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Lancashire Bird Report 2018

The Birds of Lancashire and North Merseyside

S. J. White (Editor)

D. A. Bickerton, M. Breaks, S. Dunstan,
N. Godden, R. Harris, B. McCarthy, P. J. Marsh,
S.J. Martin, T. Vaughan, J. F. Wright.



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Front Cover: Grey Phalarope, Crosby Marine Park (Steve Young)

Back Cover: Common Terns, Seaforth NR (Steve Young)

INTRODUCTION

Dave Bickerton

Welcome to the 2018 Lancashire Bird Report. To members of the Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society, who receive this as part of their subscription, thank you once again for supporting the work of the charity. To those who've purchased a copy, please consider joining the society to ensure the continued publication of reports on Lancashire's wildlife. This year we passed the 170 membership mark, a far cry from when I started as Honorary Secretary over 20 years ago when members numbered fewer than 75. The AGM earlier this year was the best attended I've ever known with 18 members contributing to a packed agenda. Getting the membership to over 200 is still a target as this level would help us maintain the financial stability of the society and continue to publish the reports we do. In the meantime we continue to run as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible with volunteers giving many hours/days/weeks of their time freely in order to get this and other journals of record into print.

This year, we published the long-awaited "Butterflies & Day-flying Moths of Lancashire" which was issued free to members. Unfortunately, sales of this have been disappointing and nowhere near as successful as the "Dragonflies Atlas" of 2015 and the recent moth books that have all recouped the printing costs. Next in the pipeline is a publication on the "Aculeate Hymenoptera of Lancashire" which will certainly have a limited appeal, but with the rise in interest of invertebrate fauna, bees and wasps could well be the first in a series of smaller publications.

Early 2018 was an interesting period in weather terms as we had an almost continual easterly airflow, bringing with it the very cold weather of late-winter/early-spring followed by two of the sunniest months on record. Climate change is upon us and the fauna of our region is changing rather rapidly in some cases, so the line in the sand that this report draws, helps to show what is happening at a more local level. Thank you to everyone who has contributed their records and articles: we can't publish every record we receive but we certainly endeavour to get the essence of each species' status.

We have a few extra articles this year, something we're always keen to incorporate so if you've anything you consider worth publishing, please let us know. The Willow Tit Survey is a very important one in the context of the national picture as there seems to be a stabilisation in our population. Similarly, the article on Skylarks tells of a dramatic fall in numbers with a small recovery. There's also the results of the Seabird Survey for our area.

In the ringing report this year, there is a short piece on colour-rings, their use and tips on reading them, a pastime that has been taken up with enthusiasm by many birders. I was fortunate to take part in canon-netting sessions on the Alt where many Knot and Grey Plover have been colour-ringed with some very interesting subsequent observations.

We had a couple of Lancashire firsts in 2018; a Snowy Owl in the West Pennine Moors was videoed by two fortunate people and a Black-headed Wagtail near Leighton Moss was enjoyed by many. For the third year in a row, a Pallid Harrier was recorded, this time near Cockersand and Lancashire's third Semi-palmated Sandpiper hung around several days to an appreciative audience.

I hope you enjoy reading the report and continue to find it useful and informative. Good birding!



European White-fronted Geese, Rishton, 16 December (Dave Bickerton)

Review of 2018

John Wright

January

January started mild and changeable; it was very windy on the 2nd/3rd with the passage of Storm Eleanor but turned more settled and quite cold between the 6th and 12th. A changeable westerly type returned for the second half of the month, and it was generally mild.

The year started with a flurry of **Firecrests** with one from 2017 still showing at Walton-le-Dale. Others were at Freeman's Wood, Aldcliffe from the 2nd, Leighton Moss from the 7th and in a Fulwood garden on the 9th.

A **Great Northern Diver** off Formby Point on the 7th was the first of five singles seen along the coast this year. A **Leach's Petrel** was a more unseasonal sighting off Blackpool on the 17th; the last midwinter record was in February 2002.

