In the Pilling/Preesall area 98 nests were monitored with 860 eggs laid, from which 675 eggs hatched and 576 young fledged. The nest-boxes at Heysham saw five successful attempts with decent brood sizes but two nests were partially predated and 39 nestlings fledged. The number of breeding pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath was down from eight to three. Nine pairs were located around Aintree, three at Cabin Hill and five pairs were at Brockholes. Three separate nest-boxes in one garden in Rishton successfully fledged at total of 16 young; two of these nests were in very close proximity being either end of a three-chamber "Sparrow terrace". At Moor Piece 29 boxes were in use compared to 18 the year before. Five pairs used boxes at Bowland Wild Boar Park and seven pairs used nest-boxes at Crook o' Lune.

Nest-boxes in the Lancaster district – Whittington, Roeburndale, Warton Crag, Leighton Moss and Teddy Heights (Cumbria) – recorded a population of 52 pairs compared to an average of 50 during 2007-2013 with all of the nest-box schemes reporting good productivity. Post-breeding ringing totals supported this with 308 ringed at Heysham and Middleton NR (compared with an average of 183 during the period 2000-2013).

There was a steady though small autumn passage. However, this included some notable peaks with over 40 at Marshside on 30 Sept, 35 at Leighton Moss on the 15th, 22 at Calderstones on the 17th and 20 at Lancaster University on the 31st.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant breeding bird, less common on autumn passage than Blue Tit.

In the Lancaster area a nest-box study recorded a population of 57 pairs, compared to an average of 64 between 2007 and 2013, with good productivity. A total of 144 fully-grown birds were ringed at Heysham NR compared with totals of 38-105 during 2000-2013.

A check on the nest-box usage at Moor Piece found Great Tits using 42 compared to 24 in 2013. Regular patch-workers recorded the following number of pairs: Freshfield Dune Heath five, Brockholes five, Aintree ten, Wild Boar Park four, Cabin Hill two and Crook o' Lune six.

In the Pilling/Preesall area 52 nests were monitored with 404 eggs laid from which 260 eggs hatched and 225 young fledged.

Many sites had peak counts during the year in the region of 10-20 but the largest numbers were at Challan Hall with 40 on 30 Jan, Warton Crag with 25 in April and Brockholes with 23 in January.

Very little passage was noted apart from Belmont where there were 24 on 5 Oct and 13 on the 10th.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common breeding bird. Some irruptive movements in autumn.

It was a fairly standard year for Coal Tits with the majority of sightings and larger numbers concentrated in the east and north of the county, especially in coniferous plantations.

Fifty were ringed in a couple of hours at a garden feeding station adjacent to Browshome Hall on 19 Jan and at least 30 were at the feeders at Stocks Reservoir on the 25th. Good numbers breed in the Sefton Coast pinewoods but no specific reports were received this year. Elsewhere, small numbers were present at many widespread locations although there was a peak of 20 at Challan Hall on 20 Jan.

Five nest-boxes were used at Moor Piece, a single pair bred at Cabin Hill and also at Aintree despite a large number of conifers in the area. At least ten pairs nested at the Hermitage Estate, Crook o' Lune with the first juvenile seen on 6 June, a month earlier than 2013.

There was little autumn passage activity either – Heysham had a peak of just seven on 2 Oct – the only exception being at Belmont on the morning of 5 Oct when 52 were counted moving south.

WILLOW TIT* *Poecile montana*

Scarce breeder in the birch copses of the south-west. Very rare elsewhere.

The plight of this species has been widely publicised recently so it was good to receive more records than usual.

In the south-west the species was frequently encountered around Billinge Hill throughout the summer and autumn with a total of ten ringed there, including eight juveniles. Birds were also present at nearby Crawford, Kirkby Moss, King's Moss, Roby Mill and Upholland. One was regular at Carr Mill Dam in the first winter period and holding territory later in the year. There were also records from Wagon Lane, Haydock, Sankey Valley and Eccleston Mere. There were also occasional sightings at Gorse Hill near Ormskirk.

In the Chorley area there were January sightings at Lower Healey, Arley and Hic Bibi with further records during the year at these sites as well as Great Knowley, Yarrow Valley Park, Chisnall and Croston Moss. Martin Mere chipped in with a couple of records on 30 Oct and 15 Nov.

On 24 Aug one, initially identified as Marsh Tit, was trapped at Brockholes. This bird was seen regularly from mid-October through to 12 Dec. There was also a record from nearby Cuerden Valley Park on 3 Dec, increasing the hope that the species may re-colonise areas around what is now the M65 corridor.

MARSH TIT* *Poecile palustris*

Fairly common breeder in the north of the county. Virtually absent south of the Ribble and in the Fylde.

The Lancaster January survey showed the localised nature of this species with 29 in SD47, four in SD66 and five in SD67. Peak counts were of ten at Challan Hall and nine at Woodwell but otherwise most records from individual observers came from Leighton Moss and the surrounding area. The Warton Crag RSPB census recorded a double-the-average ten pairs while seven pairs were recorded in the Trowbarrow Woods.

There was a small population in the Lower Hindburn and Roeburndale area around Wray and one or two isolated pairs in the Summersgill/Botton Mill area of Hindburndale but probably none in Roeburndale further upstream than Outhwaite.

BEARDED TIT *Panurus biarmicus*

Resident at Leighton Moss. Rare elsewhere.

Once again, the only records came from Leighton Moss this year with peak field counts of 15 in the early part of the year and 25 in October.

The long term colour ringing programme of this elusive species continued with an estimated 24 pairs breeding, up from 18 in 2013. The study identified 21 individual adult males, 20 adult females and a total of 70 young were ringed, one of which was seen at South Walney, Cumbria later in the year.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Abundant breeding bird and passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).

Three hundred feeding in tide-wrack along Southport Shore on 6 Jan was the largest gathering reported in the first winter period, followed by 120 and 204 on nearby Marshside-Crossens saltmarsh on 2 & 27 Feb. As usual counts in the Fylde were much lower, peaking at 80 at Ballam on 2 Feb and 60+ at Bradshaw Lane Head, Pilling on the 16th. The Lancaster & District January survey recorded a total of 44 Skylarks in two 10km squares, one coastal and the other in the far north-east. Inland a flock of 40 on Croston Moss on 3 Jan had increased to c.100 by 6 Feb; there were no January records in the uplands with the first recorded in east Lancashire on 3 Feb, and there were twelve on Pendle Summit on the 16th.

At least ten were in song at Belmont by 22 Feb. No significant spring movements were reported.

Breeding pairs were widespread in east Lancashire, exemplified by a total of 24 territories on Easington Fell. In the Chorley region Coppull Moor and the mosslands are now the main breeding stronghold of Skylarks outside the West Pennine Moors, where a BTO/BBS on a 1km square on Darwin Moor in May recorded four territories, as in 2013; however, the total population of the proposed SSSI there is cautiously estimated at 1000 pairs.

The south Ribble marshes and adjacent mosses host the Skylark's main breeding population in the lowlands; this year there were 68 pairs on Hesketh Out Marsh, 48 at MMWWT and 46 at Marshside-Crossens. Just across the estuary 17 pairs nested on Freckleton Marsh, 13 on Newton Marsh and twelve at Grange Farm but numerous territorial males were recorded in all parts of the Fylde. Further south there were c.15 pairs apiece on Birkdale Green Beach and at Lunt Meadows and six each at Cabin Hill and on Garston Shore, south Liverpool.

Autumn movements began on a small scale in early September and built up slowly during the month: 80 were at Cockersand on 11 Sept and 120 on the 20th, the season's peak of 18 flew over Caton Moor on the 17th and there were 30 at Swinden Reservoir in east Lancashire on the 22nd. Overall passage numbers this year were on the low side: Seaforth recorded a total of 1794 between 16 Sept and 29 Oct, 1077 passed over Fairhaven between 6 Sept and 17 Nov and 232 migrants were recorded at Heysham from 2 Sept to 18 Nov. The main passage was concentrated into the first three weeks of October and was almost entirely confined to coastal regions: peak counts included 250 at Lunt Meadows on 2 Oct, 434 at Seaforth and 200 at MMWWT on the 8th, 256 at Fairhaven and 220 at Seaforth on the 10th and 400+ at Marshside on the 18th with another 367 there next day.

Sporadic movements by substantial flocks were reported well into November including 200 on Downholland Moss on 7 Nov, 85 at Barnaby's Sands on the 9th and 80 over Fairhaven on the 18th, but wintering birds were installed at a number of coastal locations before the end of the month. In the uplands the last reported in Rossendale was at Holden Wood Reservoir on 9 Nov and the last in the ELOC region was at Jackhouse on the 20th.

Late year flocks were at an average level but, with the exception of 120 at Scarisbrick on 25 Dec, all the three-figure counts came from the Fylde or further inland: there were 100 at Eagland Hill, Pilling on 23 Nov, 200 on Warton Marsh on the 30th, 100 on Croston Moss on 2 Dec and 150 at Bradshaw Lane Head on the 31st.

SHORE LARK* *Eremophila alpestris*

Rare winter visitor

A bird at Rossall Point from 3 Dec into 2015 provided close views for many appreciative visitors (J Sheldon); this was our first record since one at Carnforth Slag Tips during January-April 2011.



Shore Lark, Rossall Point, 14 December (Lesley Robb)

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Common breeding bird and passage migrant. Amber List (species of European conservation concern).

Three at Marshside on 3 March were a week ahead of average arrival date and were followed by one at Brockholes on the 10th; next day one was over Blackpool North Shore and there were four at Leighton Moss. In contrast to last year arrivals came thick and fast during the rest of March: the first Sand Martins in east Lancashire were at Stocks Reservoir and Ightenhill Bridge on 16 March and there were 28 more reports before the end of the month, including 26 on the Altham-Martholme stretch of the River Calder on the 30th. The first to arrive in Chorley was at Croston Twin Lakes on 23 March and there were 45 at Wenning Foot in the Lune Valley on the 27th. Meanwhile, 100 were at Brockholes on 23 March and there were 33 more March records in the Fylde with 130+ at Preesall Flashes on the 30th; 100+ were at Leighton Moss on the 31st.

April movements were about average with coastal peaks of 200 at Marton Mere on 3 April and 150+ there on the 10th; 130 passed through Marshside on the 22nd. Six three-figure counts were reported from east Lancashire, the highest 200 at Alston Wetlands on the 12th, Foulridge Reservoir on the 20th and Stocks on the 23rd. Passage had effectively concluded before the end of the month with only single-figure counts from coastal watchpoints in the first week of May.

Although no information was received from the Lune Valley, colonies breeding in other regions appears to have done very well in the relatively warm and dry summer weather. On the Ribble upstream of Preston there were 200+ active nest-holes by Cuerdale Hall and another 25 opposite Brockholes Wetland in June and July. On the other side of the city 135 pairs were counted at Lightfoot Green on 11 June; in north Fylde about 120 nests were active at Cockerham Quarry on dates in May and June with birds still around the site in good numbers up to mid-August. In east Lancashire there were 70 pairs in the traditional three colonies on the Calder between Altham and Martholme and at least 50 active nests on the Hodder above Stocks Reservoir; Sand Martins also bred in Burnley and at Witton Country Park, Blackburn. At Alston Wetlands there were 13 occupied nests in the new nest-

box chambers. In Chorley region c.70 active nests were reported from a sand-quarry at Adlington; ten active nests at Hesketh Out Marsh was the only breeding report from the south-west.

The first southbound migrants were at Seaforth on 15 July but movements everywhere remained at very low levels until a brief surge in early August when there were 300 at Cockersand on the 4th and 400 there on the 7th, 200 at Leighton Moss on the 5th and c.1500 with other hirundines over Barnsfold Water near Goosnargh on the 8th. All subsequent reports away from breeding colonies were only in double figures, including 14 over Caton Moor on 22 Aug and 50 at Gressingham on the Lune on the 28th.

There were numerous September records although the numbers involved were very low apart from 68 still around the Lightfoot Green colony on 3 Sept. The Fylde website received another nine reports in September, there were three records in east Lancashire with the last at Gawthorpe on the 7th while one at MMWWT on the 13th was the last Sand Martin in the south-west. Four birds south at Crook o' Lune on 17 Sept ended the year in the north and there were seven at Belmont on the 22nd; almost three weeks later ten birds south over Carr House Green Common, Fylde on 11 Oct were the last migrants of 2014.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Abundant breeding bird and passage migrant. Amber List (species of European conservation concern).

Three northbound Swallows along Southport seafront on 5 March were the earliest arrivals recorded in the county to date; they were followed by one over Billinge Hill, St Helens on the 11th. Ten days elapsed before more widespread reports of single birds, at Marshside on 21 March, Withnell Landfill and Lower Dean Clough Reservoir in east Lancashire on the 22nd and Seaforth on the 24th. Three at Great Marton and one at Middleton NR on the 29th were the first Swallows in the Fylde and the north respectively; one at Croston next day began the spring passage in Chorley region.

Subsequent movements, fairly average in volume, were more brisk than usual and had effectively ended by the middle of May. Substantial passage began earlier at inland locations with 100 at Stocks Reservoir on 12 April and 200 at Foulridge Reservoirs on the 13th, when 20 per hour flew north at Belmont and 150 moved through Brockholes; 300 were at Stocks on the 20th. Coastal counts during the month included 360+ at Heysham, 120 at Cockersand and 223 over Rossall Point on 21 April and another 485 at Rossall, 200 at Knott End, 150+ at Marshside and 102 at Seaforth next day. A comparative lull then ensued before heavy movements in May brought 574 over Rossall Point on the 6th, 473 there on the 13th and 200+ to Marshside on the 15th. One hundred and eighteen over Rossall Point on 19 May was the last three-figure count reported.

As usual breeding data received represented only a minuscule sample of this abundant species' population. Nesting was recorded at several locations in the Fylde; in the Pilling-Preesall area Over Wyre 118 nests belonging to c.71 pairs were monitored and 470 young fledged from the 550 eggs laid. Breeding was recorded at eight locations in the south-west including 23 pairs in the stables adjoining Freshfield Dune Heath; in Chorley region Swallows nested at all the farms in two BBS squares at Brindle and up to 15 pairs bred in the Belmont Reservoir area.

Post-breeding movements and roosts were in evidence from the first week of July: there were 150 at Quernmore in the north on 14 July when 400 per hour also passed over Cabin Hill; a roost at Middleton NR held 100 on 7 July, 300 on the 16th and 120 at the end of the month. Two hundred-plus were at Marton Mere on 22 July and a roost at Jameson Road Landfill, Fleetwood contained 2100 on the 28th; at around the same time up to 400 Swallows were roosting at Billinge Hill. The Jameson Road roost persisted throughout August with 3550 on the 7th and 2000 on the 31st; meanwhile there were 400 at Granny's Bay, Fylde on 25 Aug and 465 over Rossall Point and 220 at Seaforth on the 27th. Next day 2500 roosted at Gressingham in the Lune Valley.

Heavy passage continued through the first half of September but tailed off very quickly thereafter. The Jameson Road roost held some 1100 on 3 Sept when Marton Mere and Knott End both recorded 200 apiece, and there were 550 at Leighton Moss and 375 at Seaforth next day and 1200+ at Skippool on the 10th; inland 190 were at Whalley Sewage Works on 3 Sept, 300 at Belmont on the 6th, and 135 moved over Caton Moor on the 10th. Two massive movements on 18 Sept, c.4000 at Barnsfold Water near Goosnargh and 1036 over Rossall Point, and a passage of 370 over Heysham signalled the end of heavy migration; only one later count in low three figures was received although smaller parties continued to move south until the middle of October.

There were 36 October reports in the Fylde including 67 at Carr House Green Common on the 8th; in east Lancashire 52+ were at Longridge on 2 Oct and 60+ flew south over Thieveley Scout on the 10th with the region's last Swallow of 2014 at Laneshaw Bridge, east of Colne on 17 Oct. In the south-west both Billinge Hill and Seaforth reported four October records and the last migrant at MMWWT was on the 19th.

There were three November records in 2014: the last Swallow in the north was at Teal Bay on 18 Nov and in the Fylde at Knott End on the 24th, while two over Formby beach on the following day closed out the year.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Common breeding bird and passage migrant. Amber List (breeding decline).

Four on the Lune at Wenning Foot on 27 March were the first House Martins of 2014, closely followed by four at Marshside and three over Rossall Point on the 30th; singles at Cuerden Valley Park on 3 April and at Ightenhill Bridge on the 6th were the first to arrive in Chorley and east Lancashire respectively. Movements during April were exceptionally sparse with only three double-figure counts reported, 13 at Starr Gate, Blackpool on 21 April, ten over Rossall Point next day and 23 at Alston Reservoirs on the 24th.

Despite generally favourable weather not a single three-figure movement was recorded in May although birds continued to trickle through in all regions: 40 at Marton Mere on 7 May, 50 at Fleetwood on the 10th, 35 at Seaforth on the 24th and 36 at Stalmine on the 28th were the peak counts on the coast; in the uplands there were 20 at Langden Intake on the 21st.

Notwithstanding the lack of passage numbers the breeding situation appears to have been very much as normal. Nesting was reported at eleven widespread locations in the Fylde and at ten in the south-west; in east Lancashire House Martins bred at Burnley, Croasdale House, Ewood, Longridge, Mellor, Rishton, Slaidburn, Waddington and Whalley, with young still in the nest in Burnley on 5 Sept. In the Chorley region nesting took place at two sites in Cuerden Valley Park and there were 13 active nests in Belmont Village, a slight recovery after 15 years of steady decline. Forty-plus pairs bred on a barn wall in Hoghton and in late August birds were feeding young in nests at Heath Charnock, Heapey and Chorley town, where a pair had young in the nest as late as 27 Sept. In Rossendale nesting was reported from Waterfoot, New Line Reservoir and Haslingden.

Autumn passage began on schedule in early August and in contrast to spring was well up to normal levels, although most of the peak counts this year were unusually early, perhaps as a result of the exceptionally cool August weather. Two hundred and eighty were at Bank End in north Fylde on 8 Aug and 200+ at nearby Thurnham on the 15th; heavy movements at the end of the month brought 190 to Seaforth on 25 Aug, 112 over Rossall Point on the 27th, 100 to Leighton Moss on the 30th and 300 to Cabin Hill next day.

Meanwhile, inland there were 50 at Chatburn on 9 Aug and 250 over Towneley Hall, Burnley on the 19th; in step with movements on the coast there were 50 at Gressingham in the Lune Valley on 28 Aug and 40 at Brockholes on the 29th.

September peaks were heavily concentrated in the first two weeks, with 100+ at Bank End on 2 Sept and over Whalley Sewage Works next day, 50 at Rowley Lake on the 5th, 40+ at Cabin Hill and over Sefton Park, Liverpool on the 6th, 200 at Wilcock's Farm, Rivington on the 11th, and 60 at Grove Lane Marsh and 50 at Slaidburn, both in east Lancashire, on the 15th.

Movements continued on-and-off at a lower level through the rest of September with 38 over Rossall Point on 18 Sept, 58 at Whalley next day and 50 at Brockholes on the 21st the highest counts received. October House Martins were more numerous and more widespread than usual this year. There were seven records in the



House Martin collecting mud, Seaforth, August
(Chris Gregson)

Fylde, including 28 over Fairhaven on 16 Oct; the last in the region and the county was at Knott End on the following day.

The last migrant in the north was at Heysham on 2 Oct and in the south-west at MMWWT on the 12th. As in 2013 late stragglers were even more evident at inland locations: two at Adlington on 8 October were the last in the Chorley region and four records in east Lancashire during 4-8 Oct totalled 21 birds. In Rossendale a total of 72 House Martins in three flocks were at Warth and Lench during 5-8 Oct and the last inland migrants were 23 at Brockholes on 9 Oct.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Recently established breeder; some winter dispersal.

The consolidation of the species continued with birds at several new sites. At the strongholds up to six were singing at Marton Mere where eight birds were ringed, while the Leighton Moss population was considered stable with four territories. There was spill-over in both of these areas, with records from Staining Nook and the De Vere hotel pond at the former and up to two pairs at the Eric Morecambe complex and Silverdale Moss near the latter. Birds were also presumably resident at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, where six individuals were trapped during the year.

During spring migration in April single(s) were at MMWWT on the 3rd and 12th (B McCarthy, JK Bannon), one was trapped at Rossall School (SP Eaves) and another was seen at Sunderland Point on the 23rd. A male which arrived at Wango Lane, Aintree on around 9 April sang until 5 June and was the first record for North Merseyside (K Fairclough).

The first for the ELOC recording area was found at Lee Green Reservoir on 26 July (N Leeming). There were at least three birds at Heysham in September, with individuals trapped at the nature reserve on the 21st and Middleton NR on the 28th and 30th (A Draper, PJ Marsh, A Mason, J Roberts).

In the final quarter of the year one was singing in the Alt reedbed at Hightown on 29-30 Oct (D Hardaker, PH Smith). There was one at Brockholes from late November onwards, with two on the 25th-26th the first multiple occurrence there (WC Aspin *et al*). Finally, the second record for east Lancashire was again at Lee Green on 31 Dec, remaining into 2015 (A Holmes *et al*).

This species has been removed from the list of county rarities requiring descriptions with effect from January 2015.



Cetti's Warbler, Wango Lane, Aintree, 5 June
(Tony Small)

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common breeding resident. Some irruptive movement in autumn.

The most comprehensive information was received from Heysham where ringing efforts showed good survival rates during the 2013/14 winter. There were four territories on EDF Energy land there and two at Middleton NR; most autumn birds trapped appeared to be local dispersals with the only evidence of longer range movement shown by 15 that moved rapidly through on 27 Sept. The annual January survey of Lancaster and district located 399 birds.

The highest counts in east Lancashire were 36 at Jackhouse on 9 Aug, 35 at Whalley on 29 Oct and 30 at Moor Piece on 14 Nov. The maximum in the Belmont area was 35 on 25 Oct, and in the Aintree study area 46 on 5 Nov. Other counts of 30 or more comprised 40 at Marton Mere on 26 May, 31 at Brockholes on 8 Jan with 43 there on 28 Sept, 30 at MMWWT on 12 Oct and 37 at Mere Sands Wood in November.

No significant breeding information was received. Other than the Heysham flock above the only other strong evidence of autumn movement was nine south at Seaforth on both 16 & 17 October.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER* *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Scarce autumn passage migrant.

A good if increasingly expected showing of a dozen birds was highlighted by early and late individuals, but was also notable for the absence of any records in the Fylde.

A first-winter was trapped and ringed at Billinge Hill on the early date of 19 Sept (P Alker). Not too surprisingly it was more than a week before the next, at Marshside on 29 Sept (C Bushell) and in a Rishton garden on 5 Oct (DA Bickerton). The main arrival came during the period 9-20th Oct, with records of singles from Sunderland Point on the 9-10th (PJ Marsh), trapped at Heysham on the 15th (J Mason), at Sunderland Point on the 16th (D Haywood), Heysham on the 18th (PJ Marsh) and inland at Brockholes on the 20th (D Beattie) and at Kings Moss, St Helens on the 25th (F Wilde).

There were two November sightings: singles at Formby on the 3rd (L Atter) and Sunderland Point on the 4th (D Haywood). Late birds merit careful scrutiny as Hume's Warbler is one of the most realistic potential additions to the county list.

An additional record from 2013 now accepted concerns one in Fleetwood Crematorium on 2 Oct (SP Eaves).



Yellow-browed Warbler, Billinge Hill, 19 September
(Peter Alker)

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Uncommon breeder in east and central areas; uncommon passage migrant, mostly in spring.

Considering the extent of this species' decline there was a good crop of spring passage records on the coast. In April these came from Marton Mere on the 23rd, Fluke Hall and Claughton on the 24th, Formby on the 27th, Blackpool's Stanley Park on the 27-28th, Heysham on the 27th and 30th and Fleetwood on the 28th. Two were at Claughton on 1 May with one from the 8-29th, and singles were at Fleetwood and Mere Sands Wood on 10 May and at Crook o' Lune the following day.

The first elsewhere was at Roddlesworth on 25 April and up to two were reported from there in May. One was singing by the causeway at Stocks Reservoir from 29 April to 10 May – the ELOC report suggested this may have been the bird noted higher up Bottoms Beck on 12 June. Elsewhere in east Lancashire one was at Moor Piece on 27 April and one was singing at Barley on 13-14 May.

Four singing males were in Roeburndale on 8 May with two still singing in the second week of June, indicative of continued breeding in what is the county's last 'stronghold'.

In the Chorley area one sang in High Bullough Woods from 4 to 22 May, with single date records from Heather Lea Woods and Siddow Fold. The only other record from a potential breeding site was of one singing at Stubbins, Rossendale on 4 May.

As is normally the case with this species there was no evidence of birds on autumn migration.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common breeder and passage migrant. Uncommon but increasing in winter.

Reports of wintering birds were received from nine sites in January, and seven in February. Most were in the west of the recording area, there were none in east Lancashire or Rossendale, but birds were seen in the Chorley area at Arley and Croston sewage works.

Returning migrants began to appear at some sites from the first week of March, although the main arrival was not until mid-month. Counts of passage birds at this time included 15 at Fleetwood on the 17th with 25 there on the 30th; the only large influx at Heysham was of 20 on 4 April.

There were 26 singing males in the 148ha patch monitored at Roby Mill. Eleven territories were recorded at both Freshfield Dune Heath and Mere Sands Wood, there were perhaps ten territories at Herons Reach GC, Blackpool, with a similar number at the old Cronton colliery site in Knowsley and in the Aintree study area. The peak counts in east Lancashire were nine at Hothersall Hall–Alston Wood on 2 April and seven from Hurst Green to Winckley Hall Wood the following day. The population at Marshside increased again, to five pairs, it was noted that this was in the context of a disappearing Willow Warbler population. The breeding population increased significantly on Warton Crag RSPB to 18 pairs from ten in 2013.

Ringling data pointed to a good breeding season. A very good autumn at Billinge Hill, St Helens saw 207 ringed between mid-June and early November, including 109 in September, while 40 were caught at Freshfield Dune Heath, a good total. Migrant counts included 20 at Fleetwood on the 18th, with eleven there on the 20th. Peak Heysham totals at this time were relatively low but included 15 on 15 Sept and 17 on the 20th. There were 17 at Aldcliffe on 22 Sept, when 14 were ringed at Leighton Moss. In the east eleven were at Lee Green Reservoir on 14 Sept.

In common with Blackcaps, assessing the number of wintering birds in November was difficult due to birds still migrating through. In particular there were still eight at Cold Park Wood, north Lancashire on the 1st and four at Heysham on the 4th.

Half a dozen records were received in December, all singles except for two at Croston sewage works on the 16th and 30th and again with none in the east of the county.

SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF* *Phylloscopus collybita tristis* Vagrant.

Category 1 accepted records

A singing male was at MMWWT from 22 Feb to 27 March (A Bunting *et al*). One at Heysham on 29 Nov was heard to call and was also accepted to this category (PJ Marsh).

Category 2 accepted records

At the same time as the singing individual another bird showing plumage features of this species was also at MMWWT from 19 Feb to 27 March (A Bunting *et al*). Similarly, one showing relevant plumage features trapped at Middleton on 29 Oct did not call (PJ Marsh, J Roberts). Finally one was photographed in a Bamber Bridge garden on 31 Dec but was not heard to call (D Gallagher).

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Abundant breeding bird and double passage migrant.

The first returning migrants were at Aldcliffe and Southport on 29 March. A wide arrival on the 30th included Fleetwood, Longridge, Marton Mere, Marshside, Jackhouse and Speke. Peak passage counts included 65 in the Fleetwood area on 21 April and 31 there on the 23rd, while there were 33 in the Langden Valley on the 20th, 30 at Heysham on the 22nd and 24 at Jackhouse on the 29th. A large grey individual of potential northern origin was trapped at Middleton on 8th May.

Forty-seven territories were counted in a circuit at Stocks Reservoir on 30 May and there were 45 at nearby Bottoms Beck on 12 June. The breeding population in the Birkdale LNR/Royal Birkdale GC area was considered to be broadly stable with 35 singing males; the population in a 148ha patch at Roby Mill was also considered to be in the region of 35 pairs. Nineteen singing males were counted in a BBS survey at Belmont and at least 14 were singing on Winmarleigh Moss. The Anglezarke/White Coppice/Brinscall axis remains the stronghold in the CDNH5 area with in excess of 50 singing males during May.

Twenty-nine pairs breeding on Warton Crag RSPB was an improvement on last year's 21 but well below the post-1989 average of 35 pairs. Fifty-five singing males were heard on the Lune between Leck Beck and the River Wenning.

Ringling operations at Billinge Hill, St Helens produced good numbers, with the total of 240 unusually outnumbering Chiffchaffs and including 30 ringed on 14 August. At Heysham there were small numbers during August but more than normal in September – although this was possibly a reflection of intensive ringling effort – peaking at eight on the 12th. There were 35 at Leighton Moss on 24 Aug and 19 at Foulridge Reservoir the same day.

Ascertaining departure dates for this species is somewhat problematic because pale-legged Chiffchaffs still cause people to trip up. Last dates at well-watched sites included 18 Sept at Fleetwood, the 19th at Stocks Reservoir, the 20th at Belmont and Cockersand, the 21st at Leighton Moss and 2 Oct at Heysham. Notably, a first year female with greyish tones suggesting *acredula*, was trapped at Billinge Hill on the late date of 23 Oct.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common breeding bird and passage migrant; fairly common winter visitor at coastal locations.

The first winter period produced a dozen widespread reports in January, including three in east Lancashire. Only six records were received for February, possibly suggesting that some birds cleared out in hard weather. The only multiple report was of at least two at the traditional site in the dunes at Birkdale, although given the dense habitat it was thought that the five there in early March was a better reflection of wintering numbers.

Widespread arrival was noted in the first week of April. At Heysham spring passage was considered to be unremarkable, contrasting with the situation in the autumn. Counts at this time included twelve in the Fleetwood area on 21 April and at Siddows on the 24th.

In the south-west there were at least 20 territories across Birkdale LNR and the Royal Birkdale Golf Club, 28 in a 148ha patch at Roby Mill, ten in the Aintree study area and nine at Mere Sands Wood. In east Lancashire 16 males held territories around Stocks Reservoir with another ten at nearby Bottoms Beck. Twelve pairs were noted around Belmont and at least 15 at Brockholes, while in the north there were at least eleven territories in the Heysham recording area and 25 were recorded at Warton Crag on 13 May.

In the autumn 118 were ringed at Billinge Hill from 17 June, with a peak of 49 in September. A record autumn was reflected in ringing totals at Heysham, where at least 20 were seen or caught on 2 Sept; there appeared to be a high turnover of birds there with relatively few off-passage individuals.

Migrants were still moving through well into November, including two at Middleton and one at Heysham early in the month and two at the Billinge Hill ringing site on the 17th. December numbers are probably a better indication of the wintering population and records were received from 20 or more sites at this time. Inland, these included four in the Chorley area and two in east Lancashire; the only multiple sighting was of two at Birkdale.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Common breeding bird and double passage migrant.

Early birds were reported at Longton Marsh on 12 April, Warton Crag (two) and Calderstones on the 15th and Whalley on the 19th. Arrival on a broad front occurred on the 23rd of the month, when there were birds at Borwick, Fleetwood and Marshside. Twelve records by the end of April in east Lancashire contrasted with just one in the equivalent period in 2013, but elsewhere migrants were few and far between in spring with the only significant coastal count four in the Fleetwood area on 16 May.

Seven were recorded during a breeding bird survey at Bottoms Beck on 12 June and nearby up to six territories were recorded on a circular path route at Stocks Reservoir. Twenty were estimated to be in the Caton area on 5 May but thought potentially to include migrants. Twelve pairs bred at Warton Crag RSPB, a lower than average total. Evidence of decline was also noted in the Belmont area, where only one territory was located.

A good recent total of eight were trapped at Heysham in autumn and six were trapped at Billinge Hill during this period. Reports were still being received from a number of sites across the county in early September, thereafter singles were noted at Fleetwood on the 18th, Heysham on the 19th and at Lee Green Reservoir on the 20th. A very late individual of presumably Scandinavian origin was at Potts Corner, north Lancashire on 29 Oct.

There was no evidence this year of any birds wintering in Sea-buckthorn in the Ainsdale area.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Fairly common breeding bird and double passage migrant.

The most notable feature of the year were two unseasonable records. One was seen visiting a Heysham garden bird table at the end of February, while at the other end of the year one was seen in a

Cleveleys garden on 3 Nov. Wintering and late birds are worth particular scrutiny with regard to potential eastern origin, (although the Cleveleys bird was photographed and looked typical of the western *curruca* subspecies).

The main arrival was also a little out of the ordinary in that one was at Aldcliffe on our earliest ever date of 3 April and three were singing at Heysham the following day. Birds were subsequently noted at Weeton on the 11th, Alston Wetland on the 13th, Roby Mill and Marton Mere on the 14th and Eccleston, Chorley on the 15th. Counts included seven at Aldcliffe on 16 April and six at Marton Mere on the 25th.

Few significant breeding data were received. At least four pairs nested on EDF Energy land at Heysham with three territories on Middleton NR, five singing males were recorded on a 148ha 'patch' at Roby Mill, and birds were noted singing at six sites in east Lancashire, although some of these may have been transient birds.

The most informative data on autumn passage came from Heysham. Despite intensive coverage the numbers recorded were unremarkable in a season where exceptional numbers of other warbler species were recorded. That said, around a dozen were recorded here in September up to the last on the 18th. Other relatively late birds were at Fleetwood and Lytham St Annes NR on 18 Sept, with one at Sunderland Point on 13 Oct the last before the Cleveleys report above.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Common breeder, mostly in the west. Common double passage migrant.

As with Lesser Whitethroat, a couple of early birds arrived ahead of the main movement, with the our earliest ever, by four days, at MMWWT on 2 April and one at Seaforth on the 7th. It was a further week before birds appeared at Marton Mere on the 14th, Arley, Eccleston and Heysham on the 15th, Aldcliffe on the 16th, Roby Mill on the 17th, and Marshside, Brockholes and Rossall on the 18th. The first in east Lancashire was at Alston on the 21st. Spring passage counts were invariably unremarkable with none received that exceeded breeding numbers.

In the south-west 42 were singing during the season on a 148ha patch at Roby Mill with a breeding density of 0.75/ha in the most favoured habitat. At Birkdale LNR 25-30 pairs were estimated and 26 pairs nested between Hesketh Golf Course and the Crossens water treatment plant, and there were twelve pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath, eleven territories in the Aintree study area, at least ten at Lunt Meadows and seven at Cabin Hill. A decline to just one pair was noted at MMWWT, where there were seven in 2012.

A minimum of 17 pairs were recorded at Brockholes, 15 on a small section of Croston Moss on 11 May, while seven males in the Belmont area was an increase. In the same vein a good year was reported in east Lancashire with several new sites occupied and three pairs at Lowerhouse Lodges. At Heysham 14 territories on EDF Energy land was considered excellent and a further eleven were at Middleton. Ringing at Freshfield Dune Heath pointed to a good breeding season with 63 caught.

The highlight of the autumn was a major fall at Heysham on 8 Aug when 56 were caught, contributing substantially to the record annual ringing total. Other double-figure counts at Heysham were 17 on 20 Aug, twelve on the 18th and ten on 19th. There were still seven at Seaforth on 4 Sept, late birds were at Parbold on the 17th, Eagland Hill and Fleetwood on the 18th and 20th, Knott End on the 20th and finally birds on the coast at Heysham and inland at Lee Green Res on 21 Sept.

One heard several times at Roby Mill in May had an unusual mixed song which included spells more reminiscent of a Redstart.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Uncommon breeding bird and passage migrant. Scarce on autumn passage.

One seen by experienced observers at Marton Mere on 3 April was the county's earliest ever by four days, in keeping with several other warbler species this year. Thereafter, reports came from Pollard Moor on the 10th, Cabin Hill on the 11th, Brockholes on the 12th and Leighton Moss and MMWWT on the 14th before a more widespread arrival during the second half of the month. High counts at this time included six at Hightown on 28 April, five at Marton and four near Bolton-le-Sands the same day, and five at Marton Mere and four at Clowbridge Reservoir on the 22nd.

In the Belmont area there were 16 reeling birds, an increase on the last two years but still well below 2011's numbers; breeding was confirmed at three of these sites. Six males held territory in

the Birkdale LNR/Royal Birkdale golf course area, a typical number, with nearby four territories at Cabin Hill. There were around five territories in the Heysham area but breeding success was considered poor. It was considered a disappointing year in east Lancashire, with a low number of reports; there were, however, up to four males reeling at Shedden Clough and successful breeding was confirmed at Coal Clough Wind Farm. Birds were singing throughout the summer at a couple of sites in Rossendale.

One was still reeling at Belmont on 29 Aug and seven September reports were received: Marshside on the 3rd, Hightown and Middleton on the 4th, Fleetwood on the 12th, Hightown on the 15th, Fleetwood and Jackhouse on the 20th and lastly one ringed at Billinge Hill on the 21st.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common breeding bird in the west and double passage migrant.

Following the first at Leighton Moss on 14 April birds appeared at widespread locations over the next few days. These included MMWWT on the 15th, Marton Mere on the 17th, the Eric Morecambe complex and Croston on the 18th, Middleton NR and Marshside/Crossens on the 19th, and the first in the east at Brookside, Oswaldtwistle on the 20th. There were 23 in the Marshside/Crossens area by 30 April and 30 in the Fleetwood area on 1 May with 35 there on the 4th. Heysham also saw a significant arrival on 1 May with 30 birds present. An almost pure white male singing at Marshside in mid-May proved very popular with photographers.

Twenty pairs at MMWWT was significantly down on 2013 but numbers have fluctuated in the last few years. Forty-one full-grown young were ringed at Fleetwood Nature Park. There was no census information from Leighton Moss but 50 were reported there on 21 July. A total of 18 pairs nested between Hesketh Golf Course and Crossens WTP, up to 15 at Marton Mere May, ten at Lunt Meadows, nine in the Heysham area, while six pairs at Brockholes was considered to be a conservative estimate.

In the east of the county breeding was confirmed at four sites in the ELOC area, including three pairs at Wood End Sewage Works and two at Grove Lane Marsh, while the pair at Lowerhouse Lodges was the first there for a decade. No territories were found in the Belmont area this year.

Few were ringed at either Heysham or Leighton Moss after the mid-July departure of local birds, perhaps due to clear settled weather leading to an absence of falls of birds from further north. Autumn migration inland included four trapped at Billinge Hill and three through Belmont.

Migrants were reported widely in small numbers in early September; one was inland at Dean Clough on the 12th and the last in the Fylde at Carr House Green Common on the 17th. There were still four at Leighton Moss on 15 Sept and two there on the 18th, the last at Middleton on the 20th was followed by singles still at Leighton Moss on the 21st and 22nd.



Grasshopper Warbler, Brockholes Wetland, 15 April (Meurig Garbutt)



Leucistic Sedge Warbler, Marshside, 13 May
(John Dempsey)

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.

Following one at Lower Burgh Meadow, Chorley on the early date of 6 April there were others at MMWWT on the 13th, Leighton Moss on the 15th, Marton Mere on the 17th, Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park on the 20th and Marshside on the 22nd.

The establishment of the reedbed at MMWWT continues to be reflected in population increases, the total of 72 pairs compares with 58 in 2013 and 26 in 2012. There was a count of 75 birds at Leighton Moss on 20 July. The main Fylde sites were not monitored but some indication was provided by ringing activity, with 79 birds trapped at Fleetwood Nature Park and 42 at Marton Mere.

Ten to twelve pairs were recorded at Marshside and six at Middleton NR with another two at Heysham NR. Breeding success there was reported as very good as reflected in juvenile ringing totals. There were at least 17 territories at Marton Mere, but this is likely to be a significant underestimate. Other breeding population data received included seven pairs at Lunt Meadows and adjacent ditches, six pairs in the Birkdale LNR area, five territories at Mere Sands Wood, four pairs in the Aintree study area and two pairs at Hesketh Out Marsh.

In the east of the county a late migrant was at Lee Green Reservoir on 7 Sept, while in the Chorley area one was at Yarrow Valley Park on the 11th. The last at MMWWT was seen on 13 Sept, after which there were several migrants on the coast: four at Fleetwood on the 15th and two on the 20th, three at Heysham in the same period followed by one there on the 28th, and the last at Leighton Moss on the 29th. A very late migrant was at Lytham St Annes NR on 12 Oct.

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

Fairly common but irregular winter visitor.

Neither end of the year saw a national influx, so records were few and far between. However, year-listers and photographers had no problems connecting as four birds lingered at the traditionally favoured Weir Street Car Park, Blackburn for almost four months. First seen on 10 Jan they were all present on 1 April, with one lingering to the 4th.

Elsewhere, one was in Chorley at Pembroke Place between 4 and 7 Feb, while there were two at Worsthorne on 25 Feb and one there again on 6 March.

The only record in the second half of the year was one briefly in Morecambe on 8 Dec.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Fairly common and increasing breeding resident.

This species continues to fare very well with new sites added to its range even in the east of the county. The population is densest in the Silverdale area with counts of 15 at Woodwell, eight at Challen Hall and eight at Cringle Barrow in January. At the Hermitage Estate, Crook o' Lune there were around six pairs that seemed to have had a good breeding season with plenty of birds in the second winter period.

The peak count in the east of the county was eight at Cliviger Fish Ponds on 2 July. Breeding was widespread in this area: six nest-boxes were utilised at Moor Piece as opposed to only two in 2013. Breeding was confirmed at twelve other locations including the first firm evidence at Cut Wood, Rishton.

The species is widely distributed in south Liverpool/Knowsley with regular sightings in all the parks and woodlands from Childwall down to Speke. A pair nested in an old woodpecker hole at Kirkdale Cemetery, at least three pairs nested at Croxtheth Park and Carr Mill Dam. They were also recorded at Ince Blundell and Hesketh Park, Southport.

Migrants were encountered at Cabin Hill on 27 April and 21 Sept and two were sighted with a southerly tit movement high over the moors at Belmont. Fairhaven and Heysham both had their second records during the autumn period.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Common breeding resident.

No significant changes have been noted for this species for some while now. Birds are recorded regularly in small number from right across the county.

Counts of four or five birds came from Woodwell, Leighton Moss, Thurnham Hall, Marshaw, Dinkley and Wiswell.

Young were being fed at nest sites from the first week in May with family groups seen from the end of May. In east Lancashire, breeding was confirmed at seven regular sites and potentially from a few others including a nest site in a disused building in Longridge.

A couple of juveniles were ringed at Heysham in late summer, typical of juvenile dispersal patterns. September brought a couple of new arrivals there as well as at Cabin Hill.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The January survey around the Lancaster district revealed a wide distribution across all 10km squares with a seven-year high of 224 recorded.

Warton Crag RSPB had a record 22 pairs compared with a mean of twelve pairs from the previous 24 years, while a total of 22-25 singing males were located on EDF Energy land at Heysham, Forty-one singing males were located in the Lune Valley between Leck Beck and Hornby, 14 down on the last survey in 2011.

Good numbers were recorded all over the county, for example 19 at Brockholes in January, the pre-cursor to 31 breeding pairs. In March, there were twelve singing males amongst a count of 27 birds at Carr House Green (increasing to 19 in April) and up to 29 were recorded around Low Moor, Clitheroe. Six pairs bred on the Hermitage Estate, Crook o' Lune with one nest in an open-fronted nest box.

The Leighton Moss and Heysham ringing totals suggested excellent productivity with 132 ringed at Leighton compared with an average of 62, and 70 at Heysham compared with an average of 59. Ringing at Freshfield Dune Heath also indicated a good breeding season with 40 caught.

There was a small and steady passage during the autumn during early October at Heysham and Seaforth.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Abundant breeding bird, double passage migrant and winter visitor. Red List (breeding decline).

Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Leighton Moss	2000	/	/	/	12	45	100	1000	3500	2000	15000	200
EM complex	150	45	2	/	25	250	1000	5000	450	75	250	60
Stocks Res	4000	4000	19000	/	/	/	/	/	/	7	10000	/
Marton Mere	2100	200	500	13	30	14	/	/	1000	6000	20000	1500
Bl'pool N Pier	/	20000	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	12000	6000

Overall numbers seemed down on 2013 this year, especially at the roosts at Leighton Moss. The peak counts during the first part of the year came from Blackpool's North Pier with 20000 in February and Stocks Reservoir with 19000 in March. Later in the year the peak counts occurred in November when there were 20000 at Marton Mere, 15000 at Leighton Moss, 12000 at Blackpool and 10000 at Stocks Reservoir and Egland Hill.

In east Lancashire there were several other counts over 1000 in the first winter period and up to 800 were at Belmont. There were 1200 at Marshside during February and 500 were counted at Ince Blundell in January, otherwise numbers around Merseyside were rather low.

Once the large winter congregations disperse, the local populations become more recognisable. It is not uncommon to find foraging flocks in excess of 50 birds throughout the breeding season. The first fledged young were seen on 15 May at Belmont, 16 May in Speke and 20 May at Jackhouse Reservoir. Breeding numbers at Cuerden Valley Park continued to decline but second broods were recorded at a couple of sites elsewhere in the county.

Visible migration totals for Fairhaven were 4404 with a peak of 1270 on 31 Oct. Heysham had a peak of 2868 the same day (in association with a huge Fieldfare passage) while Seaforth recorded 1270 on the 30th, 9308 on the 31st and 2537 on 1 Nov with an overall total for the autumn of 28700.

An albino bird was in a flock at Chipping on 20 Dec.

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING* *Pastor roseus***Vagrant**

A most unexpected early summer surprise was the finding of an adult in the Rose Grove area of Burnley on 25 June. It proved to be quite elusive in this residential area but could be found occasionally in playing fields and perched on aerials. It remained in the area until 5 July and represents the ninth record for the county and the first since two in 2008.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus***Uncommon breeding resident.**

An exceptional volume of breeding data was received this year and by all accounts this popular species is doing very well in all inland regions.

ELOC recorded a peak count of seven birds on c.3km of the Upper Hodder from Dunsop Bridge down to Burholme Bridge on 24 Jan. Breeding was confirmed on waters throughout the region, on the Ribble at Paythorne Bridge and Dinckley, at Blacko on Pendle Water and in the Calder Valley at Towneley Park, Burnley centre and Sabden Brook; on the River Hodder pairs nested successfully at Burholme Bridge and at Lower Winckley Farm and six pairs were located on 7km of the River from Arkholme Beck down to Lower Hodder Bridge. Three young were fledged by a pair at New Laithe Farm, Newton and breeding was considered probable in six other locations.

In Rossendale successful nesting was recorded throughout the Irwell catchment, at Stubbins, Warth, Strongstry (two pairs), Fallbarn, Cloughfold and Hareholme, and at Ewood Bridge Sewage Works; breeding season presence was recorded at nine other locations.

Pairs were successful in the Chorley region in Yarrow Valley Park (two broods) and two pairs bred in Cuerden Valley Park; nesting was recorded at Duxbury, Lead Mines Clough, White Coppice and Upper Rivington. In the West Pennine Moors Dippers nested on Belmont Brook and on Broadhead Brook upstream of Wayoh Reservoir; five breeding pairs are estimated in the proposed SSSI.

In north Lancashire 19 widely-distributed birds were recorded by the January survey and breeding was recorded in north Bowland, on the Marshaw Wyre at Tower Lodge and in the Langden Valley; in the Lune Valley Dippers bred at Halton Green, Caton, Gresgarth Hall on Artle Beck, at Hornby and in Roeburndale.

On the eastern edge of the Fylde Bird Club recording area pairs nested successfully at traditional sites at Galgate and further south on the Brock at Barton Grange; breeding season presence was also recorded downstream on the Brock at Myerscough College-Light Ash and at Churchtown on the Wyre. Further inland on the Brock a pair fledged three young at Brock Bottoms Country Park; one or two were present in the breeding season on the Savick Brook just north-east of Preston.

For the ninth successive year there were no records in the south-west.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus***Scarce breeding bird and passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).**

Not so long ago it was possible to list all Ring Ouzel occurrences in any given year but in 2014, for the second year in a row, numbers reported at both coastal and inland sites were so high that only summary coverage can be given.

The first to arrive was at Heysham on 27 March and there were three more coastal or lowland migrants before the end of the month; in the uplands ten were recorded on the 30th and 31st including six males at Lee Quarry, Rossendale and two birds on Darwen Moor.

Heavy movements in east Lancashire during April included six on Waddington Fell on 4 April, four in the Langden Valley on the 11th and eight on Pendle Hill on the 15th; there were five records in Chorley region between 8 and 26 April, including two at Belmont. One was on the north coast at Stodday on 3 April, there were two migrants in the Fylde during the month and twelve singles on the Sefton Coast, including six at Cabin Hill and three in the Southport-Birkdale area.

Eighteen territories were located on the United Utilities Bowland estate including four in the Croasdale area, a further improvement on the total of 16 pairs in 2013, and two pairs bred in the Dunsop Valley; nine Ring Ouzels were flushed beside a track on Croasdale on 14 July.

Autumn passage in the Chorley region included 'a steady stream' of migrants on the George's Lane, Rivington-Winter Hill axis in September; during October there were seven at George's Lane between 16 and 22 Oct and three on Winter Hill on the 24th, while nine were recorded at Belmont

during 16 Oct-1 Nov. Three records in Rossendale included two apiece at Calf Hey Reservoir on 27 Sept and Holden Wood Reservoir on 22 Oct. In east Lancashire singles were on Newton Fell on 27 Sept and at nearby New Laithe Farm on 29 Oct; one at Pendle on 9 Nov was the last record of 2014 in the region, and the county.

Meanwhile nine migrant Ring Ouzels were recorded along the coast between 27 Sept and 30 Oct, including three at Heysham; four birds were on the Hightown Dunes on 16 Oct.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Abundant breeding resident and winter visitor.

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 961 Blackbirds (mean 952 during 2006-13) and there were 34 on the North Blackpool Pond Trail on 25 Jan. Peak counts in inland regions included 20 at Dunsop Bridge on 5 Jan, 22 at Jackhouse on the 29th and eleven at Peersclough Farm, Rossendale on 6 Feb.

Breeding reports included ten singing males in Whalley Village on 26 Feb and 16 and 21 territories respectively in two 1km BBS squares in the Brindle area; on the north coast there were 15-20 pairs on EDF Energy land at Heysham and 28 on Warton Crag RSPB (mean 23.6 pairs during 1989-2013). In the Pilling-Preesall area, Over Wyre 58 eggs were laid in 15 monitored nests; 42 hatched and 38 young were fledged. Further south eight pairs nested at Mere Sands Wood and nine on Freshfield Dune Heath while there were at least 20 territories in a 33 hectare survey patch at Aintree.



Male Blackbird feeding young, Liverpool, 30 July (Steve Young)

A flock of ten at Cabin Hill on 30 Sept were the first autumn migrants reported. Subsequent movements were most conspicuous on the north coast: there were 18 at Middleton NR and 25 at Sunderland Point on 15 Oct with counts of 72 and 55 there respectively on the following day; seven Blackbirds moved along the moorland edge at Belmont on the 19th. A lull ensued until 20+ passed over Cabin Hill on 31 Oct; there were another 20 there on 3 Nov and 55 moved over Heysham on the 4th. Later movements included 21 at England Hill, Pilling on 6 Nov, 40 at Alston Reservoirs on the 16th and 20 at Marton Mere on the 24th.

High counts at the year's end in east Lancashire included 43 at Wiswell, Whalley on 3 Dec and 31 at Jackhouse next day; further south there were 30+ near Belmont on 6 Dec and 20 roosted at Upper Rivington on the 14th. Nearer the coast 76 Blackbirds were counted at Morecambe and 40+ at Cottam Brickworks, Preston on 6 Dec and 20 at Glasson on the 29th.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant.

The county hosted quite a few fair-sized flocks of Fieldfares during December 2013 so it was no surprise to receive numerous three-figure counts from most regions in January 2014. The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 2129, well above the average, and ELOC received 37 reports, the highest 700 at Lower Edge Farm near Slaidburn on 28 Jan. In Chorley there were peak counts of 250 on Croston Moss on 5 Jan and 400 at Belmont Reservoir on the 21st; 220 were in Roeburndale in north Lancashire on the 8th. Four hundred at Cumming Carr, Pilling was the largest of seven three-figure gatherings in the Fylde.

Significant flocks remained through the first half of February including 800 at Lower Edge Farm, 350 in Roeburndale and 250 at Belmont; 135 were at Cowpe Lowe in Rossendale on 4 Feb and 150 at

Brockholes on the 9th; in the Fylde c.300 were at Out Rawcliffe on 10 Feb and 260 at Thurnham on the 13th. Six hundred in the Belmont area on the 8th and 230 at Singleton, Fylde on the 24th were the largest of eight widely distributed three-figure flocks in March. As usual there were plenty of April stragglers including 100 apiece at Brockholes on 2 April and on Waddington Fell on the 4th, 20 at Belmont next day and 30 in Roeburndale on the 17th; two very late birds over Seaforth on 5 May ended the spring passage.