A particularly popular winterer was the **Chough** at Heysham Head. It was often confiding and attracted many admirers right through to its departure in April. Visitors could also see an interesting variety of other species in the Heysham area with a **Red-Throated Diver** and a **Shag** in the harbour. The harbour also had regular visits from a first-winter **Glaucous Gull**, a third-winter **Iceland Gull** and two adult **Mediterranean Gulls**. In addition, two **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** and three **Jack Snipe** were frequenting Ocean Edge and up to 1410 **Eider** were offshore with three **Scaup**.



The diver hat trick this month was completed with a juvenile **Black-throated Diver** at Blea Tarn from the 21st. This bird was another excellent find in the north of the county and generated great interest as it chose to roost on the sea, commuting daily to and from Morecambe Bay.

A male **Green-winged Teal** that turned up at Leighton Moss early in the month was accompanied by a **Eurasian x Green-winged Teal** hybrid. Further males were seen at MMWWT on the 24th and at Marshside on the 3rd February.

February

The first half of the month was rather unsettled and temperatures were somewhat below average. The weather did settle down a bit after mid-month, becoming predominantly dry and a little milder, but in the final few days it steadily became colder and snow was an issue in many areas at month-end.

The great mix of species in Morecambe Bay was added to with the discovery of a male **Velvet Scoter** with the **Eider** flocks that moved between Heysham and Morecambe. It was often tricky to locate but proved to be another long-stayer and was present until early April. A much more unexpected winterer was a first-winter **Turtle Dove** found in a garden at Pilling Lane on the 10th which remained in the area until 30 April.

Up until recently **Cattle Egrets** would also have been a rare sighting but the five that wintered around Birkdale with **Little Egrets** have become a regular feature in recent years. Sightings continued on both sides of the Ribble through the spring and then built up to a peak of nine in October. In addition, up to three were seen at Leighton Moss at both ends of the year.

The regular adult **Iceland Gull** continued to commute between Marton Mere and the Blackpool Waste Station and a first-winter was off Morecambe on the 16th. The rare subspecies **Kumlien's Gull** was present in the Fishmoor Reservoir roost on the 15th & 16th.

March

March began with an exceptionally cold easterly flow and widespread snow, and daytime temperatures remained below freezing in many parts of the county. It turned milder from the south during the first week, and until mid-month the weather was generally wet and cloudy for most with low

pressure dominant. A second cold easterly outbreak brought widespread snow on the 17th and 18th. After a brief dry sunny spell, the milder unsettled regime returned for the rest of the month.

An interesting mix of sightings this month started with a singing male **Hawfinch** at a previous breeding site in Pleasington Old Hall, Blackburn. This bird had arrived with the influx in autumn 2017 but unfortunately didn't appear to find a mate.

Whilst **Hawfinch** appear to have only a precarious foothold in the county the enigmatic **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was thought possibly to be extinct until the exciting discovery of a female in the Burnley area in early March. One of the highlights of the year and hopefully there are others still to be discovered in some of our more remote riverine woodlands.

Ring-billed Gulls continued their recent run of single sightings with an adult at MMWWT for only five minutes on the 10th, mirroring the only sighting in 2017.

A pair of dapper **Long-tailed Ducks** off Rossall Point on the 15th & 16th was the only record in the county this year. In contrast **Brent Geese** had a good winter in Morecambe Bay with wandering groups from Cumbria regularly visiting Heysham and peaking at fourteen **Pale-bellied** and three **Dark-bellied**.

The most remarkable sighting of the month (and the year) was the discovery of a magnificent female **Snowy Owl** on moorland at Spitter's Edge in the West Pennine Moors on the 25th. It was video recorded on the observer's phone and posted on a local Facebook site where the identity was established. Unfortunately, by this stage the bird had moved on – much to the disappointment of the many folk who would have loved to have seen this first the county.

April

The first half of the month continued unsettled and generally cloudy, although it was generally less cold after the 5th. There was a brief but very marked hot spell from the 18th to the 21st. Progressively cooler, unsettled weather returned from the 22nd, and it was predominantly bright and showery but with more general rain at times.

A typically varied month started with a putative '**Grey-bellied Brant Goose**' that ranged between Marshside and Banks Marsh from the 8th. Though not currently recognised as a valid taxon this smart bird attracted a lot of observers during its week-long stay. An excellent passage of **Ring Ouzels** particularly at inland sites was very welcome. The highest count was 32 in the Belmont area but there was also peaks of 23 on and around Pendle Hill, 13 on Darwen Moor, six on Winter Hill and four at George's Lane, Rivington. **Black Redstarts** were also on the move with five singles seen between the 10th & 16th at Garston Coastal Park, Cockersand, Ainsdale Dunes, Knott End and Heysham.