The pattern of arrivals and movements in autumn and in the second winter period was the most unusual for many years, beginning with an exceptionally early six birds over Dean Clough Reservoir, Great Harwood on 30 Aug. There were no further records in east Lancashire during September and precious few anywhere else; six over Great Knowley, Chorley on 28 Sept was the highest count reported. October continued in much the same vein with a mere trickle of individuals and small parties until 140 flew over Briercliffe, Burnley on the 22nd; one at Fairhaven on 17 Oct and ten over Warth on the 18th were the autumn's first arrivals in the Fylde and Rossendale respectively.

Without any other preliminaries the floodgates opened on the morning of 31 Oct in the most concentrated influx of Fieldfares for several years, all down the coastline from Morecambe Bay to the Mersey: 6200 moved over Heysham, 9000 over Fairhaven, 2850 over Cabin Hill, 3720 over Hightown Dunes and 6211 over Seaforth; these were record day-totals for both Heysham and Seaforth.

Very little of this surge was evident even a short distance inland, with peak counts of 110+ at Alston Reservoirs, 100 over Burnley centre and 90 at Eccleston, Chorley, but movements became far more widespread in the first week of November. On 1 Nov there were 342 over Fairhaven, 560 at Ainsdale NNR and 555 moved over Belmont in the first hour after dawn; next day there were 684 at Jackhouse, and counts in the next few days included 400 at Thrushgill on 4 Nov, 2600 at Heysham, 800 at Cabin Hill and 600 at Brockholes on the 6th and c.900 south at Roby Mill on the 7th. Flocks of 600 over Burnley and 500 at Easington in east Lancashire, 290 at Belmont, 400 at Fairhaven and 400 south over Billinge Hill during 8-10 Nov ended eleven days of massive movements.

Nine more three-figure counts were received during the remainder of the month, the highest 500+ at Mere Isles Clough in east Lancashire on 13 Nov and 300+ over Billinge Hill on the 15th. Fieldfare numbers are normally at lower levels during December, but not this year as a spectacular flock of 20000 flew east over New Laithe Farm, Newton on 6 Dec; 140 at Eccleston, Chorley on 15 Dec and 250 at Leighton Moss on the 23rd were the highest of six three-figure counts reported during the month.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelus*

Common breeding resident. Red List (breeding decline).

ELOC received seven reports of singing birds in January and others were in song at seven localities in the Fylde, five in south Liverpool/Knowsley and four in Rossendale during the month; the Lancaster & District January survey recorded a total of 64 Song Thrushes, around the average of recent years.

One at Heysham on 24 March was the only obvious spring migrant reported although a party of eleven at Jackhouse on 6 March well have included birds on passage.

Breeding was widespread in east Lancashire, including eleven territories around the circular path at Stocks Reservoir; six pairs nested on the Hermitage Estate, Crook o' Lune, four at Brockholes and two in Cuerden Valley Park. Nearer to the coast there were 13 pairs on Warton Crag RSPB (mean 9.6 during 1989-2013) and seven on EDF Energy property at Heysham (range 7-13 pairs 1999-2013); two pairs bred on Freshfield Dune Heath and four or five in a 33ha survey site at Aintree.

Twenty in the Langden Valley on 11 Sept was the first significant autumn movement reported; on the same date the first of 50+ migrants moved over Billinge Hill, St Helens. Passage continued until mid-November with two clear peaks, in mid- and late October. Movements during 15-18 Oct were very widespread: there were 27 at Heysham on the 15th and 40 there next day; on the 17th there was a season's peak count of 15+ at Billinge Hill and up to ten were at Hurdles Quarry, Rossendale with Redwings on the 18th. Apart from 17 at Jackhouse on 29 Oct the late-month surge was confined to coastal regions, with 15 migrants apiece at Heysham and Marshside on 30 Oct and ten at Heysham, twelve at Cabin Hill, eight at Seaforth and six at Fairhaven on the following day. Eight at Sunderland Point on 4 Nov and six at Fluke Hall, Pilling were the last movements of 2014; on 30 Nov seven Song Thrushes were singing at different locations in Wiswell near Whalley.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant.

By far the largest gathering of Redwings in the first winter period was in the Lune Valley with 1380 at Wray on 9 Jan increasing to 2397 on the 19th; 1830 were still present on 22 Jan but the flock had dwindled to 30 by 10 Feb. Meanwhile the Lancaster & District January survey, which included the birds at Wray, recorded a record total of 1612 Redwings.

Most of the other high counts during the month also came from inland regions, including flocks of 150 and 100 in east Lancashire, 100 at Adlington, Chorley on 4 & 19th and 300 in the Belmont area on 11-12th; the only other three-figure counts were of 135+ in Bowring Park, Liverpool on 4 Jan and 100 at Galgate, Fylde on the 30th.

In February 400 Redwings were regular in the Rivington area and ten records in east Lancashire included 300 in Grove Lane Plantations on 12 Feb; another 300 were at Leighton Hall on the 19th. One hundred and ten at Belmont on 8 March was that month's peak count and there were 70 at Thurnham, Fylde on the 14th and 40 at Brockholes on the 16th. A widespread flurry of double-figure counts in early April included 40 at Brockholes and 32 at Pilling on the 1st, when Rossendale's last Redwings of spring were in Trickett's Memorial Ground; the last in the West Pennine Moors was at Belmont on 3 April, there were 50 at Seaforth and 30 at Marton Mere next day and finally, three at Todderstaffe Hall, Fylde and two at Jackhouse on the 6th.

Two early singles, over Billinge Hill, St Helens on 17 Sept and Crown Point, Rossendale on the 27th began the autumn return, followed by five at Belmont on 3 Oct; seven over Blackpool South Shore on the 5th and four at Pollard Moor on the 9th were the first in the Fylde and east Lancashire respectively, and 30 at Carnforth Slag Tips on the 12th began the autumn in the north.

Passage continued until the third week of November and included three very conspicuous surges, in mid- and late October and mid-November. On 14 Oct 1036 Redwings moved over Fairhaven and there were 600+ at Billinge Hill and 500+ at Heysham; movements next day included another 1500+ at Billinge Hill, 362 at Heysham, 459 at Brockholes, 260 at Roby Mill and 105 at Fairhaven. During the next three days another 13 three-figure movements were reported from all regions of the county, the largest of these of 500+ at Billinge Hill on two successive days and 507 at Fairhaven, 300 over Hightown Dunes and 250 apiece at Eccleston, Chorley and Middleton NR, Heysham.

After a brief lull there was a sudden pulse of migration on 31 Oct, often in company with hundreds or in some cases thousands of Fieldfares and small numbers of other thrush species, that brought 1538 Redwings over Heysham and 1000 over Fairhaven; there were 240 at Cabin Hill, 172 at Seaforth and 135 over Hightown, and 460 passed at Brockholes next day. The last appreciable movements of 2014 included 250 on Silverdale Moss on 8 Nov, 200+ at Billinge Hill and 120 at Leighton Moss on the 10th and 120 over Rawtenstall, Rossendale on the 20th.



Redwings trapped at Billinge Hill, St Helens in November (Peter Alker)

The right-hand bird was identified as Icelandic subspecies *coburni* on the basis of biometrics and plumage characteristics and provided the first definite evidence of this subspecies in Lancashire; the one on the left is the more familiar nominate subspecies.

Two birds showing the characteristics of the Icelandic race *coburni* were ringed at Billinge Hill on 16 & 20 Nov.

Three hundred at West Bradford Bridge in east Lancashire on 24 December and 100 at Whittle, Chorley on the 31st were the only three-figure reports at end of the year, while 90 on Rawcliffe Moss on the 23rd and 85 at Scarisbrick on the 25th were the largest gatherings recorded in coastal regions.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Common breeding resident.

Birds were singing in the Fylde, Rossendale and east Lancashire from early January; the Lancaster & District survey that month recorded 73 Mistle Thrushes, an average total. Seventeen at Aigburth, Liverpool on 13 Feb was the only sizeable early-year flock reported.

Breeding was confirmed at five sites in east Lancashire and four in south Liverpool; at least three pairs bred in a 33ha survey patch at Aintree.

Post-breeding gatherings included eleven at Marshaw in Bowland on 11 July, 19 in Sefton Park, Liverpool on the 20th and twelve at White Lund, Morecambe on the 31st; eight double-figure flocks were reported during August from all regions of the county, the largest in upland areas including 44 at Hornby in the Lune Valley on 8 Aug, 35 on Shaw Hill Golf Course, Chorley on the 20th and 30 at Cliviger Gorge, Burnley on the 26th.

As usual both the number and size of flocks increased in September–October with sixteen wide-spread double-figure counts recorded. September peaks included 23 at Brockholes on the 7th, 24 in



Mistle Thrush, Fleetwood, June (Jacquie Moreton)

Liverpool's Everton Park on the 9th and 24 in Stepback Wood, Darwen on the 30th; in October there were 20 at Shedden Clough south-east of Burnley on the 3rd, 20 at Crook o' Lune on the 9th, 27 at Old Coach Road, Rainford on the 23rd and 45 at Eagland Hill, Pilling on the 31st. Three Mistle Thrushes flew over Heysham on 28 Sept and five on 31 Oct, with another seven in early November; a total of 56 moved over Fairhaven between 10 Oct and 1 Nov, an exceptional flock of 63 flew south over Roby Mill on 4 Nov and Seaforth recorded eight migrants on the 10th. Fifteen at Grove Lane Marsh, Padiham on 27 Dec was the only double-figure count reported at the end of the year.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Uncommon breeding bird and passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).

One at Wycoller, east of Colne on 1 May was the first arrival of 2014; ELOC received 20 records during the month from twelve sites with five birds at Crag Wood on the 18th. The first Spotted Flycatcher in the north was at Crook o' Lune on 6 May, in the Chorley region at Croston on the 15th and in Rossendale at Haslingden the next day.

Meanwhile lively coastal movements began with singles at Fleetwood on 10 May and Marshside on the 15th; the first of five spring migrants was at Heysham on the 16th. Although subsequent movements in the south-west were very light, a total of four birds in all, the Fylde coast saw bigger numbers with 16 records including six individuals at Fleetwood on 16 May, twelve there on the 20th and four in Stanley Park, Blackpool on the 24th.

ELOC received 26 reports of Spotted Flycatchers from 19 locations during June-July, well below the average of recent years; breeding was confirmed at Foulscapes and Boarsden near Newton, in the Dunsop Valley, at Whiteholme, Moor Piece, Myttons and Croasdale House near Slaidburn and New Laithe Farm, and there was breeding-season presence at several other sites.

In the north four pairs nested successfully in the Crook o' Lune area and two at Hornby Castle; territorial birds were also present at Abbeystead, Arkholme and Tower Lodge. In the Chorley recording area there were territorial reports from Anglezarke, White Coppice, Withnell Fold and Belmont, and two pairs nested at Strongstry in Rossendale. The only breeding record in the lowlands this year was of an unsuccessful pair at Out Rawcliffe.

A party of five at Marshaw on 11 July was probably the result of nearby breeding and the first clear-cut passage bird was at Belmont on 6 Aug. Movements both coastal and inland began on a broad front from 19-20 Aug: the first of 13 August birds in the south-west was at Cabin Hill on the 20th; on the same day a bird at Leighton Moss was the first of ten autumn migrants on the north coast. Inland movements in late August included up to ten in the Brockholes-Red Scar area during the 22-28th and a family party of five at Lench, Rossendale on the 30th.

The first autumn migrant in the Fylde, at Fleetwood on 1 Sept, was followed by 14 more records including three birds apiece at Fleetwood on 12 & 18 Sept; nine September migrants on the north coast included two each at Leighton Moss and Sunderland Point on 11 Sept.

Seven were seen during September on the Sefton Coast, including two at Seaforth on the 1st; further inland in Merseyside three were at Billinge Hill, St Helens next day. There were ten September records in east Lancashire, the last two singletons at Shedden Clough and New Laithe Farm on the 20th; one at Belmont during the 4-7th was the last migrant in the Chorley region and a bird in Irwell Vale on the 16th ended the year in Rossendale. On the north and Sefton coasts respectively, the last migrants were at Middleton NR on 18 Sept and Cabin Hill next day; a bird at Staining Nook, Fylde on the 26th was the county's final Spotted Flycatcher of 2014.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant breeding resident.

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 437 Robins, very slightly down on last year's total, across all eleven 10km squares. Early year gatherings inland included 18 at Arkholme on 10 Jan and 20 at Jackhouse on the 19th; on the coast there were 18 at Thornton, Fylde on 10 Jan and 21 at MMWWT on the 13th. A trickle of spring migrants was recorded at Heysham in late March and April.

Breeding totals at several regularly-monitored sites in the lowlands included 21 pairs at Warton Crag RSPB (mean 22 during 1989-2013)



Moulting juvenile Robin, Liverpool, 19 August (Steve Young)

and 22-23 on EDF land at Heysham, three up on 2013's total, where the 132 ringed during the summer and autumn suggested a good level of productivity. At nearby Leighton Moss the ringing total of 67 birds also indicated a good breeding season, as the mean number ringed during 2004-2013 was 28. In the Fylde seven nests in the Pilling-Preesall area fledged 19 young from 37 eggs laid and 25 hatched. Further south 15 pairs nested at Mere Sands Wood and 17 on Freshfield Dune Heath, four up on last year's total, and 21 pairs bred in a 33ha survey site at Aintree, again four up on 2013. Inland, six pairs nested in the Hermitage Estate at Crook o' Lune, the same total as last year's, and there were eight pairs at Brockholes; 18 and 27 Robins were recorded in two BBS squares at Brindle, Chorley.

An above-average autumn passage on the coast began with 25 at Fleetwood and 16 at Seaforth on 2 Sept; there were 13 at Fleetwood on the 4th and 20 at Seaforth and 14 at Cockersand next day. Subsequent counts during September peaked at 46 at Cockersand on the 10th, 45 at Sunderland Point on the 14th, 40 at Seaforth on the 28th and 45 apiece at Sunderland Point and Marshside on the 30th, when Heysham also recorded its autumn peak of 15 migrants. Meanwhile in east Lancashire 35 Robins were at Calderstones on 15 Sept, 33 at Low Moor, Clitheroe on the 20th and 29 at Whalley on the 25th; 43 migrant Robins were trapped at Billinge Hill, St Helens on 11 Sept and there were 23 at Capernwray in north Lancashire on the 17th.

Movements on the coast continued intermittently right through October with peak counts of 31 at Sunderland Point and 18 at Eagland Hill, Pilling on 13 Oct, another 30 at Sunderland Point on the 29th and 25+ at Marshside on the following day; further inland movements had ended by mid-October with maxima of 13 at Brockholes on the 15th and 24 at Capernwray and 37 at Jackhouse next day.

Eighteen birds at Eagland Hill on 7 Nov was the last appreciable movement recorded, while ten-plus at Stalmine, Fylde on 24 Dec and 14 at Longton Brickcroft on the 31st were the only double-figure counts reported during December.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Uncommon breeding bird and passage migrant.

The first Pied Flycatcher of 2014 was back on the breeding-grounds at Moor Piece as early as 11 April, followed by a bird in Bonstone Wood, Newton on the 14th; birds began returning to woodlands in the Lune Valley at Abbeystead and in Hindburndale and Roeburndale during the 14-19th. In the West Pennine Moors two were on breeding territory near Belmont on 21 April; in Chorley region a male was at Anglezarke on 28 April, but there was no further evidence of breeding there. Coastal passage, never very conspicuous, was exceptionally light this year with single birds at Heysham Moss on 19 April, Fleetwood on the 21st and Crossens on the 24th.

Nest-boxes were monitored at ten locations in the Lune Valley; of 86 pairs located 77 were successful and 534 pulli were ringed. In east Lancashire nine pairs used boxes at Moor Piece, one fewer than last year, and nesting was also recorded at New Laithe Farm, at Bonstone and Ashnott Woods and nearby at Crag Wood; six boxes were occupied and 40 young ringed at Bowland Wild Boar Park. Two pairs bred near Belmont, but a former nest-box site in the Upper Brock Valley at Waddecar appears to have fallen into disuse.

No reports of autumn passage in inland regions were received this year while on the coast singles were at Leighton Moss on 14 Aug and at Fleetwood on 28 Aug and 12 Sept.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Rare breeding bird, uncommon passage migrant, scarce winter visitor. Amber List (breeding decline).

A male at Heysham Red Nab on 4 Jan and a female/immature in the Red Nab-Ocean Edge area during 20 Jan-2 Feb were thought to be over-winterers from late 2013; if we include these then 23 Black Redstarts were recorded in the county during 2014, the highest total since 2010.

There were no further records in the first winter period and only three spring migrants were reported, all in coastal regions, one at Fleetwood on 6 March, a male at Seaforth on 23 April and a female at Red Nab on the 25th.

A male in song near Preston Railway Station on 20 June was the only breeding season report, an intriguing one given that a pair bred only a kilometre away in the city centre in 2010 and 2011.

A brisk autumn passage began with single birds at George's Lane, Rivington on 15 & 19 Aug; there was another there on 2 Sept and five on nearby Winter Hill between 23 Aug and 16 Nov. In east Lancashire one was at Lee Green Reservoir, Burnley on 11 Oct.

In the north singles were at Heysham Power Station on 14 Oct and Morecambe on the 27th; on the north Fylde coast three were recorded at Fleetwood, on 16 Oct and on 4 & 20 Nov, and one was in the Pilling Lane-Cocker's Dyke-Knott End area from 19 to 25 Nov. Also on 19 Nov one turned up at Blackpool South Shore and remained there and in the Starr Gate area until the 22nd. Only one Black Redstart was reported in December, at Martin Lane, Burscough on the last day of the year.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Fairly common breeding bird and passage migrant. Amber List (species of European conservation concern).

A very early male on Birkdale Shore on 4 April was the first of about a dozen Redstarts recorded along the Sefton Coast during the month, including three singles at Seaforth and two at Cabin Hill; there were three birds at Marshside on 24 April. The first of eight migrants in the Fylde was at Fleetwood on 11 April, while in the north one at Heysham on the 15th was followed by four more April birds there; three were at Sunderland Point on the 23rd and two on Aldcliffe Marsh next day. Six more coastal birds were recorded in May, the last at Cabin Hill and Seaforth on the 12th.

In the meantime, Redstarts were arriving in numbers on their upland breeding territories, the first in east Lancashire at Chipping Moss and New Laithe Farm, Newton on 14 April; six males were singing at Holmehead Bridge, Slaidburn as early as 18 April. The great majority of records received by ELOC (54 out of a total 69) came from the Hodder and Ribble Valleys. Further west there were three singing males in the Upper Brock Valley at Waddecarr on 29 April. The first arrival in Chorley was at Lead Mines Clough on 16 April and a bird had returned to a territory at Belmont by the 21st.

Reports of successful nesting were plentiful this year. In east Lancashire five pairs bred at Moor Piece and there were 18 territories on the circular path at Stocks Reservoir, ten at New Laithe Farm, five in Bonstone Wood and three at Woodhouse Lane, Slaidburn. In the Upper Lune Valley many singing males were located in both Hindburndale and Roeburndale, and in Chorley breeding was recorded at Lead Mines Clough and by two pairs at White Coppice; in the West Pennine Moors a pair bred at Belmont and the population of the proposed SSSI there is estimated at five pairs. A juvenile at Clowbridge Reservoir, Rossendale on the early date of 24 June is suggestive of successful nesting in the vicinity.



Redstart, Lunt Meadows, 2 September (Phil Boardman)

The first autumn migrant was at Leighton Moss on 9 Aug; three more coastal birds followed later in the month, at Leighton and Middleton NR on 24 Aug and in a Formby garden on the 31st. Movements inland began with singles at Ightenhill Bridge, Burnley and Clough Bottom Reservoir, Rossendale on 18 Aug; something of a surge late in the month brought about five to Brockholes from 20 Aug, three to Billinge Hill, St Helens during the 26-30th and one to Belmont on the 28th.

A widespread influx during 2-4 Sept brought seven of that month's eleven coastal migrants to Leighton Moss, Middleton NR, Martin Lane, Burscough, Cabin Hill and

Seaforth; one on Hightown Dunes on 15 Sept was the last coastal Redstart of the year. Inland one was at Billinge Hill on 4 Sept, the last in east Lancashire was at Lee Green Reservoir on the 6th and in Rossendale at Holden Wood Reservoir next day; one at Belmont on the 17th was the county's last migrant of 2014.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Scarce breeder and passage migrant. Amber List (breeding decline).

A male on the Hightown Dunes on 18 April was quickly followed by the first two in the Fylde at Fleetwood Marsh on the 21st and in the north at Middleton NR next day. A fairly average passage followed: there were 21 more birds in the south-west during April including three on Birkdale Shore on the 23rd; six Whinchats were recorded at Seaforth, five at Cabin Hill and four at Marshside. Thirty-five birds in the Fylde peaked at seven at Fleetwood on 25 April while 16 on the north coast included four apiece at Aldcliffe on the 24th and at Sunderland Point on the 28th. Movements continued intermittently through May, most noticeably in the Fylde where 45 Whinchats included five at Fleetwood on the 16th & 20th; the last of five May migrants in the north was at Aldcliffe on the 9th and the last of eight birds in the south-west at Marshside on the 13th.

Inland, the first to arrive in east Lancashire were two at Alston Reservoirs on 23 April; birds were reported there until 7 May and there were singles at Shedden Clough on 25 April and at Croasdale on the 28th. One was at Brockholes on 25 April and two on the 29th.

Fourteen pairs were located in a survey of the United Utilities Bowland estate including four territories on Croasdale Fell while further south breeding was considered probable at Oswaldtwistle Moor Edge. In the West Pennine Moors, where the population of the proposed SSSI is estimated at two pairs, one pair bred successfully near Belmont and successful nesting was judged likely at White Coppice, Chorley where a family party of five was seen on 19 Aug.

Autumn movements both inland and on the coast were heavy for the second successive year. The first migrant in Rossendale was at Clowbridge Reservoir on 27 July and there were seven in August including three at Holden Wood Reservoir on the 28th. In east Lancashire migrants were recorded from 23 Aug including four at New Laithe Farm on the 28-30th; 24 other records in the last week of August came mainly from the vicinity of four reservoirs, Cant Clough, Dean Clough, Shedden Clough and Parsonage. Thirteen Whinchats passed through Belmont between 4 Aug and 28 Sept including threes on 24 Aug and 14 Sept.

Movements in Rossendale intensified during September: at least 30 were recorded including five at Musbury on the 5th and up to ten at Calf Hey Reservoir during the 5-12th; two at Musbury on 3 Oct were the last inland Whinchats of 2014. Ten September records in east Lancashire included four at New Laithe Farm on the 5th; the last two in the region were at Parsonage Reservoir, Blackburn on 24 Sept, while further south one was at Winter Hill on the 28th.

Meanwhile a brisk passage on the coast began with a very early bird at Hightown on 6 July; the main movement commenced in mid-August with six singles in the Fylde during the month, eight in the south-west including two at Crosby Coastal Park on 27 Aug, and two on the north coast. Over 20 were recorded in the Fylde during September with a peak of four at Fleetwood on the 18th, seven in the north included two at Leighton Moss on the 9-10th with the last at Heysham Ocean Edge on the 13th, and 17 in the south-west included four at MMWWT on 9 Sept. The last Whinchat in the Fylde was at Fleetwood on 2 Oct but the year ended where it had begun, with a bird on the Hightown Dunes on 11 Oct.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

Uncommon breeding resident.

Slowly though somewhat unevenly, Stonechat numbers are recovering from the double blow of 2010's freezes, although the 98 reports received by ELOC during the year were slightly down on 2013's total.

Birds were present at four sites in the Fylde during January to early February with four on Lytham Moss on 11 Jan; ones and twos were spread along the Sefton Coast, and five were at MMWWT on the 15th. Further inland in late January-early February a pair was on Croston Moss, Chorley and there were ones or twos at Brockholes and at Ogden and Holden Wood Reservoirs, Rossendale.

Widespread spring movements began in the last week of February and ended in early April. In the Fylde five were at Fleetwood Marsh on 27 Feb and 6 March and there were six on Lytham Moss on 3 March; a total of eight was recorded on the north coast between 4 March and 3 April. Numbers in the south-west were lower; four singles were recorded at Marshside and there were three on Bill-

inge Hill, St Helens on 4 March, but none was seen at Seaforth. Also on 4 March six Stonechats were at Dean Clough Reservoir in east Lancashire; there were four on Waddington Fell on 5 April.

Breeding populations showed a distinct improvement in 2014. Thirty-seven pairs were located in a survey of the United Utilities Bowland estate, including up to 14 territories in the Croasdale Fell area and three on Hareden; elsewhere in east Lancashire there were up to two pairs at Shedden Clough, Burnley and one on Newton Fell. In Rossendale Stonechats nested at Ogden, Calf Hey, Holden Wood and Cowpe Reservoirs and at Deep Clough, Plunge and Cheesden. In the West Pennine Moors, where the proposed SSSI population is estimated at 20 pairs, there were twelve pairs in the Belmont area, double last year's total, and a pair was successful at White Coppice, Chorley. In north Lancashire the population recovery has been slower but a pair bred on Hawthornthwaite Fell and there were three at Cross o' Greet and two at Harrisend Fell-Clougha. The pace of recovery on the Sefton Coast accelerated with three pairs on Ainsdale NNR, one on Birkdale LNR and at least one at both Hightown Dunes and Cabin Hill, but there were no nesting reports from the Fylde or the north coast.

No doubt due in part to this spurt in breeding activity, autumn movements both inland and on the coast were the heaviest since the 2010 crash. Passage in the uplands began in mid-August; in east Lancashire birds, including family parties, were moving at Cant Clough Reservoir, Burnley until the end of September. In Rossendale up to ten were at Calf Hey Reservoir and four at Holden Wood on 7 Sept; at least 16 were recorded at Belmont in the West Pennine Moors between late August and mid-September and in Chorley five singles were recorded at George's Lane, Rivington on dates in September and there were three on Winter Hill on 4 Oct.

Movements on the coast were slower to develop: although a very early bird was at Cockersand on 3 July a light passage in the Fylde and on the north and south-west coasts began in mid-September. Volumes increased significantly both inland and on the coast in mid-October, however, with a widespread 'fall' during 16-18th that brought seven apiece to Hightown Dunes and Billinge Hill, six to Lytham Moss, two to Speke and Leighton Moss and one to Heysham; other notable counts during the month included four at White Coppice on the 24th and three each at Rossall Point on the 29th and at Brockholes next day.

November peaks included up to eight in the Lytham St Annes area during the 2-5th and six on Lunt Meadows and five on Croston Moss mid-month; in late November ones or twos were regular at six sites in Rossendale.

Overwintering Stonechats were present at ten locations in the Fylde during December with two at several sites and three on Lytham Moss on the 28th, and in at least five sites on the Sefton Coast from Birkdale to Crosby; inland at least three pairs remained around Belmont and one on Croston Moss in December and up to two were present at Brockholes to the end of the year.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Uncommon breeding bird, common passage migrant. Amber List (species of European conservation concern).

The first Wheatear of 2014 was right on the border with Greater Manchester at Billinge Hill on 8 March, closely followed by birds at Marshside on the 10th and Fleetwood on the 12th. The first to arrive in the north and in Chorley were at Heysham Ocean Edge and Withnell Fold respectively next day, while east Lancashire's first was on Waddington Fell on the 15th. Widespread arrivals during the rest of the month included nine birds through Belmont, six at Clowbridge Reservoir, Rossendale on the 23rd and eight at Parsonage Reservoir, Blackburn on the 26th. A lively coastal influx in the last days of the month produced nine double-figure counts from Sunderland Point to Seaforth, including 55 at Fleetwood on the 28th and 22 at Sunderland Point and 18 on Birkdale Shore on the 30th.

As usual, arrivals and movements built up during April; there were twelve at Belmont on 13 April, 24 on Darwen Moor on the 19th and 20 in Roeburndale on the 29th. Numbers on the coast were generally low until a widespread influx during 21-24 April that included 59 at Cabin Hill on the 22nd and 91 on Lytham Moss, 72 at Fleetwood, 50 at Pott's Corner, 36 at Marshside and 34 at Seaforth on the 23rd; 40+ were on Lytham Moss and 31 at Sunderland Point next day.

Sixty-three at Fleetwood on 1 May was by far the highest of only 15 double-figure counts reported that month; movements generally had ceased by the last week in May with late stragglers on

Mawdesley Moss on 2-5 June, the last in the south-west at Cabin Hill on the 9th and the last of five June records in the Fylde at Cockersand on the 13th.

Breeding reports were a little more plentiful than last year. A pair nested successfully at our only coastal breeding site on Carnforth Slag Tips; in east Lancashire there was breeding season presence at Hurstwood, Kenibus, Dean Clough Reservoir, Pendle Summit and New Laithe Farm, Newton. In Rossendale successful nesting was confirmed at Lee and Whitworth Quarries; at least four pairs held territory in the West Pennine Moors around Belmont, where the population of the proposed SSSI is estimated at 20 pairs.

Autumn passage began quite early in the Fylde with one at Rossall School on 7 July and five more records during the month; one at Glasson on 5 Aug was the first in the north and movements in the south-west began with singles at Seaforth on 14 Aug and MMWWT next day. Counts in August were on the low side overall: twelve at Gorpel Track, east of Burnley on the 30th was the highest in east Lancashire and 23 passed through Belmont during the month; on the coast 34 on Carnforth Slag Tips on 19 Aug and twelve at Seaforth and eleven at Cockerham on the 28th were the peaks in the north, south-west and Fylde respectively. Coastal movements in the first three weeks of September were somewhat more lively, peaking at 25 apiece at Heysham and Fairhaven on the 6th, 20 at Fleetwood next day and 40 there on the 18th.

There were 37 October records in the Fylde, at least ten in the south-west and seven each in the north and in east Lancashire; in Chorley region there were regular reports of migrants from the moors during October with the last at George's Lane, Rivington on the 18th. One at Brow Edge Quarry on 5 Oct was the last report from Rossendale and one on Pendle Summit on the 12th ended the year in east Lancashire; the last Wheatear in the north was at Sunderland Point on 15 Oct. Four single November stragglers were reported this year, all in the Fylde or south-west, at Formby Point on the 1st, Crosby Coastal Park and Cockerham on the 4th and Pilling Sands on the 10th.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Abundant breeding resident and uncommon double passage migrant. Amber List (breeding decline).

It is difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from large reported counts of this species. Those received this year included 15 at Jackhouse on 30 March, twelve at Brockholes on 1 March and Whalley on 13 June, and eleven at Low Moor, Clitheroe on 12 March and Calderstones on 4 April (see also Seaforth and Brockholes records below). Five in one garden at Witton on 1 April is also worth mentioning. The spring peak and eastern bias in these records is probably coincidental.

There were eleven pairs in an Aintree study area. The eight pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath was half the total of a decade ago. An unusual nesting attempt was reported from an inhospitable site at Cant Clough Reservoir, the success of which is not known.

At Heysham there were at least 14 singing males on EDF Energy properties, and a minimum of eight on Middleton NR; productivity was excellent there with good numbers of juveniles being ringed. High-flying migrants were also noted there on four dates, including four on 12 Sept and five on the 19th, tying in with ringing data showing migration/dispersal mainly limited to September with only three new birds captured after 3 Oct.

Return was noted at Seaforth from 2 Sept, and peaked at ten on the 19th with up to twelve daily from 2 to 17 Oct. The annual peak at Brockholes was 17 on 2 Nov. An interesting record from the Tobacco Dump, Formby Point on 20 Sept related to eleven birds seen to leave one bush.

Birds were reported singing at Hurst Green on 2 Jan. Similarly, three were showing courtship behaviour at Lomeshaye Marsh on 28 Dec and one was singing in Rossendale the same day.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Abundant but decreasing resident. Red List (breeding decline).

There were 25 pairs and 52 nests monitored in the Pilling-Preesall area, where from 225 eggs laid 144 successfully fledged. Otherwise, breeding information was typically scant, though six nests were noted in ivy on the wall of a house in Mellor and most of these were considered to have been double-brooded.

Larger counts in the Fylde included 120 at Starr Gate on 26 July, 63 at Eagland Hill on 10 Aug, 55 at Thornton on 10 Jan and 50 at Lytham Quays on 30 June. Monitoring of a 2km stretch of canal in Aintree produced a maximum count of 95 birds. In the Preston area there were 75 at Fernyhagh on

9 Jan and 35 at Moor Park on 9 Dec. In north Lancashire there were 55 at Arkholme on 10 Jan, 30 at Crag Bank on 4 Jan and 40 by the Lancaster Canal in the city on 2 Jan. In east Lancashire there were 60 at Calderstones on 15 March, 49 at Whalley on 10 Feb and 40 in Burnley on 12 Jan, while there were 32 at Gaghills and 30 at Cowpe Village in May in Rossendale. In the south-east up to 31 were in a Roby Mill garden and 30 in a Belmont garden. There were few counts from the south-west, 30 at Seaforth on 12 July was the highest received and there were up to 20 at Birkdale.

Typically, there was little evidence of dispersal. At Heysham single birds away from normal haunts on 13 March, 2 April and 24 October could conceivably all have been short-distance migrants. Possible migrants were also noted from Cabin Hill on 27 Aug and 9 Sept.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Fairly common but declining breeding bird. Flocks in winter also decreasing. Red List (breeding decline).

The upturn in the fortunes of this species continues and, while this is a national trend, supplementary feeding and extensive nestbox provision has led to particular success in parts of Lancashire. This is reflected in no fewer than 210 pairs and 454 nests being monitored in the Pilling-Preesall area, from these 2274 eggs were laid, 1461 hatched and 1345 young fledged; average nest size was five eggs, with three young fledging.

Outside the breeding season the highest counts on the Fylde and in Lancashire as a whole came from the feeding station at Rawcliffe Moss, where peak monthly counts here included 215 in January, 123 in February, 100 in March, 136 in November and 102 in December.



Tree Sparrow, Todderstaffe Hall, February (Paul Ellis)

Nearby, at England Hill, the New Lane feeding station held maxima of 90 in both January and December, while the feeding station at Bradshaw Lane Head held 83 in January. Further north the peak count at Cockersand was at least 80 on 29 July.

The highest count at Mere Sands Wood was 50 on 10 Nov, while a feeding station at Croston Moss held the largest numbers in the Chorley area, with up to 30 in both winter periods. The peak count at Brockholes was also 30, on 6 Jan. Post-breeding dispersal peaked at 80 at Hesketh Out Marsh on 24 Aug. Seventy eight pairs bred at MMWWT.

Against the wider trend a further decline was noted in east Lancashire.: reports were received from 15 locations, down on all years since 2011 and the number of individual records received was also lower. The peak count was eight at Calder Foot on 18 Jan – no autumn or winter records were received from this site and this was attributed to the cessation of supplementary feeding.

In the Garstang area, outside bird club recording areas, eight were at Whitestake on 30 Oct, while up to four in the Belmont area from autumn onwards were the first since 2011.

In line with the general upsurge in fortunes there has been an increase in visible migration, particularly in autumn. Peak counts over Fairhaven included 48 on 8 Oct and 32 on the 11th, and record count of 43 flew over Seaforth on 11 Oct. Lower numbers were reported from several other sites including Heysham, where the peak was eight on 11 Oct.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flavissima*

Scarce breeding bird, fairly common passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).

For the Yellow Wagtail 2014 was a year of two halves in geographical terms: an upland half virtually devoid of the species and a lowland half with heavy movements by the standards of recent years in both spring and autumn.



Yellow Wagtail, Seaforth, 23 April (Chris Gregson)

One at Bold, St Helens on 11 April began the spring passage, closely followed by birds at Fleetwood on the 14th and at Garston Shore, Brockholes and Aldcliffe Marsh next day. There were eight more records in the north in April, 16 in the Fylde, including eight birds at Rossall Point on the 23rd, and c.23 in the south-west with three at Seaforth and two at Cabin Hill on the 24th. Singles at Ewood Bridge Sewage Works on 23 April and at Whitendale Farm on the 27th were the only spring records in Rossendale and east Lancashire respectively. One at Sunderland Point on 5 May was that month's only Yellow Wagtail in the north but 16 records in the Fylde up to 24 May included eight birds in

the Fleetwood-Rossall Point area on 16 May; twelve records in the south-west up to the 26th came mainly from the Curlew Lane area of Burscough Moss, with up to three birds present on several dates.

There were no reports of confirmed breeding this year but nesting was considered probable at Curlew Lane, in the St Helens area on Rainford and Catchdale Mosses and at Mountains Farm, Billinge, and thought possible in the Cockerham area of north Fylde.

One at Worsthorpe on 8 July was the first of only five autumn records of single Yellow Wagtails in east Lancashire; nine July records along the coast included three birds at Conder Green on the 20th and at MMWWT on the 30th. Coastal movements in August were the heaviest for several years, concentrated mainly in the south-west, where 20+ records included ten birds at MMWWT on 18 Aug, 18 there next day and 15 on the 21st; there were seven at Seaforth on the 28th and at least twelve on Hesketh Out Marsh during the month. Fourteen August records in the Fylde included three birds at Cockerham on the 13th; further inland there were three at Brockholes during 26-30 Aug.

September movements were much lighter with peaks of five at Bank End, Fylde on 5 Sept, four at Seaforth on the 1st & 11th and three on Hesketh Out Marsh on the 7th; singles at Brockholes on 6 Sept, Higher Towneley Playing Fields, Burnley on the 23rd and at Holden Wood Reservoir, Rossendale next day were the last inland records of 2014. One on Banks Marsh on 5 Oct was the last Yellow Wagtail in the south-west and two at Fairhaven on the 13th the last record in the Fylde; one at Sunderland Point on 4 Nov ended the year.

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flava*

Scarce passage migrant.

After last year's unprecedented influx 2014 reverted to normal, a male at Fleetwood on the typical date of 14 May being the only record.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Fairly common breeding bird, common passage migrant.

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 19 widely-distributed Grey Wagtails, the same total as in 2013; ones and twos were to be found in all parts of the county, both urban and rural in the early year, including 43 reports to ELOC and records at five locations in Rossendale during January-February.

Low-level spring movements at Rossall Point peaked at six on 2 March, seven on the 8th and twelve on the following day; ones and twos continued to move there intermittently until the middle of May and four singles were recorded at Heysham between 9 March and 27 April.

Breeding was recorded at seven locations in east Lancashire including four pairs in the Dunsop Valley and one on the River Calder in Burnley centre; five pairs were located along 7km of the Hodder from Arkholme Beck down to Lower Hodder Bridge. In Rossendale breeding was recorded at six sites with two pairs at Strongstry. At least eight pairs nested in the Belmont area and the population of the proposed West Pennine Moors SSSI is estimated at 20 pairs; in Chorley there were six pairs in the Rivington area, three on the River Yarrow and two in Cuerden Valley Park. In the lowlands two pairs apiece nested at Carr Mill Dam, St Helens and at Crook o' Lune and Carnforth Slag Tips in north Lancashire; breeding was reported from four sites in the Fylde, in Haslam Park, Preston and at three locations in the south-west including two sites in Liverpool.

Significant autumn movements began in the last week of August. Two hundred and fifty-two were recorded at Heysham to 16 Oct, the great majority during September, and 162 were colour-ringed. At Billinge Hill, St Helens 102 flew south between 24 Aug and 28 Sept with a peak of 34 on 12 Sept, and a total of 46 was ringed. A total of 313 Grey Wagtails was recorded at Seaforth from early September to the end of October and 103 moved over Cabin Hill during the same period.

Three clear peaks in passage movements can be seen, in early, mid- and late September. Thirty moved over Rossall Point on 2 Sept, there were 13 at Seaforth on the 4th and 15 apiece at Middleton NR and Dean Clough Lower Reservoir, Great Harwood on the 5th. As well as the Billinge Hill peak noted above a widespread surge mid-month saw 22 at Rossall Point, 23 at Cabin Hill and 22 at Middleton NR on 13 Sept, and 21 at Seaforth and 15 at Rossall Point on the 16th. On 28 Sept there were 28 at Fairhaven, 15 at Heysham and twelve on the Altham-Martholme stretch of the River Calder.

Passage numbers dwindled very quickly in October although a trickle of ones and twos was observed at various watchpoints until mid-November; eleven at Calderstones, Whalley on 3 Oct and ten at Fairhaven on the 5th were the last noteworthy reports. The peak count in east Lancashire at the year's end was of nine at Altham-Martholme on 20 Dec; birds were reported from eight locations in Rossendale and at a multitude of lowland sites during the month.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Common breeding bird, very common passage migrant.

Roosts in the first winter period included c.200 in plane trees at Bootle New Strand on 7 Jan, 120+ at Cabin Hill on the 22nd and 300 in Burnley centre on 25 Feb. The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 108, around the average since 2006. Among other gatherings in the early year were c.50 apiece at Dean Clough Reservoir on 14 Jan, MMWWT on 30 Jan and at Mereside, Blackpool on 7 Feb, and c.40 at Ewood Bridge Sewage Works, Rossendale on 12 Jan.

Flocks in early March, such as 60 at MMWWT on the 1st and 50 at Croston Sewage Works next day, are difficult to categorise – passage birds or remnant winter roosts? Much more likely to be migrants were the 120 at Rossall Point on 9 March, 24 at Brockholes on the 13th and 45 at Heysham on the 28th, and a late flock of 350 on Hightown Dunes on 14 April; 306 migrants were recorded at Heysham between 9 March and 25 April.

Pied Wagtails are virtually ubiquitous as breeding birds but as usual few reports were received. Nesting was recorded at six locations in east Lancashire and throughout the Fylde, with four pairs in the Pilling-Preesall area; eight pairs around Belmont Reservoir was an increase of three on 2013's total.

There were post-breeding assemblies of 300 at Carnforth Slag Tips on 7 July and 140 at Cockerland on the 24th but substantial autumn movements on the coast did not get underway until late August. A total of 808 was recorded at Heysham between 28 Aug and 6 Nov and 2316 flew over Seaforth from early August to mid-October. August peaks included 120 at Hesketh Out Marsh and 100 on Cockerham Marsh on the 24th and 100 at nearby Bank End on the 26th. Inland movements of Pied Wagtails began in early September: 25 were at Belmont Reservoir on 7 Sept increasing to 65 by the 14th, 90 at Stocks Reservoir on 19 Sept and 178 on Newton Fell on the 28th. A total of 561 passed over Caton Moor in autumn with a peak of 78 on 11 Oct. Meanwhile, coastal passage was steady but unspectacular with counts in September including 100+ at Bank End on the 2nd and at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 7th & 15th, 122 at Seaforth on the 11th and 55 at Heysham on the 29th.

In October there were 112 at Fairhaven on the 7th and a roost of 100+ at Warton Aerodrome on the 17th. Inland counts included 62 at Calderstones, Whalley on 3 Oct and 43 at Foulridge Reservoirs on the following day; 31 at Barrowford Reservoir, Colne on 10 Nov was the last significant movement reported. Roosts of 250 in Lancaster on 30 Nov and c.100 at Croston Sewage Works on 21 Dec were the only three-figure counts at the year's end.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba alba*

Common passage migrant.

The first spring migrant was at Brockholes on 15 March and the first coastal records, singles at Cabin Hill and Seaforth on the 22nd, were the first to arrive in the south-west; one at Out Rawcliffe next day began the passage in the Fylde. A trickle of ones and twos in both inland and coastal regions ensued until significant arrivals from 10 April, when ten birds, the peak of 13 April records in east Lancashire, were at Alston Reservoirs, Longridge; 30 White Wagtails, the highest of many counts in the Fylde, were at Lower Ballam on the 11th and there were eight at Leighton Moss on the following day.

A major surge on 14 April brought the biggest flock of the year, 350 at Sandy Lane, Hightown with 150 there next day, when a series of arrivals at Aldcliffe Marsh began, peaking at 21 on the 16th and 19 on the 18th. Seaforth and Brockholes recorded their spring maxima of 13 and six respectively on 14 April. Later in the month 75 were at Hesketh Out Marsh on 21 April and 107 on Birkdale Shore on the 27th. The Fylde recorded May's only coastal migrants: there were 19 records, the highest counts 17 at Fleetwood on the 2nd and 16 there on the 6th, and the last was at Rossall Point on the 16th.

As is the norm, inland movements were at a much lower level. The last in east Lancashire was at Alston Reservoirs on 25 April and there were singles at Belmont in mid-April and mid-May and at Clowbridge Reservoir, Rossendale and on Croston Moss in late April.

Autumn movements were relatively heavy this year and extended from mid-August to early November, beginning with an influx on the north coast: there were 20+ at Aldcliffe on 15 Aug and 17 there next day and on the 18th. Further south four were at Seaforth during 24-26 Aug and 13 were recorded at Cabin Hill between 26 Aug and 6 Sept; there were eight at Clitheroe Tip in east Lancashire on 27 Aug. Widespread reports of singles were received during September and October with ten at Marshside on 17 Oct the only multiple count; one at MMWWT next day was the last coastal migrant of 2014. Inland there were singles at Whalley on 8 Oct and Mellor on the 17th; the county's last White Wagtail was at Stocks Reservoir on 8 Nov.

RICHARD'S PIPIT* *Anthus richardi*

Vagrant.

There were two records of fly-over singles in autumn: at Heysham on 8 Oct (PJ Marsh) and Cabin Hill, Formby on 19 Nov (T Vaughan), bringing the number of county records of this Siberian wanderer to 32.

Observers should note that for a record of an overflying Richard's Pipit to be accepted the call has to be heard and the bird seen well enough to be identified as a large pipit.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Scarce breeding bird and passage migrant. Red List (breeding decline).

Two at Fleetwood on 11 April were the first to arrive, followed by singles on the north coast at Heysham and Aldcliffe on the 15th. There were 23 more April records in the Fylde with a peak of 13 at Rossall Point on 23 April; twelve migrants at Heysham up to 27 April included four on the 23rd and six on the 27th. One at Cabin Hill on 18 April was the first in the south-west and a total of 19 was recorded at that site up to 8 May; there were six at Marshside during 22-25 April. Apart from singles at Cabin Hill and Ainsdale NNR early in the month all the coastal Tree Pipits in May were in the Fylde, a total of 18 records including seven birds at Rossall Point on the 5th, six on the 13th and the last spring migrant there on the 20th.

There were five April records at inland locations, singles in the West Pennine Moors at Belmont Reservoir on the 22nd and Broad Meadow Farm on the 27th, and at Birk Bank in the north on the 23rd, the first two in east Lancashire at Longridge Fell on the 28th and one on Beacon Fell on the

29th. There was no confirmation of breeding from any site but singing males were present in May at Gannow Fell and Bottoms Beck in east Lancashire and at Birk Bank and Roeburndale in the north.

One in Haslam Park, Preston on 23 July and two at New Laithe Farm, Newton on the 28th began the autumn passage.

By far the most striking feature was the 133+ Tree Pipits recorded moving south over Billinge Hill, St Helens between 4 Aug and 28 Sept with peaks of 15+ on 8 Aug, 20+ on the 14th and 18 on the 27th; a total of 57 birds was ringed. Assuming that this effort has tapped into

a regular passage movement it raises at least two intriguing questions: where are these birds coming from, and is this occurring anywhere else in the county? The number recorded at this one site in 2014 far exceeds the total of county migrants reported in any other autumn.

A notable passage was also recorded at Brockholes with a total of 18 between 15 Aug and 2 Sept. Other inland movements included eleven records in ELOC region between 19 Aug and 10 Sept with eight birds at New Laithe Farm on 20 Aug and five at Lee Green Reservoir, east of Burnley on 9 Sept; three were still at the latter site on the following day. There were three on Docker Moor in the Lune Valley on 9 Aug and four at Musbury, Rossendale on 5 Sept.

On the coast 27 migrants were recorded over Heysham between 27 Aug and 20 Sept with five on 27 Aug and seven on 5 Sept, when there were also three at Cottam Brickworks on the eastern edge of Preston. Three singles were recorded in the Fylde during August and there were 13 September records with the last bird at Rossall Point on the 21st. Numbers were fewer south of the Ribble with the last three of eight migrants at Cabin Hill and one at Crosby Coastal Park on 5 Sept the latest in the region; in the north three were on the Eric Morecambe complex on the 13th. Only one October Tree Pipit was reported this year, at Brockholes on 13 Oct.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Abundant breeding bird and passage migrant. Amber List (breeding decline).

Only two three-figure counts were reported in the first winter period, both in the south-west, 100 apiece on Southport Shore on 6 Jan and at Hesketh Out Marsh on 1 Feb; 50 on Warton Marsh on 5 Jan and 70 at Skitham on the 9th were the largest flocks in the Fylde. Inland, there were only three double-figure counts in ELOC region, the highest 30 at Dean Clough Reservoir on 2 Feb; further south there were 53 at Ogdan Reservoir, Rossendale on 4 Feb and 50 on Croston Moss, Chorley on the 6th. The Lancaster & District January survey located 132 Meadow Pipits, all but twelve of them in three coastal squares.

Coastal movements began on a small scale in the first week of March and increased quite slowly until a sudden surge toward the end of the month: 1115 at Rossall Point on 25 March were followed by 2573 there on the 29th, when 973 also passed over Marshside and 477 over Heysham; next day Heysham recorded 2189 Meadow Pipits, there were 994 at Rossall Point, 450 at Starr Gate, Blackpool and 560 at Marshside. Heavy passage continued intermittently into the second week of April with 486 at Rossall Point and 177 at Marshside on the 2nd and another 700 at Rossall Point on the 11th, but dwindled away very quickly after that, although a trickle of northbound birds was recorded at Rossall until mid-May.

This heavy coastal passage was also reflected in counts from upland areas, with peaks of 50+ at Bashall Eaves in east Lancashire and Belmont on the West Pennine Moors on 30 March.

Reports from the uplands indicate continuing high breeding populations. In Chorley Withnell Moor was described as full of territorial Meadow Pipits and c.15 pairs nested around Belmont Reservoir; the population of the proposed SSSI in that region is cautiously estimated at 1500 pairs. Fifty-three birds were present in a 1km BTO BBS square on Darwen Moor in April and 46 in May. In east



Tree Pipit, Billinge Hill, 24 August (Peter Alker)

Lancashire there were 30 territories on Easington Fell in late March and 23 on Birkett Fell on 1 April; 21 territories were located on the circular path at Stocks Reservoir.

The situation in the lowlands looks much less straightforward, however: five well-watched sites including MMWWT, Brockholes and Lunt Meadows reported no breeding pairs at all; however, nesting was recorded at several sites in the Fylde, there were 25 pairs at Marshside and smaller numbers were reported from Birkdale Green Beach, Cabin Hill and Hesketh Out Marsh; a single pair nested on Middleton NR.

Autumn movements got underway in the uplands ahead of the coastal passage: 100 apiece were on Croasdale Fell on 10 Aug and at Belmont Reservoir on the 24th and there were 115 at Claughton in the Lune Valley on the 18th; 1000+ moved over Musbury in Rossendale on 5 Sept and there were c.300 at Gorpel Track in east Lancashire next day and 350 at Belmont on the 7th.

Coastal regions remained relatively quiet during August and early September but very heavy movements began on a broad front on 13 Sept with counts of 610 at Rossall Point, 415 at Heysham and 360 at Seaforth: 7658 Meadow Pipits were recorded at Heysham and 3059 at Seaforth during the autumn; inland, 6988 moved over Caton Moor up to 11 Oct. Movements at most watchpoints peaked during 16-19 Sept with 793 at Caton Moor on the 16th and 2046 at Heysham and 1017 at Rossall Point on the 18th.

This first surge of migration was spent by 20 Sept but fairly heavy movements resumed at the end of the month and continued into early October; peak counts included 628 at Rossall Point on 28 Sept with 1032 there on 2 Oct, 1057 at Rossall Point and 709 at Heysham on the 7th and 516 at Fairhaven on the 10th. Inland there were 125 at Jackhouse on 5 Oct and 100+ at Adlington and Eccleston, Chorley on 7-8th. Major movements died away extremely quickly in mid-October; 136 at Fairhaven on the 12th was the last three-figure count reported, but a barely-perceptible passage continued in coastal regions until mid-November.

No significant end-of-year counts were received from either the Fylde or the south-west; in east Lancashire there were eleven at Stocks Reservoir on 12 Dec and 36 at West Bradford Bridge, Clitheroe on the 28th.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Birds were widely distributed on coasts and estuaries from the Wyre northward in the early year. Peaks in the north included seven at Overton on 4 Jan, three at Aldcliffe on the 30th and 15 at Stodday on 3 March; in north Fylde six were at Pilling Lane Ends on 3 Jan with eight there on 2 March and there were nine on Barnaby's Sands on 1 March.

Numbers on the north Ribble shore were even higher with peaks of eleven on Warton Bank on 3 Jan and twelve there on 2 Feb. The only report from south of the Ribble came from Marshside where eight birds over the tide, also on 2 Feb, was the highest count at the site for several years.

Only four probable spring migrants were recorded, singles at Rossall Point on 3 March, at Heysham on the 9th and at both Heysham and Rossall on 1 April.