An impressive inland flock of 23 **Kittiwakes** visited Brockholes on the 11th and a **Slavonian Grebe** was on the sea off Blackpool on the 14th. Also on the 14th a first-summer male **Black-headed Wagtail** was found at Leighton Moss and was the county's first confirmed record. This striking bird was present until the 17th and was much admired during its stay.

A female **Ruddy Duck** on Lower Foulridge Reservoir on the 17th was the only record of the year and the first in the county since December 2014.

After two years without a record the appearance of three **Hoopoes** in a six-day period was an unexpected delight for those lucky enough to see them. One at Hightown and Formby Point on the 19th was quickly followed by two garden visitors in the Fylde, at Ansdell on the 21st and Thornton on the 25th.

Another rare visitor was a **Savi's Warbler** at Brockholes from the 22nd. Despite regular bouts of singing during its four-day stay it was very elusive. A pair of beautiful summer-plumaged **Black-necked Grebes** were on Eccleston Mere on the 26th and more unusually one was off Blackpool on the 29th.

May

At the start of May the county was in an unsettled westerly regime, but after a frontal system had brought rain south-eastwards on the 1st and 2nd it soon turned much warmer and, for most places, sunnier. The second week was cooler but still with a fair amount of dry sunny weather for many parts. The second half was generally warm with high pressure dominating and easterly winds bringing further warm sunshine.

Marshside had a spectacular purple patch at the start of the month with two **Glossy Ibises**, that also made a brief appearance at Brockholes, two **Spoonbills**, a **Snow Goose** and two **Tundra**

Bean Geese with lingering **Pink-footed Geese**, a male **Garganey**, a **Temminck's Stint**, two **Wood Sandpipers**, up to eleven **Curlew Sandpipers** and 28 lekking **Ruff**.

Wood Sandpipers have shown a marked increase in recent years and the total of 35 birds this year set a new record. Thirteen of these were seen in May including the two at Marshside, three at Lunt Meadows and two at Saltcotes on the Fylde. In contrast, **Dotterel** had a very disappointing passage with only two single birds on Pendle Hill on the 9th and the 12th.

Another summer plumaged **Black-necked Grebe** that appeared on Kincaig Lake, Bispham gave fabulously close views during its seven day stay. It also introduced many visitors to the bread eating **Grey Herons** that breed there!

The spring's fourth Hoopoe was in a garden at Catforth on the 12th. A superb summer-plumaged **White-winged Black Tern** was a lovely discovery at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 20th and another fantastic find was a **Red-backed Shrike** at Cockersand on the 27th. This beautiful male was the first county record since 2015.



Black-necked Grebe, Kincaig Lake, Bispham, 4 May (John Wright)

June

The first week of June became increasingly settled, with temperatures rising well above average especially by day. It became less settled from the 9th onwards, and on 13th/14th there were some large rainfall totals in upland areas. The middle part of the month saw generally larger cloud amounts, but from around the 21st onwards most areas were sunny and increasingly warm, with some areas approaching 30 °C from the 25th onwards.

The joy for the finder of a female type **Subalpine Warbler** at Heysham on the 1st was somewhat complicated by trying to allocate it to a species. Recent taxonomic splits have made identification in the field very difficult, so this record was accepted as a **Subalpine/Moltoni's Warbler**. It was only the 5th record of a **Subalpine Warbler** sp. for the county and an unequivocal male would no doubt be greatly appreciated.

The return of **Nightjars** to a location in east Lancashire in recent years has been an exciting development and two males were heard churring there on the 3rd. There was also good news for our **Hen Harriers** with three nests in Bowland fledging thirteen young.

Sadly, the negative headlines this year moved onto the plight of our **Curlews** and **Lapwings**. So beloved by folk across the county a recent change to farming practices has led to dramatic declines in breeding success. This was exemplified by the **Curlew** population within the West Pennine Moors SSSI which is estimated at a hundred pairs. Calling adults and sightings of juveniles suggested that those that bred on moorland and unimproved pasture had a successful season but those that bred on improved pasture all appeared to fail as a result of June silage cutting.