A single bird at Heysham Red Nab on 12 Sept was the first autumn migrant recorded. There were nine September records in the Fylde and 17 in October with peak counts of five at Pilling Lane Ends on 11 Oct, 15+ there on the 25th and nine on 7 Nov; nine were at Barnaby's Sands on 9 Nov. Counts on the north coast included six at Overton on 16 Oct and ten at Sunderland Point on 4 Nov.

South of the Ribble a total of 13 Rock Pipits, mostly flying over, was recorded at Seaforth from 21 Sept including four on 17 Oct; there were five on the Hightown Dunes on 31 Oct and singles at Hesketh Out Marsh on 11 Oct and 13 Nov, and at Marshside on 9 Nov.

Two at Conder Green on 1 Dec was the only end-of-year report from the north; in the Fylde there were at least nine at Pilling Lane Ends on 23 Dec and six at Cockersand on the 25th. In the south-west one at Lunt Meadows on 30 Dec was the only Rock Pipit reported at any distance from coasts or estuaries all year.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Scarce winter visitor. Amber List (rare winterer).

All records in both winter periods came from the Fylde. At Warton Bank four were seen on 2 Jan, three on the following day, one on 3 Feb and two on 31 March; further north one was in the Fleetwood area from 12 Jan to 30 March.

Two spring migrants were recorded, both at Marshside, singles on 27-28 March and 7-8 April.

Two singles were in the Fylde in late autumn, at Barnaby's Sands/Burrow's Marsh on 9 Nov and at Fleetwood on the 10th & 23rd; these may well be the same two wintering individuals recorded at Barnaby's Sands-The Heads on 7 Dec and at Fleetwood on the 26th.

BUFF-BELLIED PIPIT

Anthus rubescens

Vagrant

A summer-plumaged bird at Slack Lane, Cockersand on the evening of 4 May was our long-awaited first record of this North American species (S Piner); unfortunately it had departed by the following morning.

The record has been accepted by the BBRC (see separate article).

Buff-bellied Pipit, Cockersand, 4 May
(Stuart Piner)

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*

Winters in variable numbers. Fairly common double passage migrant, mostly in autumn.

The majority of first winter period records came from east Lancashire and the West Pennine Moors. Up to 350 were in the rhododendron roost site at Belmont on 12 Jan, approximately 400 at Turton Tower on 4 Feb and 180 on Turton Golf Course on the 18th. Up to 200 were in woodland around Anglezarke during January and 100 at Broadhead in February, while a flock numbering up to 100 was seen regularly in the Ewood area of Blackburn up to April. A flock of up to 30 birds was regularly around feeders at Gaghills, Rossendale; there were double-figure counts from a further 24 sites east of the M6 but elsewhere numbers were limited to the odd singletons and none at all were seen around Liverpool.

The last birds were at Grove Lane Plantation on 15 April, Belmont on the 29th and Gaghills on 2 May.

Autumn passage was rather poor with singles at two sites in Burnley on 4 Oct and Belmont and Billinge Hill on the 10th. Heysham recorded just eight birds with five on 28 Oct, Fairhaven produced a total of 18 with seven on the 18th and Rossall had a peak of eleven on the 28th. There were just four migrants over Seaforth and two through Cabin Hill. Further inland, though, there were some good numbers including 51 over Belmont in an hour on 25 Oct.

Although numbers were not as large as earlier in the year, there were several double-figure counts in similar locations. Thirty roosted in rhododendrons at Belmont on 16 Nov and this had risen to 310 by 13 Dec with 235 remaining on the 22nd. There were 40 at Shedden Wood on 12 Nov and 40 at Stepback Wood on the 9th, rising to 60 on 2 Dec. A minimum of 80 were feeding on beech mast at Whalley Road, Clitheroe with at least 50 still present on 29 Dec, 100 were feeding with Chaffinches near Entwistle on 30 Nov and 60 were at Sunnyhurst on 2 Dec. There were several double-figure counts elsewhere in the east of the county but hardly any in the north or west.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant breeding bird, passage migrant and winter visitor.

There were very few reports of large flocks in the first winter period; 80 at Skitham and a roost of over 100 at Belmont Plantations in March were by far the highest. Even feeding stations had rela-

tively few with 30-50 recorded at Eagland Hill, Moss House Farm, Warton, Winkley Hall Farm and Brockholes. Very little spring passage was noted.

An early male was singing at Cabin Hill from 20 Jan and at least six pairs bred there. Another was singing at Poulton-le-Fylde on 25 Jan while further east one was singing at Gaghills, Rossendale on 1 Feb. Otherwise, it was the first week in March before song was noted from most areas.

Up to 16 pairs nested at Heysham NR with good productivity, five pairs at Aintree and three at Kirkdale Cemetery. Numbers at Freshfield Dune Heath were well down on previous years with just six pairs while nine pairs were located around Brockholes Wetland. BBS surveys of two squares in the Brindle area confirmed the species as the commonest finch with 21 and 24 being recorded.

A good autumn passage was noted at several sites with migration lasting well into November. Fairhaven recorded 2689 with a peak of 458 on 31 Oct and Caton Moor had 1499 with a peak of 371 on the 9th. Over Belmont 454 were counted over six days with a peak of 116 on 5 Oct. Further south the numbers were poorer with Seaforth recording just 842 and its lowest peak count in nine years of 150 in mid-October, while Cabin Hill had a peak of 194 on 31 Oct. Heysham recorded some good totals with a notable passage of 331 in September, 1703 in October (with peaks of 389 on the 11th and 314 on the 31st) and 141 in November. Pride of place, however, goes to Rossall Point where 1080 were counted on 28 Oct.

By far the largest count of the year came from Stocks Reservoir on 23 Nov when there was a minimum of 200 present, mainly males. Elsewhere, there were just five reported counts of 40 or more to the end of the year: at Eagland Hill, Conder Green, Leighton Moss, Entwistle and Roby Mill.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Rare and localised breeding resident. Red list (breeding decline).

No reports were received from the Woodwell area but two were recorded at Gait Barrows on 10 April with six there on 16 June.

A pair were located at a private site in SD56 (north-east of Lancaster) on 18 April and seen daily until mid-June; the male reappeared with two juveniles on 1 July but that was the last time they were seen.

There was an unconfirmed report of a male at Barnoldswick on 26 May and 7 June.

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Common breeding resident. Amber list (breeding decline).

It seems that 2014 was a good year for Bullfinches with several sites noting high numbers of birds throughout the year. The species has long favoured the Silverdale area and so it was little surprise that the highest counts came from there: 25 on Warton Crag on 24 April, 16 at both Cringle Barrow and Woodwell on 12 Jan and 15 at Slackhead on 5 May. Seven on the island at Stocks Reservoir on 4 Jan were very unusual. A winter survey of 22 gardens in the Chorley area produced sightings in more than half of them.

Double-figure counts were reported throughout the year at Savick Park, Preston with several family parties present from August onwards, including 13 on 12 Oct. Other sites that reported birds present all year included several areas around Preston (Ingol, Cottam, Red Scar, Preston Junction & Preston Docks) as well as Speke, Birkdale LNR, Whalley, Clitheroe and Mere Sands Wood. At Rishton 27 new birds were trapped over the year with up to six present at any one time at one feeding site.

At least two pairs bred at Billinge Hill, four pairs at Roby Mill and three pairs at Aintree. Two pairs bred at Cuerden Valley Park and at Yarrow Valley Park. Males were singing at Moor Piece on 18 Feb and at Rishton on 17 April while family parties were seen at Higherford, Colthurst and Hurstwood in east Lancashire. There were at least five territories around the Heysham and Middleton area and three pairs at Crook o' Lune.

The autumn passage period brought a small influx: eleven were at Roby Mill on 11 Oct while Heysham recorded a total of 38, peaking with eight on 12 Oct. Cabin Hill recorded only its second on 8 Nov. At least 13 birds were present around Belmont on 10 Dec.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

Abundant breeding bird. Some autumn movement, flocks in winter.

The Greenfinch population seems to have stabilised in some areas after all the problems with *Trichomoniasis*. It was reported widely throughout the county but still in far lower numbers and from fewer sites than other finches such as Chaffinch and Goldfinch.

During the first winter period birds were more prevalent on the Fylde with peaks of 112 at the Fleetwood WWTW roost on 10 Feb, 50 at Fairhaven Lake on 28 Jan, 40 at Blackpool Zoo on the 16th and 49 at Proctor's Farm on 7 Feb. There was a good count of 25 around feeders at Gaghills in Rosendale during February and double-figure counts were received from Jackhouse, Marl Hill and Rishton in the same period.

Singing birds were first noted on 6 Feb at Poulton-le-Fylde and then from the 22nd at many other sites including more inland locations. A minimum of five pairs were located in an area of approximately one acre at Aintree, three pairs bred at Cabin Hill and seven territories were occupied around Heysham NR. Breeding was widespread across Southport. Large numbers of local juvenile birds were caught and ringed at Heysham from the end of June through to early September as they dispersed from their natal areas.

Once juvenile dispersal was out of the way, visible migration of birds from further afield was recorded at many sites from early October. Heysham recorded 196 with a maximum of 54 on 10 Oct when Seaforth recorded its maximum of 36 out of a total of 235. Fairhaven had 693 with a maximum of 82 on 31 Oct and Marshside had a peak of 31 on the 12th. Thirty-five in a garden at Belmont on 1 Oct was a high count for the area.

In the second winter period by far the largest count of the year was at Fleetwood WWTW where 300 roosted on 8 Dec. there were some other reasonable double-figure counts including over 50 at the Eric Morecambe complex on 4 Nov, 65 at a pre-roost gathering in Princes Park, Liverpool on 17 Dec and 30 at Parsonage Reservoir on 26 Nov.

LINNET *Linaria cannabina*

Common breeding resident. Double passage migrant, common winter flocks in the west. Red List (breeding decline).

Above-average numbers were at Heysham during both winter periods with up to 50 feeding on weed-seeds on a newly-disturbed area in early in the year and flocks of 40 on Ocean Edge saltmarsh later in the year. The largest flocks of the first winter period were on Croston Moss with 200 throughout January increasing to around 400 by 6 Feb. On the Fylde there were 150 at Fluke Hall in January, 150 at Moss House Farm on Rawcliffe Moss in February and 100 at Marton Mere throughout. Smaller numbers were recorded in the south-west with peak counts of 85 at Oglet on 29 March, 80 at Scarisbrick on 18 Jan and 80 at Hightown on the 7th.

The species is largely absent in winter in the east of the county. Two were seen at Whalley on 30 Jan, otherwise the first records were on 10 March at Alston Wetlands and the 17th at Grove Lane Marsh.

There was the usual small but noticeable spring passage with 110 north at Heysham between 29 March and 19 April with almost half of these, 52, on 30 March. At Rossall there was a total of 136 with a peak of 47 also on 30 March. A flock of 200 or so gathered at Calder Foot on 12 April and flocks of around 100 birds were noted at Aldcliffe, Cockersand and Farington Moss during the month.

Singing males were first reported at Fine Jane's Brook, Southport on 24 Feb and at Jackhouse on 19 March but more frequently from the middle of April onwards. Breeding pairs were thinly scattered across east Lancashire and at Belmont Reservoir there were only three pairs. At least eight pairs bred at Lunt Meadows, six at Cabin Hill, ten at Freshfield Dune Heath, 21 at Marshside, 15 at Hesketh Out Marsh and up to eight around Birkdale; several pairs were reported on Billinge Hill. There were seven territories on EDF Energy properties at Heysham and at least eight at Middleton NR.

Widespread breeding reports came from the Fylde and a large post-breeding flock at Singleton numbered 250 on 5 August and 300 on 23 Sept. There was a flock of 200 at Ream Hills on 16 Aug then 300 birds at Clifton Marsh on 16 Sept, 125 at Cockersand on the 15th and regular three-figure counts at Sunderland Point peaking with 280 on 23 Sept. A flock of 100 was on Croston Moss in mid-July and this gradually built up to 150 in August through to November and eventually 200 in December.

A similar pattern was recorded at Lunt Meadows with 40 on 18 Aug, 150 on 10 Sept, 300 on the 29th and 165 on 3 Dec. Two hundred were at Hesketh Out Marsh during early September and a flock of 180 were seen feeding in rape stubble at Billinge Hill on 1 Oct.

In the east of the county flocks of up to 80 were seen at both Swinden and Parsonage Reservoirs throughout September and into October while 147 were feeding on thistles above Green Haworth on 8 Oct. Fifty were at Belmont Reservoir during this period.

Migration watchpoints recorded a light passage in autumn, including 339 at Fairhaven, 181 at Heysham and 519 at Seaforth – with peaks mainly around 10 Oct.

Flocks of 80-90 were recorded across several sites on the Fylde during the second winter period while 200 were at Lytham Moss on 3 Dec.

TWITE *Linaria flavirostris*

Rare and decreasing breeder. Winter visitor on coasts. Red List (breeding decline).

Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Heysham	31	74	51	2	0	0	0	0	0	21	16	13
Knott End	60	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	83	263	157
Southport	100	82	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	80	/
Birkdale	40	/	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	/	/

The flock that ranged north of the pier at Southport proved very popular in the first winter period as numbers at the Weld Road site were well down. The area between the mouth of the Wyre and Pilling Land Ends was another regular haunt of up to 74 birds. Other regular coastal reports came from Heysham, Knott End, Banks Marsh, Fleetwood and Sunderland Point.

The first of the year in east Lancashire was very early at Hurstwood Reservoir on 8 Jan; no more were seen until four at Cant Clough Reservoir at the end of March and thereafter small numbers through to early May. At Belmont there were groups of four in March and two up to late April, suggestive of breeding in the area.

The first birds noted back at Whitworth Quarry were two on 12 April and then eight throughout May. It was here that breeding was confirmed with a couple of family parties and a nest with six eggs. Counts of 18 were made during July and August at Whitworth and a further six were seen at Lee Quarry.

Meanwhile Cant Clough Reservoir had approximately 25 on 12 Aug and 40 on the 22nd. September brought some excellent counts: 65 at Cant Clough Reservoir on the 14th, 70 at Whitworth Quarry, 17 at Huttock Top on the



Cant Clough Reservoir, 20 January (Meurig Garbutt)

21st and 60 at Swinden Reservoir on the 22nd. There were also reports from Gorple Track and the last report of the year was a flock of at least 50 at Cant Clough Reservoir on 12 Oct.

The area around Preesall Sands to Pilling Lane Ends was the favoured site for the largest aggregation of the second winter period with birds first noted around 22 Oct, reaching 135 by 3 Nov and 263 by the 26th. Indeed, very few were noted at Heysham (where 21 arrived on 22 Oct) and there were very few reports from the Southport area. A few were reported elsewhere such as Glasson and

Cockersand and occasional larger flocks were at Fleetwood. Away from there, there were three at Crosby Coastal Park on 26 Oct, five at Hightown on 30 Oct and one at Fairhaven on 8 Nov.

LESSER REDPOLL *Acanthis cabaret*

Fairly common but decreasing breeding bird. Common double passage migrant and winter visitor. Red List (breeding decline).

The early part of the year was again poor for this species with only small numbers reported from a small but widely scattered selection of sites across the county. The only exceptions were a flock of 20 at Freshfield Dune Heath and two regular feeding/ringing sites in east Lancashire. At New Laithe Farm there were counts of up to 22 during January and February while at Rishton numbers got up to 25 birds with over 50 individuals identified through ringing.

Numbers then increased during March and April with a further 47 at Rishton and peaks of 40 at New Laithe Farm on 2 & 5 April in what seemed to be the main migration period there. Up to 20 were regular in a Belmont garden in March and April.

At coastal locations the peak of a rather sedate passage came during the middle of April; Heysham recorded 150 with a peak of 37 on 15 April, Marshside had just 13 birds, Cabin Hill recorded 77, Fleetwood recorded 133 with 39 of those on the 19th and Fairhaven had 29 on the 16th. Small numbers were noted at three sites in south Liverpool/Knowsley and 20 were at Aldcliffe on 15 April.

An estimated 20 pairs bred in birch woods and conifer plantations around Belmont with family groups of recently fledged juveniles seen between 21 June and 7 August. One or two pairs bred at a regular site at White Coppice. Elsewhere, breeding information was limited but evidenced at Shedden Clough, Stocks Reservoir, Newton, Clitheroe and Rishton.

Autumn passage was very odd and minimal in most locations. Only 25 were ringed at Billinge Hill while Heysham recorded just 15, Seaforth six and Cabin Hill eleven. The feeding sites at Newton and Rishton saw hardly any birds and only just reached double figures in the winter. However, some interesting groups were seen in unusual places, for example 19 at Brockholes on 13 Oct was very unusual for the site as were 30 at Dean Clough Reservoir on 4 Nov. During November there were other notable flocks of 30 or so at Shedden Clough and Moor Piece but by far the largest congregation, completely out of sync with the rest of the year, was at Stocks Reservoir where numbers built from an initial 15 on 19 Oct to 54 on the 31st, 440 by 8 Nov and still 300 on the 16th. Numbers across the county diminished to just a handful of sightings during December.



First-winter Mealy Redpolls, Rishton, March (Dave Bickerton)

Noticeably larger and greyer than the accompanying ginger-toned Lessers. Prominent white rump streaked with grey-black. Pointed tail feathers and worn tertials indicate first-year birds.

MEALY (COMMON) REDPOLL * *Acanthis flammea*

Scarce winter visitor.

The classification of this as a species is mired in conflicting evidence and opinions but as things stand, it is recognised as such although identification remains a highly contentious issue, especially in spring when worn male Lessers can appear very pale. The following records were of trapped birds or ones that were closely examined on the essential criteria at close range. What they demonstrate, however, is a significant passage through the region this spring, the last one being in 2011.

All records came in the spring passage period starting with a bird on feeders at New Laithe Farm, Newton on 18-19 March (Margaret & Brian Breaks). There were further records there on 28 March, two on the 31st and then singles on 1-8 April with three birds present on the 7th (Mark Breaks). These were all in the company of a large turnover of Lesser Redpolls so it is difficult to determine exactly how many individuals were involved but there were at least five.

At Rishton, a first-winter male accompanied by Siskins was trapped on 19 March (DA Bickerton, Mark Breaks). This was followed by two trapped on the 22nd, remaining to the following day and another trapped on the 26th (DA Bickerton). These also coincided with a large movement of Lesser Redpolls.

The only other accepted record was of a male ringed at Heysham on 15 April (AJ Draper *et al*).

There were other unsubstantiated records of birds showing characteristics of Common Redpoll from six further sites during the same spring period but no descriptions were received.

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Rare breeding bird. Occasional irruptive movements.

Crossbills were exceedingly scarce throughout the year. January's records were of singles at Cut Wood, Rishton on the 3rd, Hornby on the 7th and twelve along the Fisherman's Path at Formby on the 12th. There were no February records.

March brought a few more with 15 at Broadhead above Darwen on the 8th, six at White Coppice on the 22nd, five at Royal Birkdale Golf Course on the 29-30th and a smattering of other records from Formby, Cloughton and Fleetwood. From April to August there were just five submitted reports including eight at Moor Piece on 14 May, six at Crook o' Lune on 19 June and singles from Cabin Hill, Billinge and Brinscall.

The autumn period was no better. Three flew south over Heysham on 20 Sept and a small group were heard in the Delph Plantations on the 24th. During October there was one at Gynn Gardens, Blackpool on the 7th and two over Fleetwood on the 15th.

November brought a few more, most notably ten at Troy Wood, Haslingden on the 26th, two at High Tatham on the 2nd and singles at Clough Bottom and Dunsop Valley. There were no records in December.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Common breeding resident and passage migrant. Flocks in winter.

The largest congregations in the first winter period were at roost sites: 70 in rhododendrons at Belmont on 19 Jan (with 50 in a nearby garden the following day) and 110 at Oakenclough on the 25th. Other reasonably sized flocks included 60 at Netherley, 55 at Fleetwood and 47 at Freshfield Dune Heath. Flocks of over 20 were reported from 30 other sites (mostly in the west) and in double figures from right across the county. The Chorley winter garden bird survey recorded Goldfinches in 16 out of the 22 gardens. A male was singing in Burnley town centre on 14 Jan and nest-building was underway at Childwall on 27 Feb.

Spring passage was unremarkable across most parts of the county as birds filtered back; Heysham recorded 61 north in a six week period. However, there was a noticeable passage at Rossall Point where 1176 were recorded, peaking at 106 in mid-April.

Breeding was widespread with the first fledged juveniles seen at Staining on 5 May. There were three breeding pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath and Brockholes, seven in a small area around Aintree and four along two streets in Belmont. In the Heysham/Middleton area at least 28 territories were held.

Some impressive post-breeding flocks included 200 at Croston Sewage Works on 25 Aug and 250 at Lunt Meadows on the 28th. A full set of observations from Caton Moor recorded 2366 flying over

between 8 Aug and October with peaks of 200 on 20 Aug and 283 on 16 Sept. Similarly, at Seaforth there were 200 in the last week of August feeding on thistles and teasel with up to 150 there through September and into October. Heysham recorded 588 with a peak of 100 on 31 Oct and Fairhaven had 564 with a maximum of 103 on the 12 Oct.

Six flocks around Belmont totalled 230 birds during September. Other September maxima included 300 on Lytham Moss on the 13th, 200 at Conder Green on the 27th, 150 at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 13th and 150 at Martin Mere in the last week. There were further three-figure counts from Fleetwood Tip, Brockholes, Skitham, Skipool, Stannah, Claughton, Yarrow Valley Park, Darwen Moor and Stocks Reservoir.

Numbers dropped off in November but there were still counts of 40 from Princes Park, Liverpool and four sites in the east of the county as well as New Laithe Farm in Bowland where numbers rose to 70 on 27 Dec.

SISKIN *Spinus spinus*

Uncommon recent breeding colonist. Common double passage migrant and winter visitor.

Both winter periods were generally poor although flocks of 50 at Brockholes and 50 at Clayton Green in the early part of the year were notable exceptions to the rule. There were a few other double-figure flocks in January (Haighton Hall Woods Fulwood, Crook o' Lune, Leighton Moss and Cuerden Valley) but birds were scarce elsewhere. Records increased at the end of January, 30 at Heysham on the 29th, for instance, and a scattering of birds visiting garden feeders.

Passage started early and was rather protracted as noted at Rossall from 22 Feb and then continued at a low level until early May with 191 birds counted altogether. Some larger counts were made in this period with 40 at Bowland Wild Boar Park on 1 March and a distinct peak towards the end of March with 20 at Entwistle Reservoir, 70 at Mere Sands Wood, 32 at Knott End, 40 at Newton and a flurry of small parties reported from around 70 sites across the county, many providing the only record of the year. Birds continued to move throughout April but far fewer than March.

The summer months were rather barren with only a few breeding birds reported. Birds were present around Stocks Reservoir and Newton-in-Bowland as well as occasional records from Beacon Fell. There were two pairs at Belmont with two fledged juveniles seen on 18 June. Additionally, birds were present in two plantations near Belmont. Birds were also noted at Billinge Hill in June and July. A pair and two juveniles were seen at the Hermitage Estate, Crook o' Lune on the very early date of 5 May.

Autumn passage was poor. Heysham recorded just 61 with 27 on 16 Oct, Fairhaven had 91 with a peak of 33 on 31 Oct and Rossall had just 28 with 25 of those on 28 Oct. Seaforth recorded just seven although numbers over Belmont were a little better with a total of 56 counted on five mornings in October. There were 40 near Moor Piece on 27 Oct and the largest count of the year was of approximately 100 with the large Lesser Redpoll flock at Stocks Reservoir on 8 Nov; 30 remained at Stocks Reservoir on 22 Nov when numbers began to build up on feeders at New Laithe Farm, Newton with 36 on the 23rd remaining into early December. Elsewhere, very small numbers were reported from just eight sites throughout the whole of December.



Siskin, Cleveleys, March (Jacquie Moreton)

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Fairly common winter visitor to summits and coasts.

Up to seven were reported regularly on the top of Pendle Hill from 4 Jan until 22 Feb and up to 25 were at a moorland feeding site in north Rossendale until 15 March. Up to seven frequented the beach between St Annes and Starr Gate from 2 Jan to 16 Feb, one was at Fleetwood from 2 Jan to 8 March and three were on Pilling Marsh on 27 Feb. The only other record for the first winter period came from Cabin Hill with one on 2 March.

Autumn passage birds were recorded at Heysham on 23 Oct and 18 Nov, Sunderland Point on 4 Nov and one flew over Fairhaven on 31 Oct. Singles were seen during early November at Morecambe, Barnaby's Sands, Cockersand and Fleetwood, remaining at the last site until the end of the year.

Three birds returned to Pendle on 4 Nov and the flock there built up to 36 by the end of the year. Other records were a small flock of approximately ten birds on the island at Stocks Reservoir on 11 Nov, one at Carnforth Slag Tips on the 12th, one at Starr Gate on 1 Dec, one at Hightown on the 10th, two at the Rossendale feeding station from early November and one at Formby on 28 Dec. One at Bradshaw Lane feeding station on 30 Dec was unexpected.

LAPLAND BUNTING* *Calcarius lapponicus*

Rare autumn passage migrant and winter visitor to coasts.

At least three birds were present at a moorland feeding station in Rossendale up to 15 March and one there from late December and into 2015 (C Bell). No other submissions were made.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Fairly common but decreasing resident, mostly in the south. Scarce autumn passage migrant. Red list (breeding decline).

Monthly Peak Counts at feeding sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Eagland Hill	5	8	4	5	5	3	3	2	5	2	4	24
Rawcliffe Moss	13	21	14	1	2	0	0	0	0	5	14	10

In the Chorley region there was a flock of 20 near Arley NR on 18 Jan. Good numbers were noted in mixed finch and bunting flocks on the local mosses in both winter periods and the species remains present in good numbers here and at Bretherton, Eccleston, Coppull Moor and Chisnall.

At least five pairs bred on Billinge Hill with many more pairs on the surrounding farmland; a total of 81 were ringed here and the majority of these were juveniles suggesting they had a good breeding season. At least three singing males were present around a regular Roby Mill 'patch' with a further seven males in the surrounding area and another three at King's Moss.

Birds were present at four sites around Tarbock in the breeding season and a bird singing at Oglet was unusual for the site. There were a couple of large flocks near Burscough in January, 49 on Red Cat Lane on the 12th and Burscough Moss on the 6th, and up to eleven at Gorse Hill, while singing birds were recorded at Haskayne and MMWWT.

Numbers on the Fylde continue to be poor but the feeding sites still drew birds in. To the west of Preston a search of previous haunts around Lea Town drew a blank. Singing males were reported from Newton-with-Scales, Inskip, St Michael's on Wyre, Out Rawcliffe and Eagland Hill.