In contrast, **Pied Flycatchers** had a great breeding season with nest-box monitoring in the Lune Valley recording a record total of 108 pairs of which 68 were successful and 451 juveniles were ringed.

Sightings of **Storm Petrels** have been very scarce in recent years so two off Blackpool on the 14th with singles off Fleetwood & Heysham the same day delighted our dedicated band of seawatchers.

July

The first half of July was dominated by high pressure and the first week in particular was very hot, dry and sunny over a large majority of the county. The second week was similar but not generally as hot or sunny. The weather was a little less settled in the second half of the month, but rainfall amounts remained small in many parts of the county until the last few days. The hottest spell of the month was between the 23rd and 26th, followed by a thundery breakdown.

A booming **Bittern** at Leighton Moss in the spring raised hopes that a breeding attempt would be made this year. During June and July regular feeding flights were observed to the delight of all those who had been involved in the habitat restoration that led to the successful fledging of two juveniles. Further encouraging news came from MMWWT where a **Bittern** was booming throughout the summer.

Even rarer was the breeding of two pairs of **Rock Pipits** at Heysham, the nearest regular breeding populations to Lancashire are at St. Bees Head in Cumbria and in North Wales.

Another success story was the continuing improvement in the fortunes of our breeding **Common Terns** thanks to the provision of a variety of rafts, boxes and tyres. At Seaforth 171 pairs hatched a record 207 chicks and fledged 152 juveniles. At least 89 pairs bred at Preston Dock and six pairs at Hesketh Out Marsh, three pairs at Mere Sands Wood and breeding took place a Brockholes for the first time with a single pair raising three young. The larger colonies also attract elegant **Arctic Terns** and four pairs nested at Hesketh Out Marsh and two pairs at Preston Dock.

These colonies also act as magnets for scarcer tern species. Seaforth has an excellent track with **Roseate Terns** and a pair were present here on the 23rd with a single on the 25th. Elsewhere in the county they are very rare visitors so the single **Roseate Tern** at Preston Dock on the 8th was a prized find. It was only the second record here since the colony was established and a Little Tern was also present on the same day. A **Black Tern** also visited Preston Dock on the 28th, an unusual mid-summer record.

August

The first week of August continued the warm and settled theme of the previous couple of months, but after that conditions were more unsettled and closer to the average. There was cooler weather at times during the second half of the month, and rainfall amounts were more significant. The last few days were the most unsettled and the coolest part of the month.

Terns continued to feature with the late summer gathering of **Sandwich Terns** along the Sefton Coast building up to a spectacular 2000 at Formby Point on the 6th. **Mediterranean Gulls** are also now appearing in large post-breeding gatherings with a record 79 at Heysham on the 2nd.

August is traditionally a good month for wader passage in the county and this year produced the spectacular sight of 32225 **Dunlin** on the Ribble. At the same time there were 3777 **Sanderling** on the Ribble and another 1659 on the Alt. Many of our passage waders are declining for reasons that are not entirely clear so to witness these numbers gladdened the hearts of our dedicated teams of Wetland Bird Surveyors.

Green Sandpipers can now be encountered in the county in all months of the year, but August remains the best time to find them. Approximately 50 were seen this month including ten on the Lune and seven at MMWWT.

Amongst the more regular waders are usually a few surprises and an adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** was discovered at MMWWT on the 21st and there was a juvenile **Temminck's Stint** also at MMWWT from the 31st.

September

The start of September was fine and warm, but within a few days unsettled weather was prevalent over the whole county. This continued for most of the month, and there was a particularly windy spell with a succession of active depressions after mid-month. However, the last week was more anticyclonic with settled autumnal weather.

It had been a quiet year for rarities in the county but that all changed this month starting with a juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** found at Skippool Creek on the 6th. This tricky peep was elusive at times but was present on and off until the 18th and was the third county record. This was followed by the discovery of an adult **American Golden Plover** at Crossens Outer Marsh on the 12th. It stayed around Crossens and Marshside with **Golden Plovers** until the 26th and was the eleventh county record.

A juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** showed very well at Lunt Meadows on the 15th and another was at Marshside on the 25th.

The excitement continued with the appearance of a juvenile female **Pallid Harrier** at Bank End, Cockerham on the 16th. This exquisite raptor gave stunning views as it hunted a small area of hedgerows and field edges until the 18th and was the third record for the county.

The amazing run of rare birds continued with a juvenile **White-Winged Black Tern** at Marton Mere from the 19th – 23rd initially in the company of a juvenile **Black Tern**.

After a major storm overnight on the 19th observers were hopeful of a good seawatch on the 20th but expectations were exceeded by the discovery of a **Barolo Little Shearwater** off Heysham. The holy grail of British seawatching was also reported past Rossall Point later in the morning and was the third county record – if accepted by the BBRC.

This storm also displaced several **Grey Phalaropes** with the first discovered on the Allen Pool on the 20th. This was followed by one well inland at Holden Wood Reservoir, Haslingden on the 21st, when another was at Southport. On the 22nd two more were discovered at Newton Marsh and Crosby Coastal Park with the final record at Clowbridge Reservoir, above Burnley, from the 25th. Several of these windblown waifs were typically and delightfully confiding and yet another highlight of this memorable month.

Perhaps surprisingly only one **Sabine's Gull** was found during this period, a lovely juvenile seen flying south past Ainsdale on the 21st.

This truly remarkable period ended with a returning male **American Wigeon** found amongst thousands of **Wigeon** at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 30th.

October

October began with high pressure and the second week was unseasonably warm due to southerly winds, but Storm Callum brought wet and windy weather to most parts on the 12th. After a relatively settled spell with high pressure often close by, a northerly outbreak on the 26th and 27th resulted in a very cold end to the month, with wintry showers on high ground on the 27th.

October could not compete with previous month for rarities but still produced a typically varied set of records. A co-ordinated count across Leighton Moss and the Eric Morecambe complex on the 9th resulted in an impressive count of 232 **Gadwall**.

A **Lapland Bunting** was a nice find on Pendle Hill on the 10th and was the only record in the county this year. Another good inland find was a lovely **Shore Lark** on Fairsnape Fell in Bowland on the 17th.

An unprecedented flurry of **Bearded Tit** records from the south-west of the county started with two at Marshside on the 12th which remained there until the 18th. These were followed by a flock of up to twelve birds at MMWWT from the 28th and another flock of twelve at Lunt Meadows from the 29th.

A juvenile **Rose-Coloured Starling** was an unusual find in a St. Helens garden on the 19th; it stayed until the 31st when it met an untimely end. It was the tenth record for the county and the first since 2014.

A series of fascinating sound recordings from Knott End started with a nocturnal **Woodlark** on the 20th. **Woodlarks** have now been recorded in three successive years and perhaps a grounded individual may soon put in an appearance.

A **Black-necked Grebe** was at Barnacre Reservoir from the 7th and a **Slavonian Grebe** was at Alston Reservoirs on the 21st with another offshore from Heysham Head on the 31st.



Semipalmated Sandpiper, Skippool Creek,
16 September (Craig Bell)

November

November began with relatively cold quiet weather, but from the 3rd to 14th it was mild with a predominance of southerly winds, and it was also wet in most parts of the county. A large high over Scandinavia brought a settled spell from the 15th to 18th, with variable amounts of cloud. It was cold with easterly winds from the 19th to 26th, with frequent rain or showers. It turned very mild, wet and windy from the 27th onwards.

November is often a good month to look for **Great Grey Shrikes** and a small influx occurred this year with one at Ainsdale on the 3rd, one at Leighton Moss from the 4th and another in Gisburn Forest on the 23rd.

A large movement of **Bramblings** was noted across the county with the beech woods in the Belmont, Rivington and Roddlesworth areas attracting high numbers with one roost at Belmont holding an impressive 1882 on the 9th.

The sound recordings at Knott End continued to produce excellent records with a **Richard's Pipit** on the 6th and a **Red-Throated Pipit** on the 10th, the fourth county record. **Goshawk** sightings are very sporadic in the county so a juvenile in the Oswaldtwistle area on the 13th was encouraging.

Another exciting discovery was a **Dusky Warbler** in willows and sea buckthorn at Ainsdale LNR on the 16th. It was present until the 18th and whilst ranging widely its distinctive calls allowed most would be observers to see it. This was the fourth record for the county.