There were a couple of interesting records from east Lancashire where the species is an extreme rarity these days. One was seen regularly at a feeder in a Clitheroe garden from December 2013 until 5 March and one appeared briefly at New Laithe Farm, Newton on 13 Dec. There are no breeding Yellowhammers in Lancashire north of Winmarleigh although a small population persists within 2km near Hutton Roof in Cumbria.

Migrants were reported from Heysham on 16 and 29 Oct, Seaforth on the 18th and Fairhaven on the 29th. Cabin Hill had a five records of singles scattered through the year on 10 March, 11 April, 30 Sept, 30 Oct and 3 Nov. A male was singing at Bretherton Eyes on 15 Nov.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common breeding bird and winter visitor. Double passage migrant. Red list (breeding decline).

In the first winter period the species was reported widely but not in any great numbers. The largest count by far was of 60 at Burscough Sewage Works on 2 March followed by 28 at Bone Hill, Pilling on 8 Jan. Good numbers were reported in mixed finch and bunting flocks on the mosses to the west of Chorley in both winter periods. At least 15 were at Belmont Reservoir throughout January and February and Brockholes had up to 23 at the feeding stations. The only double-figure count in the east was of ten at Grove Lane Marsh on 17 March.

A lot of breeding information was supplied this year. Singing males were first recorded on 28 Feb at Barrow and then 3 March at Dilworth Reservoir and Winmarleigh Moss. There were rather few singing males in south Liverpool/Knowsley although five territories were located along Garston shore and three on the former Cronton colliery site. Seaforth held three pairs, Cabin Hill seven pairs and there were 19 pairs at Lunt Meadows. Further up the Sefton Coast twelve territories were identified at Ainsdale NNR, at least eleven at Birkdale and a minimum of seven at Marshside. There were also seven pairs at Hesketh Out Marsh, 19 at Brockholes and an increase to 90 pairs at MMWWT.

Numbers were also up at Belmont Reservoir with 14 but in the east of the county birds were a little more sparse although still recorded at six sites in Rossendale and several sites around Bowland. Nine singing males were at Cottam and eight on Winmarleigh Moss during May, four at Lytham St Annes NR and singles at a great many other sites on the Fylde. Nine pairs bred at Heysham NR and the maximum count at Leighton Moss was 15.

Autumn passage was productive: Heysham recorded 227 migrants with many trapped and ringed at Middleton; Fairhaven had a total of 155 with a maximum of 40 on 31 Oct and Seaforth had a total of 145. Good ringing totals were also posted from Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park (77) and Billinge Hill (52).

A flock of 60 were around Belmont from late August into September and over 70 were there in December. There were also a minimum of 64 at Musbury Heights on 28 Dec. Counts of 20 were made at Mowbreck on 18 Nov, Gorpel Track on 22 Oct and Shedden Wood on 25 Nov, otherwise numbers were generally low in the second winter period.

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Common breeding bird in the south-west and Fylde.

Monthly Peak Counts at Fylde feeding sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Eagland Hill	19	72	5	10	9	6	5	/	7	2	23	21
Bradshaw Lane	46	22	52	1	1	3	/	/	/	9	47	70
Rawcliffe Moss	56	23	/	/	1	/	/	/	/	1	28	15

Increased numbers of wintering birds were reported with several large counts in the early year. The regular Fylde feeding sites had good numbers at both ends of the year as shown in the table above.

By far the largest count of the year was 200 at MMWWT on 13 Jan but there were also 68 there in February, 67 at Scarisbrick on the 18th, 36 at Burscough Moss on the 7th and 60 on Marsh Moss Lane on 28 Feb. There were similar figures on the Fylde including 85 at Skitham on 30 Jan, 60 at Peel on the 20th and 40 at Bone Hill, Pilling on 4 Feb. Flocks in the twenties were at Croston Moss, Rawcliffe Moss, Pilling and Longton Marsh.

Three arrived at Cabin Hill on 31 March but stayed only briefly and a migrant flew south through the dunes on 25 April with one in song there on 3 & 8 May the first to do so for two years.

On the Fylde, 20 singing birds were reported from 16 mossland locations. There were plenty of singing males scattered around the mosses east of Southport and Formby – examples were three at Rufford Moss, three near Lunt Meadows, two at MMWWT, two at Scarisbrick and several on Mawdesley Moss. Eight pairs were on Hesketh Out Marsh. There were no records from south Liverpool this year.

In the second winter period there were flocks of up to 45 at Croston Moss, 65 at Cat Tail Lane, Scarisbrick, 48 at Peel, 35 at Higher Penwortham and 26 from Whitestake. Large flocks sitting on wires above the feeding site at Bradshaw Lane brought regular admirers.

Escapes & Category D

TRUMPETER SWAN *Cygnus buccinator*

The long-staying bird was again on the Ribble near Ribchester and, although only reported on 4 March and 2 April, was presumably there throughout the year as it was seen again in 2015.

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus*

Keeping track of the wanderings of Black Swans is becoming increasingly difficult. We received more than 30 records this year but it seems likely that only four birds were involved.

One was at several sites on the north Fylde coast from the start of the year until 19 Feb then again on 7 & 14 March, with what may have been the same bird at Thurnham on 28 Feb and Aldcliffe on 3 & 7 April and 13 May.

A different bird at Alston Wetland on 10 Jan and nearby Dilworth Reservoir on the 13th seems likely to have moved to Brockholes on the 19th. It was seen again at Brockholes on 24 Jan then presumably returned on 30 March when it was joined by another at some time during the summer, resulting in an unsuccessful nesting attempt; one remained until at least 7 Aug. Single(s) at Grimsargh on 30 Aug and 15 Nov seem likely to have involved one of the Brockholes birds.

From the dates it is also conceivable that one that was seen fairly regularly at various sites on the Ribble Marshes and around MMWWT during the first three months of the year – and again at MMWWT on 4 Nov – may also have ended up at Brockholes.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Single(s) were at Wyreside Fisheries in July and August and MMWWT on 1 Dec.

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

One or two were at Leighton Moss and the Eric Morecambe complex from 14 March to 17 May, and singles at Aldcliffe and Jeremy Lane from 14 Nov to 3 Dec and MMWWT on 14-31 Dec.

ROSS'S GOOSE *Anser rossii*

A first-winter was seen regularly at MMWWT from 11 Feb to 23 April and at Marshside on 3 Jan and 1 Feb, with probably the same bird at Marshside on 30 Nov to 26 Dec.

RED-BREASTED GOOSE *Branta ruficollis*

A ringed bird first seen in 2013 was at Cockersand and Pilling Lane Ends on 2-18 Jan.

WOOD DUCK *Aix sponsa*

The pair seen last year at Rowley Lake was reported again on 31 Jan and 13 Feb. One was at Mere Sands Wood, where they have nested recently, on at least 22 June; a female was at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 7 Aug and a male at Ogden Reservoir on 22-28 Nov and Strongstry on 2 Dec.

MUSCOVY DUCK *Cairina moschata*

This species is probably under-reported but records were received of eight in Hesketh Park, Southport in January and singles at various times of the year at Foxhill Bank in Oswaldtwistle, Padiham, Rowley Lake, Stocks, Anglezarke and Belmont Reservoirs, Cleveleys and Pilling.

SPECKLED TEAL *Anas flavirostris*

One was at MMWWT on 25 March and 27 June – and presumably other dates.

CHESTNUT TEAL *Anas castanea*

One was at Bispham Marsh on 18-19 April and again on 2 Sept.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Singles were reported on Southport Marine Lake in January and December, throughout the year at Walton Hall Park, Liverpool with presumably the same at nearby Stanley Park in July, at Brockholes in July and MMWWT in December.

SILVER PHEASANT *Lophura nycthemera*

A male was at Woodplumpton on 11 May.

GOLDEN PHEASANT *Chrysolophus pictus*

Single males were at Rawcliffe Hall throughout the year and at Shard Bridge on 29 April.

REEVES'S PHEASANT *Syrnaticus reevesii*

Single males were seen at Lytham Hall in March and April and Thurnham Hall in May, and two females and a male were at Fluke Hall in October and November.

HELMETED GUINEAFOWL *Numida meleagris*

Two were at Singleton on 27 March.

INDIAN PEAFOWL *Pavo cristatus*

Up to six were reported on a number of occasions from the Household Waste Disposal Centre at Sid-dows, Clitheroe. Breeding did take place and a small juvenile was seen on 14 July. On one occasion four males were seen and on another three females so, with the new juvenile, it seems likely that at least eight birds were involved. Another was at Clowbridge Reservoir in April to June.

STELLER'S SEA-EAGLE *Haliaeetus pelagicus*

'Nikita' escaped from its trainer while being flown in blustery conditions on 25 Jan at Bracken-bottom, North Yorkshire. There were numerous subsequent sightings in both North Yorkshire and then Lancashire: over Stocks Reservoir on 28 Jan and Longridge and Little Singleton, where it was recaptured.

HARRIS'S HAWK *Parabuteo unicinctus*

Surprisingly few were reported compared with recent years: one that has been present at Wrightington for the past several years and others at Middleton on 10 June, at Tarbock Green, Knowsley on 21 Sept and Aintree for several months.

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

A close-ringed bird was at Hightown on 30 April.

TURKEY VULTURE *Cathartes aura*

One that had escaped in Accrington was seen at Lytham on 5-10 May.

EAGLE OWL *Bubo bubo*

There were two pairs in Bowland but no further information was received. The bird present around Belmont since 2013 (which is thought to be different to the 2011 bird) was last seen on 10 April.

SNOWY OWL *Bubo scandiacus*

One was seen at Blackpool South Shore on 9 May and at Marton Moss Side on the 12th.

EASTERN ROSELLA *Platycercus eximius*

An adult seen at Towneley Park on 18 Oct flew off into Towneley Woods.

BUDGERIGAR *Melopsittacus undulatus*

One was at Newton Marsh on 30 July and another at Gisburn Cotes in east Lancashire with Starlings on 13 Oct.

GALAH *Eolophus roseicapilla*

One at Preesall in early August was one of four that escaped from Blackpool Zoo.



Goshawk, Hightown Dunes, 30 April
(Ian Wolfendon)

LANCASHIRE RINGING REPORT 2014

(including recoveries received since the last annual report)

Pete Marsh

Reflecting the superb 2014 breeding season and day after day of suitable mist netting conditions, especially in September (hence absence of Leach's Petrels!), this report is quite heavily weighted towards passerine ringing recovery data. Judging by the feedback so far on the 2015 season (especially lack of Sedge Warblers), there will be plenty of space to balance this out with non-passerines in next year's report.

Comments on the individual recoveries, where appropriate, can be found in the text. Worthy of mention here are the oldest Tawny Owl on the BTO's 'books', the first (inevitable?) colour-ringed Caspian Gull sighting and the first definite evidence for several years of Bearded Tit moving away from Leighton Moss (albeit just one bird). Two ringing recoveries reinforce the status of Cetti's Warbler as a winter visitor and post-juvenile dispersive migrant as well as the slow colonisation by regularly re-trapped 'resident' birds. The BTO on-line report always produced the odd gem and a Farne Isles-ringed Shag found dead on the beach at Heysham makes an intriguing change from the usual "Ringed Puffin Island, Anglesey" and a Belarus-ringed Woodcock was also notable.

One of the problems with ringing recovery data reared its head on three occasions this year. Rings can be very hard to read and, for example, I've just been pulled up over a 5 instead of a 6 error from my recent CES. It is so easy to do, especially if you are not at a regular base with attendant magnifying glass. There is nothing more frustrating than making a mistake reading a bird which has been ringed by someone else – it usually happens when you are on your own, no one else to check and needing to get on with the rest of the catch.

It's not a problem if a Siskin comes back as being ringed as a Meadow Pipit, apart from wasting the BTO's time, but just occasionally you are faced with a highly unlikely ringing recovery where the species is correct but the most obvious explanation is a misread. I think it is important here to 'back down' to this most likely option even if occasionally a really good recovery is dismissed as unsafe.

Therefore maybe the solution is to use the really good cameras on most mobiles these days and, if you are on your own, photograph any rings which are not yours. Having said that, occasionally perfectly correctly read rings prove untraceable – there has been a lot of correspondence on a Kittiwake this year which hit a complete dead end. This is fortunately an exception.

Photography has really helped with the documentation of colour rings. Half a dozen full frame Grey Wagtails have materialised from various south Cumbrian/Merseyside and Lancashire locations and the acknowledgements below include highly skilled ring-photographers who somehow manage to decipher lettering on rings I can hardly see.

Please do keep sending in any colour-ringed birds – for example I see occasional social media references to e.g. colour-ringed Sanderling, but no details have reached me for some time now from other than the Fylde Ringing Group.

Loads of people to acknowledge and the usual excuses and apologies if I have missed someone out: Ian Walker, Tim Vaughan, Tony Conway, Bill Aspin, Tony Disley, Janet Packham, Annie Ord, Annie Irving, Richard Brown, Mark Breaks, Jonathan Fenton, Fylde Ringing Group, South-west Lancs Ringing Group, North Lancashire Ringing Group, Ian Hartley, Pete Woodruff, Dan Haywood, Jon Carter, Chris Batty, Stuart Piner, Bob Danson, Craig Bell, Peter Alker, Paul Ellis, Pete Kinsella, Mark Prestwood, Gavin Thomas, Hugh Jones, Merseyside Ringing Group, Mac and Sheila Cooper.

MUTE SWAN

ZY1265	Nestling male	10/09/2009	Sambrook Mill, Telford and Wrekin 52°49'N 2°25'W
	Read in field	07/07/2013	near Salwick Hall, Lancashire 111km NNW
	Read in field	30/03/2014	Lea Preston, Lancashire 109km NNW
	Read in field	07/09/2014	Cottam, Preston, Lancashire 110km N

The longest movement reported during the year.

WHOOPEER SWAN

ZY0886	First-year female	28/02/2013	Martin Mere, Lancashire	53°37'N 2°52'W
	Read in field	08/10/2014	Fair Isle: 59°31'N 1°37'W	662km N
	Read in field	21/10/2014	Fair Isle: 59°31'N 1°37'W	662km N

The longest movement reported within the British Isles.

CANADA GOOSE

5274067	Adult female	29/06/2014	Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria	
	Read in field	24/10/2014	Greenbank Park, Liverpool	110km

One of two birds making an identical movement

SHELDUCK

GF87675	Adult female	23/11/1999	Martin Mere, Lancashire	53°37'N 2°52'W
	Long dead	05/08/2014	River Forth, near Rosyth, Fife	270km N

TEAL

EX35862	First-year male	26/09/2012	Skipwith Common NR, York	
	Killed by mammal	18/02/2014	Brockholes Quarry, Lancashire	107km W

PINTAIL

FP70842	First-year female	18/11/2009	Martin Mere, Lancashire	53°37'N 2°52'W
	Caught by ringer	10/02/2010	Martin Mere, Lancashire	53°37'N 2°52'W
	Shot	08/05/2014	Yagkedzh, Ust-Kulomskiy District: 62°22'N 53°51'E (Komi) RUSSIA	3,461km ENE

CORMORANT

5255619	Nestling	16/06/2013	Denny Island, Bristol Channel, Gwent, Wales	
	Dead	25/01/2014	Lancaster Canal, Galgate, Lancashire	275km N

The longest *P. carbo* movement reported within the British Isles

9009406 & orange UC	Nestling	23/05/2012	Enkhuizen, De Ven, NETHERLANDS	52 44N 5 17E
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	Read in field	06/11/2012	Seaforth Nature Reserve, Merseyside	
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Of the form *P.c.sinensis*

SHAG

1470497	Nestling	14/06/2014	Puffin island, Anglesey	
	Dead on shore	27/02/2015	Cleveleys, Lancashire	90km NE

1465946	Nestling	22.08/2014	Big Harcar, Farne Islands, Northumberland	
	Freshly dead	23/10/2014	Heysham 54°1'N 2°55'W	198km SSW

Very unexpected source and suggesting a cross-country journey

LITTLE EGRET

GR08380	Nestling	18/05/2014	Besthorpe Gravel Pits, Newark, Nottinghamshire	
	Read in field	18/07/2014	Brockholes, Lancashire	140km WNW

MARSH HARRIER

FH53183	Nestling male	29/06/2014	Site Confidential, near Tay Lodge, Errol, Perth and Kinross	
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	Read in field	11/09/2014	Martin Mere: 53°37'N 2°52'W	309km S
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GF65270	Nestling female	18/06/2014	Brandon Fen, Lakenheath Fen, Suffolk	
	Read in field	27/09/2014	Burscough, Lancashire	262km WNW
	Read in field	03/12/2014	Stoke St. Gregory, Somerset	284km WSW

Read in field 20/12/2014 Catcott, Somerset 272km WSW
 Read in field 26/12/2014 Stockland Bristol (Somerset) 284km WSW

Either one of these two or a different wing-tagged bird was reported around this time at Leighton Moss. Please do scrutinise Marsh Harriers appearing in September as clearly this passage includes sources involved in wing-tagging schemes.

COOT

GR25051 Adult 30/11/2010 Marine Lake, Southport, Merseyside 53°39'N 3°1'W
 Read in field 03/12/2010 Marine Lake, Southport, Merseyside 53°39'N 3°1'W
 Read in field 05/01/2012 Herrington CP, Pensa, Tyne and Wear 169km NE
 Read in field 03/07/2013 Herrington CP, Pensa, Tyne and Wear 169km NE
 Read in field 18/10/2014 Herrington CP, Pensa, Tyne and Wear 169km NE

GR25047 First-year 30/11/2010 Marine Lake, Southport, Merseyside 53°39'N 3°1'W
 Read in field 05/04/2014 Sharpley Gc, Seaham, Durham 168km NE
 Read in field 24/04/2014 Sharpley Gc, Seaham, Durham 168km NE

GR51029 Adult 24/12/2011 near Carnforth: 54°7'N 2°45'W, Lancashire
 Read in field 19/11/2013 Harold Park, Bradford, West Yorkshire 77km SE
 Read in field 30/10/2014 Rother Valley Country Park, South Yorkshire
 130km SE

AVOCET

colour-ringed Nestling 20/06/2008 Bas Boulais Saint-Molf, **FRANCE** 47 24N 2 27W
 Seen 2008 x 8 Banc de Strado **FRANCE** 47 30N 6 2 W
 Seen 2009 x 6 Banc de Strado **FRANCE** 47 30N 6 2 W
 Seen 2010 x 15 La Saline Neuve Mesquer **FRANCE** 47 19N 3 31W
 Seen 2012-2015 Eric Morecambe Complex as breeding adult

Why it has not been reported in e.g. France during 2011-15 is rather odd. As with all Avocets, only present at the Eric Morecambe complex during the breeding season from late March.

OYSTERCATCHER

FP19567 First-year 01/02/2006 Heysham 54°1'N 2°55'W
 Dead 03/07/2014 Gjanoyar, Stremoy, **FAROE ISLANDS** 941km NNW

The longest movement reported during the year

LAPWING

colour-ringed Nestling 20/05/2014 Berney Marshes, Breydon Water, Norfolk
 Read in field 04/11/2014 Preesall Sands, Pilling Lane, Lancashire 341km NW

KNOT

SV74138 Adult 21/02/2004 Heysham 54°1'N 2°55'W
 Caught by ringer 18/05/2008 Indre Brenna, Porsanger, Finnmark **NORWAY**
 2,327km NE
 Read in field 28/05/2008 Kjaes, Porsange, Finnmark **NORWAY** 2,339km NE
 Read in field 19/05/2014 Lille Porsanger, Lebesby, Finnmark **NORWAY**
 2,355km NE

A well-known staging post for spring migrants *en route* to Greenland (via Iceland)

SANDERLING

8108131 Full grown 31/05/2013 Sandgerdi, Gullbringu, **ICELAND** 64 2N 22 42 W
 Read in field 23/09/2013 Rossall Point, Lancashire 1584km SE
 Read in field 07/01/2014 Rossall Point, Lancashire 1584km SE

Please do keep an eye open for colour-ringed birds and do inform us of any info you receive.

CURLEW SANDPIPER

colour-ringed Juvenile 02/09/2014 Revtangen, **NORWAY**
 Read in field 06/09/2014 Eric Morecambe Complex, Leighton Moss 720km W
 A juvenile Little Stint from the same source was present on the nearby Lilian's Pool around the same time but the colour rings were not seen well enough to narrow down to a particular individual

WOODCOCK

EX37205 First winter 16/01/2014 Docker Moor, nr Whittington
 Shot 24/01/2015 Nidderdale, North Yorkshire 57km E
 BYM First-year 24/09/2012 Verabki, Vitebsk Oblast **BELARUS** 54°49'N 28°37'E
 F00413 Freshly dead 22/11/2014 Garstang, Lancashire 53°54'N 2°46'W, 2,036km W

EUROPEAN BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

An error in last year's report needs correcting. The ringing location and date for the European Black-tailed Godwit was given as northern France in winter. The identity was rightly questioned as typical of *islandica*. However, it was ringed "correctly for *limosa*" as an adult in the Netherlands in the middle of June.

CURLEW

FC79566 Nestling 09/06/2010 Brock Bottom, Lancashire
 Freshly dead 13/01/2014 John Lennon Airport, Liverpool 62km S

KESTREL

EW94676 Nestling 09/06/2014 Great Altcar, Merseyside
 Freshly dead 24/06/2014 Weaver Hall, Cheshire 55km SE
 EW94647 Nestling 17/06/2013 Ince Blundell, Merseyside 53°31'N 3°1'W
 Freshly dead 14/04/2014 Ladthwaite, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria 114km NNE

MERLIN

EY56154 Nestling female 18/06/2014 Middleton, Durham 54°37'N 2°6'W
 Freshly dead 04/12/2014 Skelmersdale, Lancashire 128km SSW
 EW28776 Nestling 04/06/2014 Site Confidential, Lancashire
 Freshly dead 30/09/2014 St Ouen, Jersey, Channel Islands 527km S
 EL57171 Nestling female 29/06/2013 near Costy Clough, Forest of Bowland, Lancashire
 Freshly dead 05/02/2014 Grues, Vendee **FRANCE** 46°22'N 1°18'W 853km S
 EL57185 Nestling 21/06/2014 near Costy, Forest of Bowland, Lancashire
 Long dead 12/10/2014 Low Snaygill, Skipton, North Yorkshire 31km ESE

RAZORBILL

K04736 Adult 20/05/2011 Calf of Man, Isle of Man
 Dead 19/02/2014 Fairhaven, Lancashire 123km ESE

SANDWICH TERN

DE35674 / Adult 20/07/2011 Ythan Estuary, Aberdeenshire
 EVS
 Read in field 15/06/2012 Sands of Forvie, Ythan Estuary, Aberdeenshire
 Read in field 19/07/2013 Ythan Estuary, Aberdeenshire
 Read in field 18/08/2013 Preesall Sands, Knott End, Lancashire
 Read in field 05/09/2013 Preesall Sands, Knott End, Lancashire

Read in field 16/10/2013 Le Portel, Pas-de-Calais, **FRANCE**

Read in field 13/04/2014 Ottersaat, Texel, **NETHERLANDS**

A good example of the interesting information available when you follow up subsequent sightings of a colour ringed bird visiting our area.

COMMON TERN

M26822 first-winter 31/10/2000 Ile aux Oiseaux, Delta du Saloum, **SENEGAL**

Read in field 01/07/2014 Preston Dock, Lancashire 4624km NNE

XR70438 Nestling 05/07/2012 Ynys Welltog, Anglesey, Wales

Read in field 30/07/2014 Preston Dock, Lancashire 112km ENE

4H58786 Full-grown 29/03/2011 Mile 4 Saltworks, **NAMIBIA**, 22 35S 14 32E

Breeding 2014 Preston Dock, Lancashire

Breeding 2015 Preston Dock, Lancashire

Inclusion of a second Namibian-ringed bird on the BTO website is erroneous

Black 2.38 Nestling 10/07/2012 Greatham Creek, Cleveland NZ507252

Read in field 22/08/2015 Seaforth, Merseyside

ST09512 Nestling 10/07/2012 Saltholme Pools, Cleveland

Black 2.12 Read in field 15/06/2015 Seal Sands, Cleveland

Read in field 30/08/2015 Formby Point, Merseyside

SR09655 Nestling 20/07/2005 Saltholme Pools, Cleveland

Dead of raft 17/07/2015 Seaforth Merseyside

Three recoveries at Seaforth confirming the regular passage between Teesside and Liverpool Bay.

KITTIWAKE

FRP Nestling 07/07/2013 Pointe du Raz, Cleden-Cap-Sizun, Finistere **FRANCE**

FX23639 Freshly dead 23/01/2014 Carnforth, Lancashire 689km N

BLACK-HEADED GULL

Colour ring Nestling 15/07/2007 Hirsholm, Frederikshavn, **DENMARK**

White SKF Read in field 20/05/2009 Hirsholm, Frederikshavn, **DENMARK**

Read in field 21/06/2010 Hirsholm, Frederikshavn, **DENMARK**

Read in field 24/08/2010 Alston Reservoir, Longridge, Lancashire

Read in field 01/09/2011 Alston Reservoir, Longridge, Lancashire

Read in field 25/2-10/6/12 Hirsholm, Frederikshavn, **DENMARK**

Read in field 17/03/2015 Alston Reservoir, Longridge, Lancashire

Presumably not actually wintering in the Alston area?