A dowitcher at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 16th was likely to have been a **Long-Billed Dowitcher** but the views didn't allow the identity to be clinched.

Our wintering wildfowl and waders were now returning and the 4124 **Shelducks** on the Ribble was the second highest count this century. Equally impressive was the 19020 **Oystercatchers** in Morecambe Bay. A female **Smew** at Hesketh Out Marsh from the 23rd was the only record of the year.

December

December started mild and changeable with westerly winds, and this pattern continued until the 9th, but there was a cold snap, between the 3rd and 6th. A blocking Scandinavian high brought a colder quieter spell between the 10th and 14th. Storm Deirdre brought widespread freezing rain on the 15th, which caused considerable travel disruption. The mild changeable weather returned from the 16th to 23rd. From the 24th onwards it was somewhat more settled with high pressure dominant. A generally westerly flow resulted in mild and mostly cloudy weather to end the year.

With our wintering birds now back in force the importance of our estuaries was once again demonstrated by the spectacle of 68079 **Wigeon** and 8873 **Teal** on the Ribble along with 15611 **Lapwings**. Other impressive totals included 302 **Tufted Ducks** at Marshside where a count of 950 **Skylarks** was also made this month.

These spectacular flocks attracted many raptors with **Marsh Harrier**, **Buzzard**, **Peregrine**, **Merlin**, **Sparrowhawk** and **Kestrel** seen daily at Marshside. The raptor highlight though was the presence of multiple **Hen Harriers** for the first time in many years. It was thought up to six individuals were involved and four including adult & immature males were seen daily along both sides of the estuary. These beautiful birds gladdened the hearts of many observers and hopefully they will once again become a regular part of winter birding on the Ribble.

Starling roosts are another popular attraction in winter and a massive 200000 were at Silverdale Moss on the 14th. This was followed by regular counts of up to 50000 at Leighton Moss and 30000 at Brockholes.

Nine **European White-fronted Geese** at Rishton Reservoir from the 15th associated with the local **Canada Goose** flock. **Goosanders** appear to be on the increase in the West Pennine Moors and the largest roosts count were 85 at Delph Reservoir and 78 at Yarrow Reservoir.

With the last large landfill site in the county sites being at Whinney Hill in Accrington the nearby gull roost at Fishmoor Reservoir attracts huge numbers of gulls throughout the year. In winter the roost regularly holds in excess of 5000 **Herring Gulls**, 300 **Great Black-backed Gulls** and an increasing wintering population of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**. Careful searching regularly turns up scarcities and from the 24th two immature **Caspian Gulls** and an adult **Glaucous Gull** were being seen daily and a juvenile **Iceland Gull** was present on the 28th. In addition, an adult **Iceland Gull** was seen at Whinney Hill on the 24th.

The year ended with a popular pair of **Waxwings** in Chorley town centre from the 26th.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla bernicla*

Scarce winter visitor.

There appeared to be none remaining from 2017 but three were on Southport Beach on 20 Jan. One appeared in the Pilling Marsh area on the 25th and was joined by a second on the 27th, with one to the 30th. There were also birds here or at nearby Moss Edge Sand Villa on 24 Feb and 4 & 11 March but these could have been new arrivals. One joined the Pale-bellied Brents at Heysham on 14 March, with one or two there on most dates to 7 April and three on 1 April. These were apparently roaming birds from the flock at Roa Island/Foulney in Cumbria.

Presumed spring migration in April involved three at the Stone Jetty on the 8th, two at Cockersand on the 15th and one on Crossens Marsh on the 17th, while one passed Knott End on 16 May. Rather more unexpected was one at Burrow's Marsh on the Wyre Estuary on 17 June. The only report in the second winter period was one with Pinkfeet at Todderstaffe Hall, Fylde on 13 Dec.

PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla hrota*

Scarce winter visitor.

It was busy at Heysham early in the year as birds ventured across Morecambe Bay from the south Cumbrian wintering sites. There were up to three between 1 Jan and 16 Feb then, after a gap, between six and 14 were recorded between 14 March and 14 April with the peak count on 28 March. Some birds were seen to fly in from Rampside, while others remained in the Heysham area to roost when not feeding.