EY26801 Adult 26/02/2014 Pine Lake Carnforth, Lancashire

Read in field 21/04/2014 Carrickfergus, Antrim 209km WNW

Read in field 26/05/2014 Carrickfergus, Antrim 209km WNW

FRP Nestling 05/06/2012 Oye Plage, le Platier, Pas-de-Calais **FRANCE**

FS73901 Read in field 22/07/2013 Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire 466km NW

Read in field 15/07/2014 Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire 466km NW

The last two are rather atypical movements

MEDITERRANEAN GULL

PLY1 adult 16/05/2011 Rybical, Warminsko-Mazurkie, **POLAND**

	Read in field	24/09/2014	Skippool Creek, Wyre Estuary, Lancashire
PNE7	Nestling	10/06/2011	Wojcice, Otmuchow, POLAND
	Read in field	14/09/2011	Skippool Creek, Wyre Estuary, Lancashire
	Read in field	03/12/2011	Hayle Estuary, Cornwall
	Read in field	17/07/2013	Heysham power station outfalls, Lancashire
	Read in field	20/07/2013	Heysham power station outfalls, Lancashire
	Read in field	05/04/2014	Beauport, Cotes d'Armor, FRANCE
	Read in field	08/09/2014	Skippool Creek, Wyre Estuary, Lancashire
	Read in field	28/09/2014	Skippool Creek, Wyre Estuary, Lancashire
E933572 / E928	Nestling	23/06/2012	Antwerp, BELGIUM
	Read in field	02/08/2012	Le Portel, Pas-de-Calais, FRANCE
	Read in field	18/08/2012	Le Portel, Pas-de-Calais, FRANCE
	Read in field	10/03/2013	Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue, Pont de Saire, Manche, FRANCE
	Read in field	18/03/2013	Morsalines, La Redoute, Manche, FRANCE
	Read in field	16/08/2013	Dawlish Warren, Exe Estuary, Devon
	Read in field	06/11/2013	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset
	Read in field	07/11/2013	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset
	Read in field	22/04/2014	Hayling Oysterbeds, Langstone Harbour, Hampshire
	Read in field	24/08/2014	Skippool Creek, Wyre Estuary, Lancashire
	Read in field	30/08/2014	Skippool Creek, Wyre Estuary, Lancashire
5409036 AKZH	Nestling	16/06/2012	Pionierinsel Luhe, Niedersachsen, GERMANY
	Read in field	20/07/2013	Heysham power station outfalls
	Read in field	19/08/2014	Cabin Hill NNR, Formby, Merseyside
5346629 AAKL/AJRL	Nestling	17/06/2006	Pionierinsel Luhe, Niedersachsen, GERMANY
	Read in field	17/05/2008	Pionierinsel Luhe, Niedersachsen, GERMANY
	Read in field	22/01/2009	Cork Harbour
	Read in field	23/05/2009	Pionierinsel Luhe, Niedersachsen, GERMANY
	Read in field	22/05/2010	Pionierinsel Luhe, Niedersachsen, GERMANY
	Read in field	04/07/2010	Seaforth Nature Reserve. Merseyside
	Read in field	12/7- 11/8/10	Hoylake, Wirral
	Read in field	09/05/2011	Kattrepel, GERMANY 53 35N 9.03E
	Read in field	12/5- 19/6/12	Pionierinsel Luhe, Niedersachsen, GERMANY
	Read in field	01/02/2013	Cork Harbour
	Read in field	30/01/2014	Cork Harbour
	Read in field	03/06/2014	Spiekeroog, GERMANY 53 46N 7 44E

The Czech-ringed veteran returned to Heysham for its thirteenth 'winter' in July 2015. Judging by the numbers of unringed 1CY and 2CY at Heysham in 2015-2015, compared to earlier years, the proportion of ringed birds is declining. Please do continue to check for rings as many of the adults have very interesting life-histories.

COMMON GULL

5188544	First year	22/09/2013	Bergen, Hordaland, NORWAY
	Seen	28/07/2014	Nether Burrow, Lancashire 838km SW
ETM UT311	Adult female	10/06/2014	Kakrarahu, Laanemaa: 58°46'N 23°25'E ESTONIA
	Read in field	01/10/2014	Crosby Beach, Merseyside 1,738km WSW

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

FP86889	Adult	24/11/2007	Stoke Orchard Landfill Site, Gloucestershire
	Read in field	18/11/2008	Stoke Orchard Landfill Site, Gloucestershire
	Read in field	20/11/2008	Stoke Orchard Landfill Site, Gloucestershire
	Read in field	23/11/2009	Grundons Landfill Site, Gloucestershire 2km N
	Read in field	28/01/2011	Portimao, Faro, PORTUGAL 1702km SSW
	Read in field	12/03/2011	Preston Dock, Lancashire 206 km NNW
	Read in field	19/03/2011	Preston Dock, Lancashire 206 km NNW
	Read in field	29/12/2012	Portimao, Faro, PORTUGAL 1702km SSW
	Read in field	13/01/2013	Quarteira, Faro, PORTUGAL 1718 km SSW
	Read in field	23/01/2013	Quarteira, Faro, PORTUGAL 1718 km SSW
	Read in field	28/01/2013	Quarteira, Faro, PORTUGAL 1718 km SSW
	Read in field	21/02/2013	Aviles Estuary, Asturias, Oviedo, SPAIN 972 km SSW
	Read in field	22/02/2015	Preston Dock, Lancashire 206 km NNW

A good example of the interesting information you will receive if you send in colour-ringed LBBG which are subject to a lot of ring-reading in coastal Iberia.

CASPIAN GULL

DN28744 / PKUX	Nestling	25/05/2012	Kozielno, Paczkow, Opolskie, POLAND
	Read in field	23/08/2012	Blaringhem, Nord, FRANCE
	Read in field	14/03/2013	La Seguiniere, Maine-et-Loire, FRANCE
	Read in field	24/05/2013	Blaringhem, Nord, FRANCE
	Read in field	07/06/2013	Blaringhem, Nord, FRANCE
	Read in field	14/06/2013	Blaringhem, Nord, FRANCE
	Read in field	27/06/2013	Blaringhem, Nord, FRANCE
	Read in field	02/01/2014	La Seguiniere, Maine-et-Loire, FRANCE
	Read in field	09/01/2014	Treffieux, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE
	Read in field	10/01/2014	Treffieux, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE
	Read in field	15/01/2014	Treffieux, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE
	Read in field	23/01/2014	Treffieux, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE
	Read in field	30/09/2014	Knott End, Preesall Sands, Lancashire
	Read in field	21/10/2014	New Brighton, Wirral

The first ringing recovery of this recently designated species in Lancashire

WOODPIGEON

FP19443	Adult	21/01/2010	Pocklington, East Riding of Yorkshire 53°55'N 0°48'W
	Shot	29/08/2014	Orchard End Farm, Garstang, Lancs 135kmW

BARN OWL

GV00296	Nestling	11/07/2014	Winmarleigh, Lancashire
	Dead	20/04/2015	Silverdale, Lancashire 28km N

TAWNY OWL

GF01954	Nestling	15/05/1992	Crawshawbooth, Rossendale
	Found dead	15/04/2014	Rawtenstall, Rossendale 3km in 8005 days

It was described as "not too fresh", therefore there *were* some identifiable remains (as opposed to an ancient Greenfinch ring found by a metal detector), therefore it has been accepted as the oldest BTO ringing recovery at 21 years 11 months.

GOLDCREST

HPV313	Full grown female	18/09/2014	Billinge Hill, St Helens, Merseyside
	Caught by ringer	07/04/2015	East Lamington, Morangie Forest, Highland 483km N
HRH334	First-year male	17/10/2014	Billinge Hill, St Helens, Merseyside
	Caught by ringer	01/11/2014	Runcorn, Cheshire 17km S
EFR198	First-year female	09/10/2013	Wendon Tofts, Essex
	Caught by ringer	08/04/2015	Heysham Nature reserve 303km NW

The spring passage was late at Heysham in 2015 and this was therefore in the 'normal' passage period which is usually over by the end of the first week in April.

BLUE TIT

D665544	First year	13/09/2014	Lytham St Annes
	Caught by ringer	16/12/2014	Barnacre Reservoir 23km NE

The other way round would be a more typical movement

GREAT TIT

D766030	Adult female	02/01/2014	King's Moss, Merseyside
	Caught by ringer	16/11/2014	High Batts, North Stainley, North Yorks 110km NE

Although it never features as an obvious coastal irruptive migrant like Blue, Coal and Long-tailed Tits in certain years, individual birds can undertake significant movements.

BEARDED TIT

D752012	Nestling	14/04/2014	Leighton Moss
	Caught by ringer	18/6-28/9/14	Leighton Moss (caught four times)
	Read in field	14/10/2014	South Walney, Cumbria 30km WSW
	Read in field	18/10/2014	South Walney, Cumbria 30km WSW

Vagrant status in Cumbria. The first known irruptee for many years but at least one observation of multiple irruptive behaviour at Leighton during the autumn before the flock returned to the reedbed.

SAND MARTIN

Y596793	Juvenile	21/07/2013	Fleetwood Marsh, Lancashire (roost)
	Caught by ringer	30/06/2014	Strath Rory Lower Quarry, Alness, Highland 463km N
D996809	Juvenile	25/06/2014	Whittington, River Lune (colony)
	Caught by ringer	07/07/2014	Winterset Reservoir, West Yorkshire 99km SE
D350058	First year	28/08/2013	Icklesham, East Sussex
	Caught by ringer	30/07/2014	Brockholes Quarry 389km NW

SWALLOW

D528588	Juvenile female	09/08/2013	Cors Dgyga, Anglesey
	Caught by ringer	17/05/2014	Little Crosby, Merseyside 92km ENE
	Caught by ringer	13/06/2015	Little Crosby, Merseyside 92km ENE
D657586	Adult male	24/09/2013	Gressingham maize field roost, Lancashire
	Caught by ringer	05/08/2014	Salsburgh, Lanarkshire 205km NNW
D550283	Juvenile	28/08/2013	Gressingham maize field roost, Lancashire
	Freshly dead	10/06/2014	Long Preston, North Yorkshire 31km ESE

D656841	Juvenile Found dead	13/09/2013 02/06/2014	Gressingham maize field roost, Lancs Dent, Cumbria 26km ENE
D551174	Juvenile Caught by ringer Caught by ringer	22/08/2013 17/05/2014 05/07/2014	Middleton Nature Reserve Thornton, Merseyside 60km S Thornton, Merseyside 60km S

Published recoveries limited to a movement to Scotland and those indicating breeding sites

HOUSE MARTIN

D424900	Juvenile Caught by ringer	15/09/2014 24/05/2015	Sandwich Bay, Kent Fazakerley, Liverpool 381km NW
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CETTIS WARBLER

D765661	Juvenile female Caught by ringer	22/07/2014 28/09/2014	Winterset Reservoir, Wakefield, West Yorkshire Middleton Nature Reserve 106km NW
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Z296371	Full Grown Caught by ringer	04/11/2014 17/04/2015	Leighton Moss Woolston Eyes, Warrington, Cheshire 89km S
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One of two autumn dispersal individuals caught at Middleton and further evidence that the Leighton Moss population is not a 'closed' one of local breeding birds and offspring.

LONG-TAILED TIT

EPT053/056 (two birds)	Full grown Caught by ringer	11/10/2014 16/11/2014	New Laithe Farm, Newton in Bowland Runcorn, Halton, Cheshire 69km SE
EBH073	Juvenile Caught by ringer	10/07/2013 01 & 03/09/14	Woolston Eyes, Warrington, Cheshire Billinge Hill, St Helens, Merseyside 18km NW

CHIFFCHAFF

DYN263	First-year Caught by ringer	05/08/2014 11/10/2014	Conon Islands, Maryburgh: 57°34'N 4°25'W (Highland) New Laithe Farm, Newton, Lancashire 422km SSE
EHX594	Juvenile Caught by ringer	30/07/2014 28/09/2014	Brockholes Quarry Sandwich Bay, Kent (TR3657) 388km SE
HNN757	First year Caught by ringer	31/08/2014 13/10/2014	Billinge Hill, St Helens, Merseyside Trunvel, Treogat, Finistere, FRANCE 636km SSW
CDT269	First year Caught by ringer	02/10/2014 12/10/2014	Middleton Nature Reserve West Bexington, Dorset 372km S
CDT270	First year	02/10/2014 07/10/2014	Middleton Nature Reserve Hungerford, Berkshire 303km SSE

Caught together but slightly different migratory agendas. Note the number of Chiffchaff recoveries compared to Willow Warbler and, for the first time in 35 years, the ringing total at Heysham/Middleton was higher than Willow Warbler (by a significant 40 birds).

WILLOW WARBLER

EAH986	Adult	29/08/2013 23/08/2014	Ripon Parks, North Yorkshire Leighton Moss 82km W
EEE071	Juvenile	23/06/2014 28/07/2014	Middleton Nature Reserve Stanford Reservoir, Northamptonshire 214km SE

EEE076 Juvenile 02/07/2014 Middleton Nature Reserve
07/08/2014 Queen Mary Reservoir, Surrey 331km SSE

The last two epitomise the earlier autumn migration compared to Chiffchaff ringed at the same location.

BLACKCAP

D466675 Juvenile 14/07/2013 Brookvale LNR, Sefton, Merseyside
Caught by ringer 12/10/2014 Southampton Common, Hampshire 304km SSE

D665275 Juvenile male 28/06/2014 Burglars Alley, Fleetwood
Caught by ringer 31/08/2014 Brookvale LNR, Sefton, Merseyside 47km S

Z219583 Juvenile male 26/07/2014 Billinge Hill, St Helens, Merseyside
Caught by ringer 01/11/2014 Fonte da Benemola, Faro, **PORTUGAL** 1856km SSW

TT10636 Nestling (male) 19/05/2014 Billinge Hill, St Helens, Merseyside
Caught by ringer 31/08/2014 Woolston Eyes, Warrington, Cheshire 18km SE

All relating to birds of British origin

WHITETHROAT

D752518 First year 08/08/2014 Middleton Nature Reserve
Caught by ringer 31/08/2014 Haxton, Wiltshire 317km SSE

SEDGE WARBLER

D551096 Juvenile 07/08/2013 Middleton Nature Reserve
Caught by ringer 17/08/2014 Squires Down, Dorset 341km S

Z130299 Juvenile 07/08/2014 Leighton Moss
Caught by ringer 16/08/2014 Rutland Water 217km SE

Z131089 Juvenile 22/08/2014 Leighton Moss
Caught by ringer 31/08/2014 Haxton, Wiltshire 332km SSE

Z131142 Juvenile 23/08/2014 Leighton Moss
Caught by ringer 07/09/2014 Slapton Ley, Devon 435km S

Z132227 Juvenile 13/09/2014 Leighton Moss
Caught by ringer 28/09/2014 Witton-le-Wear, Durham 88km NE

A rather late and lost juvenile. In addition, six Leighton-ringed birds were reported from the usual French **ringing sites during late July/August.**

REED WARBLER

POL Adult male 05/05/2011 Paul Do Taipal, Coimbra (Coimbra) **PORTUGAL**

A315717 Caught by ringer 31/05/2014 Brockholes Quarry, Lancashire 1,570km NNE

Caught by ringer 14/06/2014 Brockholes Quarry, Lancashire 1,570km NNE

L863237 Adult 11/07/2011 Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park, Lancashire

24/08/2014 Squire's Down, Stalbridge, Dorset 329km S

Z150877 Juvenile 16/09/2014 Burglar's Alley, Fleetwood, Lancashire

27/09/2014 Titchfield Haven, Hampshire 387km SSE

Y763963 Juvenile 20/08/2012 Leighton Moss

Caught by ringer 06/07/2013 Marton Mere, Blackpool 43km SSW

Caught by ringer 30/05/2014 Marton Mere, Blackpool 43km SSW

Z131015	First year Caught by ringer	20/08/2014 6/9 & 8/9/14	Leighton Moss Lebbeke, BELGIUM 51 0N 4 8E 586km SE
D752907	First year Caught by ringer	27/07/2014 15/09/2014	Middleton Nature Reserve Lagoa de Santo Andre, PORTUGAL 1826km SSW
D998620	First year	05/07/2014 11/08/2014	Leighton Moss Les Barthes de Quarter Bas, FRANCE 1195km S

One of two birds with similar ring/recapture dates at this Pyrenees-Atlantiques location. A further four Leighton-ringed birds were reported from French locations in August.

D998955	First year	23/07/2014 14/08/2014	Leighton Moss Titchfield Haven, Hampshire 387km SSE
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One of four birds from Leighton to south coastal sites during the autumn passage (Sussex, Dorset and Hampshire).

BLACKBIRD

LE84258	Juvenile female Caught by ringer	14/06/2014 02/04/2015	Brookvale LNR, Sefton, Merseyside Bessacar, Doncaster, South Yorks 126km E
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An unusual movement by a bird of Merseyside origin

VC42140	Adult female Dead	03/04/2013 16/06/2015	Thornton, Merseyside Slatevein, Skomrak, Vest Agder, NORWAY 811km NE
NOS 7513328	First winter male Caught by ringer	02/11/2010 13/03/2011	Blikshavn, Karmoy, Rogaland, NORWAY Clayton Brook, Merseyside 781km SW
LC12116	Adult female Shot	09/11/2010 12/10/2013	Lytham St Annes, Lancashire 53°45'N 3°1'W Porsgrunn, Telemark, NORWAY 59°7'N 9°39'E 981km NE

REDWING

RT01335	First winter Killed by cat	08/12/2013 01/06/2014	Kings Moss, Merseyside Sandhed, Orsa, Kopparberg, SWEDEN 1339km NE
RS60485	First year Shot	17/10/2014 30/11/2014	Billinge Hill, St Helens, Merseyside Fitero, Navarra, SPAIN 1272km S
RF52117	First winter Dead	26/12/2014 26/04/2015	New Laithe Farm, Newton in Bowland Os, Breiodalur, ICELAND 64 46N 14 4W 1368km N

As was also the case at Billinge, there appeared to be a few Icelandic Redwing in the county during winter 2014/5. More on this, I suspect, in next year's report.

ROBIN

Z273561	Adult Caught by ringer Caught by ringer	10/09/2014 13/01/2015 22/01/2015	Billinge Hill, St Helens, Merseyside Newport, Telford and Wrekin 85km SSE Newport, Telford and Wrekin 85km SSE
D954605	Adult Caught by ringer	07/09/2014 13/09/2014	Brookvale LNR, Sefton, Merseyside Hilbre Island, Wirral 20km SW
Y730803	First winter Caught by ringer	10/04/2014 05/10/2014	Isle of May, Fife Brookvale LNR, Sefton, Merseyside 304km S

Several possible interpretations of the last one including 'a north European migrant caught on its way from and subsequently to southern European wintering grounds' We will never know!

PIED FLYCATCHER

D665164	Nestling	01/06/2014	Lees, near Chipping, Lancashire	53°52'N 2°31'W
	Caught by ringer	01/08/2014	Steyning, West Sussex	50°52'N 0°19'W 366km SSE
L220803	Nestling	07/06/2011	Lyme Park, Disley, Cheshire	
	Nesting female	21/05/2013	Botton Mill, upper Hindburn	87km NNW
	Nesting female	11/05/2014	Winder Wood, upper Roeburn	90km NNW
L989066	Nestling	04/06/2011	Baringham, Durham	
	Nesting female	09/06/2012	Whittington, Lune valley	56km SW
	Nesting female	14/06/2013	Whittington, Lune valley	56km SW
	Nesting female	22/05/2014	Whittington, Lune valley	56km SW
Y494547	Nestling	12/06/2012	Baringham, Durham	
	Nesting female	26/05/2013	Hills Kirk Wood, lower Roeburndale	64km SW
	Nesting female	20/05/2014	Hills Kirk Wood, lower Roeburndale	64km SW
Y685932	Nestling	06/06/2013	Strid, Bolton Abbey, North Yorkshire	
	Nesting female	14/05/2014	Botton Mill, upper Hindburn	

In addition, there were many movements within the same woodlands, to adjoining woodland in the same catchment and between the Hindburn, Roeburn, Lune and Hodder catchments all under 20km.

REDSTART

D179717	First year female	26/04/2013	Portland Bill, Dorset	
	Caught by ringer	01/05/2015	Middleton NR	390km N

STONECHAT

Y593927	Nestling	28/04/2014	Hall Road Station, Crosby, Merseyside	
	Caught by ringer	27/09/2014	Shingle Street, Suffolk	343km ESE

TREE SPARROW

L079366	Juvenile	29/06/2014	Sedgewick, Cumbria	
	Caught by ringer	06/10/2014	Over Kellet	17km S
TS97410	Nestling	12/06/2013	Todderstaffe Hall, Lancashire	
	Caught by ringer	17/12/2013	New Longton, Lancashire	18km SE
	Caught by ringer	15/01/2014	New Longton, Lancashire	18km SE

This species has increased considerably as e.g. a coastal vis mig species in recent years so it is perhaps not surprising that there are recoveries showing movements between different populations.

GREY WAGTAIL

D657408	First winter	20/09/2013	Heysham Nature Reserve	
	Read in field	15/02/2014	Torver, nr Coniston SD2894	35km NNW
	Read in field	21/02/2014	Torver, nr Coniston SD2894	35km NNW
	Read in field	03/01/2015	Torver, nr Coniston SD2894	35km NNW

Staying all year round at/near the breeding site as an adult?

Z132768	First winter	12/09/2014	Middleton Nature Reserve, Heysham	
	Read in field	06/10/2014	Connahs Quay NR, Flint	88km S
	Read in field	09/11/2014	Connahs Quay NR, Flint	88km S

Not seen later than this at this well-watched site

Z132763	First winter	12/09/2014	Middleton Nature Reserve, Heysham	
	Read in field	18/09/2014	Seaforth Nature Reserve	64km S

D657029	First winter Read in field	11/09/2013 04/03/2015	Heysham Nature Reserve Worsley (Gt Manchester) 68 km SSE
D657047	First winter Read in field	20/09/2013 25/03/2015	Heysham Nature Reserve Melrose (Borders) 174km N in 551 days
Z130865	First winter Read in field Read in field	27/08/2014 17/04/2015 20/04/2015	Heysham Nature Reserve Marbury Country Park, Cheshire 88km SE Marbury Country Park, Cheshire 88km SE

This was also reported by a dog walker on/around 12/04/15. Female of a pair and presumed to be intending to nest there, but no further sightings. Most unexpected as breeding records should logically be to the north of Heysham.

Z130927	First winter Read in field	27/08/2014 17/03/2015	Heysham Nature Reserve Lostock Hall, Lancashire 37km SSE
Z296608	First winter Read in field Read in field	07/10/2014 25/01/2015 22/02/2015	Middleton Nature Reserve, Heysham Warton Bank, Ribble Estuary 31km S Warton Bank, Ribble Estuary 31km S

Presumably the wintering site

Y966256	First winter Read in field	15/09/2012 08/02/2015	Heysham Nature Reserve Crook of Lune, Caton 15km NE
D657049	First winter Photographed	20/09/2013 13/04/2014	Heysham Nature Reserve Sedgwick, south Cumbria 29km NNE
Unknown	First winter Read in field Read in field	Aug/Sept 11/05/2015 15/05/2015	Heysham or Middleton NR Fairliehope Burn, Carlops, Borders 197km NNW Fairliehope Burn, Carlops, Borders 197km NNW

A colour ring unfortunately missing, so one of 17 options ringed between 23/8/14 and 27/09/14. Seen gathering nesting material.

Unknown	First winter Partially read	Sept 2014 28/09/2014	Middleton Nature Reserve Appleton, Cheshire 76km S
Z296584	First winter Read in field Read in field Read in field	20/09/2014 16/11/2014 24/12/2014 03/05/2015	Middleton Nature reserve waste ground next to Middleton NR waste ground next to Middleton NR River Lune, Killington, Cumbria SD622908 c38km NE

Recorded as a territorial female by a Dipper researcher, but not seen subsequently. Seen at Middleton on several occasions between the two limital dates, but not subsequently. However, presumably wintered in the area. In addition, there were four birds seen within 5km to the S/E on autumn/winter 2014/5 dates, suggesting at the very least prolonged off-passage and almost certainly wintering status.

PIED WAGTAIL

D273627	First-year female Dead: hit glass	01/03/2013 17/04/2014	Stanley Downton, Gloucestershire 51°43'N 2°18'W Twiston, Lancashire 239km N
D732269	First-year Dead: hit glass	03/12/2013 15/04/2014	Stanley Downton, Gloucestershire 51°43'N 2°18'W Croston, Leyland, Lancashire 218km N
Z133415	First winter Caught by ringer	06/10/2014 05/11/2014	Gressingham, Oakley, Hereford & Worcester 212 km, S

D657649	First winter female	28/09/2013	Gressingham
	Caught by ringer	24/02/2014	Theix, Morbihan, FRANCE 47°37'N 2°38'W 723km S

MEADOW PIPIT

L367051	First year	02/09/2014	Downholme, North Yorkshire
	Caught by ringer	10/09/2014	Billinge Hill, St Helens, Merseyside 115km SSW
D236541	First year	05/08/2014	Nr Dalchork, Lairg, Highland NC5709
	Caught by ringer	20/09/2014	Brockholes Quarry 489km SSE
Z220039	Adult	10/09/2014	Brockholes Quarry
	Caught by ringer	20/09/2014	Holland Haven, Frinton on Sea, Essex 339km SE

Three long-distant movements in a year are notable for this species with a notoriously low percentage of metal-only-ringed birds being relocated

CHAFFINCH

Y999891	Full-grown female	10/11/2012	Kings Moss, Merseyside 53°30'N 2°45'W
	Dead: hit glass	28/12/2014	Southminster, Essex 51°39'N 0°49'E 317km SE
Y556051	Adult female	12/12/2012	Freshfield Dune Heath, Formby, Merseyside 53°34'N 3°3'W
	Caught by ringer	06/03/2014	Maugre, Santes: 50°34'N 2°57'E (Nord) FRANCE 527km SE

RUM	First-year female	23/04/2006	Zelenogradskiy District, Kaliningrad Oblas, RUSSIA 55°4'N 20°43'E
XN10512	Dead: hit glass	28/03/2011	Langho, near Blackburn, Lancashire 1,505km W

All of presumed (or obvious!) continental origin

R688864	First year female	08/08/2012	Moss House Farm, Out Rawcliffe
	Dead	28/04/2014	Pleasington, Blackburn 26km SE

D657814	First winter female	28/02/2014	Lancaster (south)
	Dead	15/04/2015	Redmire, North Yorkshire 65km ENE

Most ringing recoveries concerning birds of presumed British origin are on a north-south axis e.g. north Cumbrian birds wintering in Lancashire.

GREENFINCH

TS98951	First year female	02/10/2014	Over Kellet, nr Carnforth
	Dead	22/10/2014	Townfoot, Dumfries and Galloway 128km N

The 'wrong' way!

TWITE

D137972	First-year female	05/03/2013	Heysham Harbour, Heysham: 54°1'N 2°55'W, Lancashire
	Caught by ringer	16/05/2013	Clachtoll, Lochinver, Highland 485km NNW
	Caught by ringer	23/04/2014	Clachtoll, Lochinver, Highland 485km NNW

Y316032	Adult male	14/10/2013	Machrihanish, Argyll and Bute 55°25'N 5°45'W
	Caught by ringer	29/01/2014	Heysham Harbour, Heysham 239km SE

Three returning birds ringed at Machrihanish were present at Heysham during the first winter period and at least one seen in the field during the second winter period.

LESSER REDPOLL

Y470704	Full-grown female	27/03/2012	Heysham Harbour, Heysham: 54°1'N 2°55'W, Lancashire
	Caught by ringer	07/12/2013	Xhendelesse, Liege 50°36'N 5°46'E BELGIUM 703km ESE
L733536	First-year male	07/04/2013	Rossall School: c. 53°54'N 3°3'W, Lancashire
	Caught by ringer	25/04/2014	Grantown-on-Spey, Highland 57°19'N 3°37'W 382km N
D570682	First year	03/10/2013	Clowbridge, Rossendale
	Caught by ringer	2/2-23/3/14	Greenham Common, Berkshire 273km SSE
D240530	First year male	07/05/2013	Leswalt, Dumfries and Galloway
	Caught by ringer	19/03/2014	Freshfield Dune Heath, Formby, Merseyside 202km SE
Z296219	First year	16/10/2014	Leighton Moss
	Caught by ringer	15/02/2015	Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire 263km SE
L733536	First-winter male	07/04/2013	Rossall School, Lancashire
	Caught by ringer	25/05/2014	Grantown-on-Spey, Highland, Scotland
L733568	First-winter	20/04/2013	Rossall School, Lancashire
	Caught by ringer	01/03/2014	Woodford Green, London 326km SE
L418289	Adult male	30/04/2013	Knott End, Lancashire
	Caught by ringer	22/05/2013	Reiff, Achiltibuie, Highland 486km NNW
	Caught by ringer	15/04/2014	Reiff, Achiltibuie, Highland 486km NNW
	Caught by ringer	19/05/2014	Reiff, Achiltibuie, Highland 486km NNW

All recoveries over 200km published in full. The rest are all variations on a north in spring, south in autumn theme with less mileage involved.

SISKIN

D394787	Adult female	16/05/2013	Fort Augustus, Highland 57°7'N 4°42'W
	Caught by ringer	01/06/2013	Fort Augustus, Highland 57°7'N 4°42'W
	Caught by ringer	05/03/2014	Clayton Brook, Lancashire 53°43'N 2°39'W 401km SSE
N626551	First-year male	02/03/2013	Kemple End, Lancashire 53°51'N 2°28'W
	Caught by ringer	27/04/2014	Braal, Halkir, Highland 58°31'N 3°30'W 523km N
Y555358	Adult male	13/03/2012	Clayton Brook, Lancashire
	Caught by ringer	22/04/2014	Callander, Stirling 297km NNW
Y556269	First year female	06/04/2013	Mere Sands Wood, Rufford
	Caught by ringer	18/01/2014	Hamilton, South Lanarkshire 249km NNW
D139377	First year male	27/04/2013	New Laithe Farm, Newton in Bowland
	Caught by ringer	28/03/2014	Drummond, Inverness, Highland 406km NNW
L771838	Juvenile	14/06/2011	Thrushgill, Upper Hindburndale
	Caught by ringer	30/04/2014	Humshaugh, Northumberland 112km NNE

Included as this bird was almost certainly an offspring of a Thrushgill breeding pair

Y967033	First winter male	09/02/2013	Lancaster (south)
	Caught by ringer	26/03/2014	Kildary, Highland 422km N

D139198 First winter 10/04/2013 New Laithe Farm, Newton in Bowland
female

Caught by ringer 02/05/2014 Bettyhill, Highland 521km NNW

Most of the recoveries received were long-distance movements to and from Scottish breeding areas where they were caught at feeders

GOLDFINCH

Y470022 First year female 05/12/2011 Over Kellet, nr Carnforth

Caught by ringer 16/01/2015 Coolcush, Dungannon, Tyrone 264km W

This is well inland in Northern Ireland and cannot find any precedent

Z359467 First year 09/11/2014 Clowbridge, Rossendale

Caught by ringer 12/12/2014 Hodthorpe, Derbyshire 89km SE

A late autumn movement

REED BUNTING

Z131564 First year female 03/09/2014 Middleton Nature Reserve

Caught by ringer 30/10/2014 Tidmoor, The Fleet, Dorset 380km S

Z296042 First year female 13/10/2014 Leighton Moss, Lancashire

Caught by ringer 17/01/2015 Rowland Gill, Tyne and Wear 108km NE

Two completely different agendas for birds ringed on autumn passage using a tape

L870950 First year female 13/10/2011 Runcorn, Cheshire

Caught by ringer 08/04/2013 New Laithe Farm, Newton, Bowland 66km NNE

Caught by ringer 27/04/2013 New Laithe Farm, Newton, Bowland 66km NNE

Caught by ringer 22/03/2014 New Laithe Farm, Newton, Bowland 66km NNE

Presumably breeding near Newton in Bowland - an area where this species is almost exclusively a summer visitor.

A FIRST FOR LANCASHIRE BUFF-BELLIED PIPIT AT COCKERSAND, 4 MAY 2014

Stuart Piner

Following a month of almost non-stop work, which had culminated in a weekend-long paperwork session on Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 May, I was approaching madness with genuine speed. By Sunday evening, enough was enough, so my partner Josephine and I decided to take a walk at Cockersand. Whilst walking along Slack Lane a passerine flushed from the grass verge by a tilled field and landed on the tilled earth. I immediately identified the bird as a Water Pipit and began to photograph the stunning summer-plumage pipit.

Delighted with finding a Water Pipit in such an unusual location so late in the spring, I showed Josephine the bird and, after taking a few more photographs, at 19:09 we left the pipit still feeding in the field and retired to a local pub for dinner.

While at the pub I 'Googled' 'Buff-bellied Pipit May' on my Blackberry, but failing to find any photos of summer-plumaged birds in a brief internet search, I dismissed the possibility. Just before returning home, Lancaster birder Dan Haywood telephoned to tell me about his day's birding and I joked that I was just on my way home to check that I hadn't 'goofed' a Buff-bellied Pipit! While I clearly had the possibility of the bird being a Buff-bellied Pipit on my mind, I wasn't giving the option serious consideration, or else I would have raised the alarm, and I wouldn't have spent the remaining daylight sat in a pub.



Buff-bellied Pipit, Cockersand, 4 May 2014 (Stuart Piner)

We arrived home just as darkness was falling and I immediately loaded my photographs of the pipit onto my computer. Suddenly, when the context of a coastal field in Lancashire had been removed (clearly, a coastal field in May should have been a massive clue that the bird was not a Water Pipit), everything became clear, and after a few minutes of playing spot the difference with photos of summer plumage Buff-bellied Pipits and checking features in field guides, I realised that my 'Water Pipit' was in fact a Buff-bellied Pipit. I telephoned Chris Batty and asked him to urgently turn his computer on, and knowing of my earlier Water Pipit claim, he responded 'why, you've not just found a Buff-bellied Pipit have you?' After viewing my photographs he agreed with my (belated) identification and the news was broadcast on Rare Bird Alert.

Unfortunately, there was no sign of the bird at dawn the following morning. Given that I try my best to make sure that other birders see the rare and scarce birds that I encounter, it was disappointing and embarrassing that my initial misidentification cost people the opportunity of seeing such a great bird.

Identification

Separation from Water Pipit

- smaller, daintier bill than Water Pipit
- pale lores
- complete eye-ring
- buffish (more orange than pink) wash to underparts, lacking contrasting white belly of Water Pipit
- well defined streaks on breast and onto flanks, forming band across breast and malar patches
- uniform blue-grey on head and mantle, lacking contrast of blue head/brown mantle of Water Pipit
- black centres to tertials contrast with rest of upperparts
- upperparts and crown lightly streaked
- extent of white in outer tail feathers not noted in field, but appears to be a significant amount on T5 (in addition to T6) in photos

Separation from *japonicus*

'Pipits and Wagtails of Europe, Asia and North America' by Alstrom *et al.* states that *rubescens* and *japonicus* are 'not safely separable' in summer plumage. However, using some of the features listed in 'Advanced Bird ID Handbook' by Nils Van Duivendijk the bird can tentatively be identified as *rubescens*:

- Dark brown legs, pale pinkish to red-brown in *japonicus*
- Weakly streaked upperparts, heavier streaking in *japonicus*

Ageing

Two generations of greater coverts are visible on the bird's closed wing. Three generations of greater coverts would need to be visible to confirm the bird as a first-summer, so the bird could be either an adult or a first-summer.

AUTUMN MIGRATION OF GREY WAGTAILS OVER NORTH LANCASHIRE

Pete Marsh

The BTO Migration Atlas states that “little has been learnt in recent decades about Grey Wagtail movements. Larger numbers need to be ringed to show, for example, differences between the sexes and between young and adult birds in the pattern of movements”. This article reports on our study of colour-ringed Grey Wagtails, which aims to fill some of these knowledge gaps for passage migrants traversing Heysham and Middleton in the autumn.

Nature of the migration over Heysham and Middleton

The Heysham Observatory area witnesses a significant passage of Grey Wagtails from mid-August to early October, with a peak usually in the first half of September. This takes the form of singletons or small flocks of up to six individuals flying in-off the sea from the NNW to SSE, heading across Morecambe Bay from the south Lakeland coastline.

Peak movements occur in calm, clear weather, as with the majority of smaller species recorded on visible migration, such as the far more abundant Meadow Pipit. Largest numbers tend to occur in the first hour after dawn but can continue in small numbers for four to five hours. Numbers per morning rarely exceed 20 and, even in suitable weather, counts are usually below 15 and often below ten individuals.

At least one bird from any registration appears to call in flight regularly, with up to 5-6 equally-spaced calls within audible range, with the process interrupted as they descend to the tape lure. It appears to be very unusual for more than one bird in a flock to call. On call alone, therefore, all registrations would be recorded as singletons. However, consistent follow-up of calls has revealed that groups of 2-3, occasionally 4-6 comprise about 50% of the registrations, the remainder being singletons. It is considered highly unlikely, from our observations, that a significant number, if any, pass overhead and remain unrecorded through not calling and/or not responding to the tape.

The level of coverage has been very good during this study, for example no key mornings of suitable migration weather were missed in 2014, and there were no large gaps in observation periods during suitable mornings.

Catching strategy

Unlike Meadow Pipits, where the proportion of birds attracted down to the tape often land some distance away and/or hover above the catching area, Grey Wagtails seem to almost invariably home in on the tape. Therefore the problem was not to attract the birds down, but to be able to catch them successfully.

The ideal trapping area is an enclosed space with plenty of background for the net and no obvious perches; a net set at a rather open location will be seen and avoided. Sun on the nets drastically reduces the catch for the same reason but unfortunately coincides with the best migratory conditions. Given these factors, catches varied between 20% of the visibly recorded total on sunny, windy mornings to as high as 80% during still conditions with no sun on the net and minimal background noise. In 2014, the 162 birds ringed represented just over 64% of the known total of birds recorded on visible migration – higher than the usual average of just under 50%.

The captures

Out of the just over 400 individually colour-ringed birds, all but one were aged as juveniles. Given that the Migration Atlas suggests that adults as well as juveniles evacuate upland areas in autumn, this was a bit of a surprise and led to an evaluation of the behaviour of birds at the net and overhead. Were we missing adults on migration because they were not as responsive to the tape and/or avoided the net? Was there any difference between capture success of early and late birds? Several Meadow Pipit ringers (Craig Bell pers. comm.) have noted that later season passage birds contain a higher proportion of adults and this results in a higher proportion of birds flying straight over ignoring tapes, or circling half-heartedly before carrying on.

There have been just four examples of migrant Grey Wagtails showing little interest in the tape and just hovering above the net before carrying on with migration. Therefore there is little

to indicate that more wary, less tape-influenced adults are passing though on autumn migration and the catches are selectively biased towards juveniles. Migration over Middleton and Heysham is therefore assumed to be primarily juvenile dispersal, in this case almost exclusively on a NNW-SSE flight-line. All the birds trapped were recorded as carrying zero body fat.

Since 2009, and, more systematically, since 2011, the birds have been fitted with individual colour ring combinations in an attempt to increase the re-trap and recovery rate. All sightings so far have been of colour combinations read in the field, rather than birds re-caught or found dead, so the approach has already proved its worth.

Movements

So, we are tape-luring a diurnal migrant which invariably flies quite high and purposefully to the SSE, and climbs up into the sky and continues that journey on release. Therefore it was surely reasonable to assume that this is a lengthy, high migration which will produce some nice long-distance recoveries and a few from the Lakes and Scotland in the breeding season? It has not really worked out like that!

It became apparent that a small number of Grey Wagtails heading SSE in the early morning were, like the accompanying *alba* Wagtails, simply exiting their roost to return to their local daily routine. A Heysham-ringed bird which was re-trapped during the early morning a month after ringing was the first in a series of sightings which indicated that some birds were either remaining in the local area or were intending to winter there. Indeed, the last three years have seen ten different birds sighted at least two weeks after ringing at various local sites within 10km, in an arc between east and south of the ringing area.

These included a midwinter bird attending a small Grey Wagtail roost in the middle of Lancaster; two remaining at Middleton during winter 2014/5 and one in a Heysham housing estate in February 2015. February 2015 also saw a sighting at the Crook of Lune, about 15km north-east, which had been ringed in September 2012. Presumably these were either roosting locally or birds ringed late in the migration season, possibly settling down at wintering sites nearby.

However, the ringing times of the birds which remained local did not conform to any pattern and several of them were ringed well after the very early morning roost departure period. There was no perceived change in behaviour during the course of the migration season with all birds trapped and ringed taped-lured down from a high NNW-SSE flightline. There was no evidence of late season captures of birds which were on a 'local circuit'. Early October onwards did, however, produce the occasional individual on a regular feeding routine, therefore overlapping with the end of season migratory trickle, and these targeted the preferred habitats (e.g. Middleton sewage works, Heysham NR observation tower pond) and ignored the tape, even though it was within audible range. Therefore there was no apparent correlation between a late ringing date and increased likelihood of wintering locally.

Conclusions

Despite giving the impression of high-flying, long-distance migration, it seems that some birds are just "jumping across Morecambe Bay" from the south Cumbrian coast before looking for a suitable winter niche. This has also seen some pretty modest movements to wintering sites on the Ribble, Connah's Quay, Flintshire and perhaps the three at Seaforth, as well as two further Seaforth and one north Cheshire sightings which indicated a very leisurely 60-70km migration.

So these high-flying birds may simply be using the best strategy to cross the bay and continue similarly over land, perhaps avoiding coming within Sparrowhawk range; they can behave very 'deceptively', with a towering flight after release, continuing high SSE, in some cases stopping as soon as they catch sight of the enticing River Lune a minute or two later

On the other hand, there have been some longer distance movements involving wintering at a sewage works in Wiltshire, a one-day visit to a garden pond in Wolverhampton and the late season ten day movement to Skokholm (4-14 October 2013). Additionally we know of a nestling ringed at Moy, Highland that was found just over the border in north-west Cheshire.

Finally, few birds were initially seen on breeding grounds, as opposed to on passage or wintering, but these improved considerably in 2015. These included sightings at Melrose and Carlop (both in Borders), and closer to hand Torver near Coniston, Sedgewick, Killington bridge and Levens (all in

Cumbria), and Marbury Country Park in Cheshire (a nesting female).

So our initial hypothesis that significant numbers of Grey Wagtails observed in autumn were long-distance migrants has not been supported. Rather it appears that this autumn movement is composed overwhelmingly of dispersing juveniles, most probably undertaking quite short journeys within the north-west but a few venturing further south. We have found no evidence that adults undertake similar movements.



Heysham-ringed Grey Wagtail on Skokholm, October 2013 (Richard Brown)

OBITUARY: ERIC WARD (18th November 1919 – 11th February 2015)

Peter Hornby

Eric Ward died at Haslingden Hall Care Home, Helmshore, Rossendale on 11 February 2015 aged 95. Together with his wife Margaret they moved from their native Warrington to Rossendale in 1948 when Eric was appointed a geography and biology teacher at Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School (BRGS), a post he held until retirement in 1982. He founded the BRGS Birdwatching Society which he ran from 1949 to 1982.

Eric was a founder member of the Rossendale Ornithologists Club (ROC) and its chairman from 1976 to 1999. In 1989 he wrote and published 'Rossendale Birds' and followed this with 'Rossendale Birds Millennium Update' published in 2002. He enthused a whole generation of students with his passion for and knowledge of ornithology and many went on to join the ROC.

Eric's special achievement was undertaking the BTO's Common Bird Census on his local upland patch 'The Hile' near to his Waterfoot home for 28 years from 1968 to 1995, which stands as one of the longest series of CBC data in the country. As a consequence 'The Hile' was chosen along with one other Pennine CBC site for a BTO research project on upland birds in 2000, which culminated in Eric being a co-author of a 2002 research paper, along with RJ Fuller, D Hird and AF Brown, entitled 'Declines of ground-nesting birds in two areas of upland farmland in the south Pennines of England' (Bird Study 49: 146-152).

I first met Eric in the early 1970s – always kindly, bright and erudite, he embodied the qualities of that very special post-war generation of true amateur ornithologists. After Eric and Margaret needed to move to the care home I continued to visit them regularly, right up until the Saturday before his death, when he was in good spirits.

DRAGONFLIES IN 2015

Steve White

The generally cool and overcast summer predictably produced a below-par showing for several of Lancashire's regular species but there were some surprises in store.

The first came on 3 July when Pete Kinsella discovered the county's second Keeled Skimmer, a male at Slack 47 amongst the Birkdale dunes – the first, also a male had been found on the Grindleton Ponds/Levi Well in east Lancashire in August 2013.

Hot on its heels another, even more remarkable discovery was made at Birkdale on 10 July by Chris Storey of a Southern Migrant Hawker. This was a first record for Lancashire and North Merseyside and believed to be the most northerly British record of a species that has recently established a tenuous toehold in south-east England. Even more remarkable was that it was a female as it is almost always males of all species that are prone to wander.



**Female Southern Migrant Hawker, Birkdale, 10 July 2015
(Chris Storey)**



**Male Keeled Skimmer, Birk Bank, Clougha, 12 August 2015
(Steve Graham)**

In the last week of June Red-veined Darters began to appear at Middleton Nature Reserve and up to eight were seen there regularly in July before the last on the 25th. Females were seen ovipositing on at least four dates. Since we know of no other records of this species in Lancashire during 2015 it seems most likely that this represented the re-emergence in some strength of the breeding population that became established there in 2002 or earlier.

Two, possibly three, male Keeled Skimmers were then found at Birk Bank Bog, Clougha by Steve Graham on 12 August, this time in what appears to be suitable breeding habitat – perhaps colonisation is finally underway.

'The Dragonflies of Lancashire and North Merseyside' was finally published in 2015 (copies are available for purchase via the LCFS website) but dragonfly recording goes on. We welcome submission of all records at the end of each season – send to stevewhite102@btinternet.com. All will be passed on to the British Dragonfly Society nationally.

Migrant Dates 2014

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 2014.
- The earliest recorded spring and latest recorded autumn records.
- The average (mean) first arrival and last departure dates.
- The trends for Earlier or Later arrival or departure where these are statistically significant between 1990 and 2014.

Records of overwintering and sickly birds have been omitted.

	SPRING				AUTUMN			
	2014	Earliest	Mean	Trend	2014	Latest	Mean	Trend
Garganey	4/4	24/2/95	29/3					
Osprey	22/3	4/3/05	22/3	E	15/11	15/11/14	11/10	
LRP	21/3	8/3/10	19/3		16/9	19/10/76	16/9	
Dotterel	11/4	29/3/89	21/4					
Whimbrel	12/4	11/3/78	8/4		19/9	6/11/88	5/10	
Common Sandpiper	8/4	18/3/11	5/4	E	16/10	29/10/77	13/10	
Wood Sandpiper	6/5	14/4/83	3/5		27/9	5/12/12	19/9	
Little Tern	10/4	12/4/13	24/4		1/9	3/10/03	14/9	
Black Tern	23/4	11/4/80	29/4		23/11	23/11/14	11/10	
Sandwich Tern	24/3	13/3/90	27/3		12/10	2/12/94	16/10	
Common Tern	12/4	30/3/07	12/4		1/10	17/11/77	18/10	E
Arctic Tern	20/4	1/4/94	17/4		21/10	18/11/11	11/10	
Cuckoo	14/4	23/3/00	16/4	E	28/8	18/10/09	31/8	
Swift	20/4	1/4/04	16/4		19/10	4/12/63	7/10	
Sand Martin	3/3	24/2/90	10/3		11/10	13/10/72	4/10	
Swallow	5/3	5/3/15	21/3		25/11	31/12/86	23/11	L
House Martin	27/3	17/3/63	1/4	E	17/10	31/12/81	25/10	E
Wood Warbler	23/4	14/4/79	23/4			26/9/67		
Willow Warbler	29/3	19/3/90 & 11	29/3		23/10	18/11/89	10/10	
Garden Warbler	12/4	6/4/11	19/4	E	29/10	13/11/95	13/10	
Lesser Whitethroat	3/4	3/4/14	19/4	E	25/10	23/11/99	4/10	
Whitethroat	2/4	2/4/15	15/4	E	21/9	23/10/90	1/10	
Grasshopper Warbler	3/4	7/4/11	15/4	E	21/9	5/10/14	18/9	
Sedge Warbler	14/4	27/3/03	12/4		22/9	14/11/96	29/9	
Reed Warbler	6/4	5/4/11	14/4	E	12/10	14/11/93	13/10	
Spotted Flycatcher	1/5	20/4/85 & 11	30/4		26/9	15/11/79	3/10	
Pied Flycatcher	11/4	7/4/11	16/4		12/9	3/11/01	22/9	
Ring Ouzel	27/3	11/3/99	21/3		9/11	11/12/00	7/11	
Redstart	4/4	28/3/68 & 12	9/4	E	17/9	10/11/82	2/10	
Whinchat	18/4	20/3/76	20/4		11/10	12/11/79	11/10	
Wheatear	8/3	26/2/03	10/3		10/11	27/11/11	31/10	
Yellow Wagtail	11/4	24/3/96	10/4		4/11	11/11/95	11/10	
Tree Pipit	11/4	17/3/57	5/4		13/10	1/12/12	5/10	

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 below. Since 2007 the BBRC has no longer been accepting paper records. Paper submissions, including sketches, should therefore be electronically scanned and sent by email to the County Recorder as low resolution jpegs or pdfs. Photographs should also be sent as jpegs. Digital copies of the BBRC submission form are available from the County Recorder. If descriptions are submitted directly via the BBRC website could copies of these also be sent to the County Recorder to be added to the Lancashire archive. 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:

- Black Stork, Rivington, 26 May 2014
- Buff-bellied Pipit, Cockersand, 4 May 2014

The following records are under consideration by the BBRC:

- 'Todd's Canada Goose', two, various Fylde sites, 16-31 December 2014
- Pied-billed Grebe, Leighton Moss, 25 April to 4 May, 2015
- Lesser Yellowlegs, Conder Estuary, 23-26 August 2015
- Laughing Gull, Seaforth, 5-16 April, 2015

The following record was found to be not proven by the BBRC:

- Baikal Teal, Lunt Meadows, 10 November 2014

The following record is under consideration by the BOURC as a first for Britain:

- Cackling Goose, south-west mosses, 14-28 November 1976

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, many 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, Mark Breaks, 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 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. Descriptions 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

Please note that both Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Turtle Dove are now so rare in the county that they are now 'description species', and that records of both Willow and Marsh Tit outside of their known ranges also need to be supported by descriptions. Glossy Ibis and Olive-backed Pipit were dropped as national rarities at the beginning of 2013 and Lesser Scaup, Penduline Tit, Blyth's

Reed Warbler and Citrine Wagtail from 2015, while Aquatic Warbler, Tawny and Red-throated Pipits, and Rustic Bunting are now treated as national rarities and assessed by the BBRC.

Species and Subspecies Requiring Full Descriptions

These are all marked with an asterisk in the systematic list

Taiga Bean Goose	White-rumped Sandpiper	Pallas's Warbler
Black Brant	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Yellow-browed Warbler
American Wigeon	Pectoral Sandpiper	Radde's Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Red-necked Phalarope	Dusky Warbler
Ferruginous Duck	Long-tailed Skua	Siberian Chiffchaff
Lesser Scaup	Puffin	Barred Warbler
Surf Scoter	Little Auk	Dartford Warbler
Black Grouse	White-winged Black Tern	Western Subalpine Warbler
White-billed Diver	Roseate Tern	Icterine Warbler
Cory's Shearwater	Sabine's Gull	Melodious Warbler
Great Shearwater	Ring-billed Gull	Blyth's Reed Warbler
Sooty Shearwater	Caspian Gull	Marsh Warbler
Balearic Shearwater	Turtle Dove	Rose-coloured Starling
Wilson's Petrel	Nightjar	Nightingale
Night Heron	Alpine Swift	Bluethroat
Cattle Egret	Hoopoe	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Purple Heron	Bee-eater	Citrine Wagtail
Glossy Ibis	Wryneck	Richard's Pipit
Red-necked Grebe	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Olive-backed Pipit
Honey Buzzard	Red-footed Falcon	Common Rosefinch
Black Kite	Golden Oriole	Common (Mealy) Redpoll
White-tailed Eagle	Red-backed Shrike	Coues's Arctic Redpoll
Montagu's Harrier	Woodchat Shrike	Serin
Rough-legged Buzzard	Chough	Lapland Bunting
Golden Eagle	Woodlark	Cirl Bunting
Spotted Crake	Shore Lark	Ortolan Bunting
Corncrake	Short-toed Lark	Little Bunting
Common Crane	Red-rumped Swallow	
Stone Curlew	Penduline Tit	
American Golden Plover	Marsh and Willow Tit	
Kentish Plover	(out of normal range)	
Temminck's Stint	Greenish Warbler	

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 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).

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Thank-you to everyone who has sent in their records this year and sincere apologies if we've missed anyone out!

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Alt WeBS	Heysham NR & Observatory Report
Birdguides	LDBWS report
Blackburn Bird Club	Mersey WeBS
BTO/RSPB Birdtrack	MMWWT logs
Chorley & District Natural History report	Morecambe Bay WeBS
Cuerden Valley Park report	Rare Bird Alert
ELOC Report	Ribble WeBS
Fylde Bird Club database	Seaforth Bird Report
Gorse Hill NR report	United Utilities

Photographs and Illustrations

We've continued to produce the report in full colour this year allowing us to use lots of images. Thanks to everyone for letting us use them! We would be delighted to receive further submissions from the growing number of Lancashire birders with high quality photographic equipment.

Abbreviations used in the text

1S - first-summer, 1W - first-winter, and so on.

GC	Golf Course	ML	Marine Lake
GP	Gravel Pit	Qry	Quarry
LNR	Local Nature Reserve	SW	Sewage Works
NR	Nature Reserve	Res	Reservoir
NNR	National Nature Reserve		
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		
LDBWS	Lancaster and District Birdwatching Society		
LWT	Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside Wildlife Trust		
SWLRG	South-West Lancashire Ringing Group		

The Dragonflies of Lancashire and North Merseyside

We printed 500 copies of the 'Dragonfly Atlas' in March this year and existing members received a copy in the post as part of their membership. We still have copies available at £10 each but they're selling out fast! If you want a copy then contact Dave Bickerton (details page 3).



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