Other reports early in the year came from the Pilling and Preesall area on 22-25 Feb, and ranging between Marshside and Old Hollows/Banks Marsh on 8-16 April. The latter bird showed some characteristics of 'Grey-bellied Brant', though this is not currently recognised as a valid taxon and the assessment of the record is currently held by BBRC.

Two flew north at Starr Gate on 5 Oct. The only sightings from Heysham in the second winter period were three heading to Rampside on 29 Oct and three past Ocean Edge on 22 Nov. Reduced levels of gutweed were considered to be a factor in the diminished numbers.

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

Scarce winter visitor

Birds were reported as 'present' at Birkdale on 22 Jan, and two were recorded at Jenny Brown's Point. In both cases given the proximity to Dark-bellied records at the same or nearby sites these are likely to have been this subspecies.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Common breeder, very common winter visitor.

Monthly peak counts at sites holding 300+ birds:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	19	9	2	11	6	16	36	296	2	96	110	11
The Snab	/	320	240	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	110
Skippool/L S'ton	100	/	/	/	/	/	/	222	674	117	147	/
Bretherton	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	350	/	/	/
Ribble WeBS	208	489	225	258	336	839	1008	2323	2649	2495	2232	2305
Hesketh OM	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	340	200	400	400
Clifton/Longton Mrsh	810	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	1000	800	/	/
MMWWT	8	41	130	36	24	12	8	316	800	30	10	9
Mere Sands Wood	74	46	32	40	44	62	38	346	790	238	4	7
Lunt Meadows	133	161	/	/	/	/	/	760	400	320	/	64
Seaforth	800	30	17	38	55	360	268	94	435	20	70	35
Croston Moss	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	350	/	/
Foulridge Res	236	152	93	36	99	207	296	15	288	217	178	314
Stocks Res	150	140	121	44	90	305	300	102	37	175	259	200

Breeding was reported to be widespread in Rossendale and confirmed at nine sites in east Lancashire. There were 15 pairs on Marshside inner and one on Crossens inner. Of fifteen pairs at Cuerden Valley Park twelve fledged young. Seven pairs nested at Leighton Moss and four at neighbouring RSPB properties. At least five pairs bred at Lunt Meadows. There were at least four broods at Seaforth. Other breeding information included 63 goslings at Fairhaven Lake in early June and 20 at Withnell Fold in late May.

At sites where control measures are in place Belmont Reservoir had 16 nests but no young fledged with 46 adults shot and 68 eggs pricked. Elsewhere in the West Pennine Moors, continuing licenced control by egg-pricking on 25 United Utilities reservoirs/water bodies resulted in 90 eggs from 20 nests controlled. All five nests at Stocks Reservoir had their eggs pricked.

As well as the control measures above Canada Geese at Belmont Reservoir were thought to have suffered from a botulism outbreak, and a total of 64 dead birds were removed from the reservoir perimeter in July. The usual records from seawatching locations in the summer were noted as birds moved to and from the moult flock at Lake Windermere, Cumbria; the outward peak was 115 north at Starr Gate on 6 June while on return flocks totalling 56 moved south west at Heysham on 4 Aug.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Wild birds, uncommon winter visitor. Scarce feral breeder.

Apparently wild individuals

In the first winter period there were many of reports of birds in the Pinkfeet flocks. The peak count was four on pasture with Pinks at Crimbles, Over Wyre on 4 March and similarly at Banks Marsh on 16 April. The last report was one at Marshside on 4 May.

Return appeared to begin with two on Pilling Marsh with Pinkfeet on 23 Sept. There were again many reports of one or two with Pinkfeet on the Fylde and in the south-west. There were at least three presumed wild birds with Pinkfeet on Marshside in October and five in December.

Feral populations

The largest numbers were at Knowsley Safari Park with up to 112 in April, increasing to 125 in May and 130 in June, while the peak count of 200 in September suggests there may have been successful nesting.

At Stocks Reservoir there were up to 44 in January and 46 on 4 Feb but after that there were no records to 14 April when two were present; during spring and summer numbers were low with a maximum of twelve on 26 Aug when families with broods of one, two and three were present, and after that a flock was present to the end of the year with a peak count of 57 on 21 Sept.

The population which feeds in Blackpool Zoo and roosts on Marton Mere was in the region of 50 birds during the year; at times outside the summer months these also fed in fields at Staining Nook.

A flock of 20 flew north over Southport Pier on 25 Aug. Up to nine on the Ribble Estuary at Naze Point and Warton Bank in May and December were presumably feral. Elsewhere, there were the usual scattered ones and twos across the recording area, generally with feral Canada or Greylag Geese. An individual which unsuccessfully nested with a Greylag at Belmont Reservoir subsequently succumbed to the botulism outbreak there.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Feral: fairly common breeder and common winter visitor. Wild: scarce winter visitor.

Monthly peak counts at sites holding 250+ birds:-

[illegible]

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ribble WeBS	82	14	2	9	90	49	68	519	52	523	14	96
Clifton Marsh	260	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
MMWWT	360	309	135	51	33	33	132	509	763	500	600	300
Stocks Res	140	400	49	40	152	352	300	84	47	89	350	200

In the Leighton Moss area there were 33 pairs on the main reserve, 17 at Barrow Scout, 15 at Silverdale Moss and 11 on the Inner Marsh. A total of 27 broods were noted on the Lune between the Crook and Wenning Foot; low water levels meant that some of the favoured pools and cut-offs dried out. Elsewhere, submitted breeding data included five pairs at Barnacre Reservoir and Lunt Meadows, at least four on Brennand Fell and three at Delph Reservoir, Marshside, Stocks Reservoir and Upper Rivington Reservoir. At Belmont Reservoir only three young were raised from the three pure pairs (one was paired with a Barnacle). The population here was largely unaffected by the avian botulism outbreak with only one succumbing.

In Rossendale there were only five records, one of two birds and four singles. In the Over Wyre area there were one or two with Pinkfeet at both ends of the year which could potentially relate to Icelandic individuals, but there is no way of being certain on the origin of these.



Greylag Geese (presumably feral), Conder Pool, 29 April (Paul Slade)

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Abundant winter visitor to Fylde, Ribble Estuary and south-west mosslands.

International importance 5100; National importance 5100.

Roost counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	118	610	1257	300	8		2			1426	150	1449
Pilling										19615	13748	
Preesall										4350	7150	
Wyre										4230	7855	
Ribble WeBS	1096	9954	4374	10207	14	2	1	1	21	34155	8564	6481
Marshside											3290	7050
MMWWT									6932	14439	6068	5855
Formby Point										25000	11810	7800
Simonswood Moss										2550	1200	

Apart from the WeBS counts, the October and November totals in the above table are mostly from the co-ordinated Lancashire and national count weekend, the exceptions being at MMWWT where larger totals were recorded on other dates. There were no systematic roost counts early in the year.

Numbers of feeding birds were generally lower than in the second winter period, presumably because of the timing of movements to and from other wintering areas. The largest totals were all in early January and included 10000 at Altcar Moss and 9500 at Lydiate, up to 6800 at Lytham Moss at the same time, presumably involving movement across the Ribble, and up to 8000 Over Wyre. Spring influxes from Norfolk led to 7000 being counted at Banks Marsh on 14 April.

As usual there were birds lingering into May and birds passing coastal watchpoints at this time. A very late large movement of 1890 on 5 May was noted at Heysham. Two late birds at the same site on 30 May and 7 June may have been injured and responsible for other sightings in the north into July.

As well as other potentially 'pricked' birds at several sites out of season there was a single on various dates at Marshside with two on 29 June. There were up to seven presumably sick or injured birds at MMWWT in the summer months, with return first noted on 30 Aug when 13 included seven that flew in. There were four south-west over Conder Green on 27 Aug. Several other sites reported earliest ever arrival dates in early September.

There was much movement in September, this was noted at Seaforth and particularly at Formby Point where numbers increased from 1600 on the 20th to 25000 on the 27th. At MMWWT there were 7000 by 25 Sept and as shown in the table 14439 in October. Other counts at this time included 15000 over Birkdale on 25 Sept, 25000 over there on 3 Oct and 17000 on the 8th.

Inland birds were noted over east Lancashire from 22 Sept, with peaks the following month of 2200 on 21 Oct and 1650 on the 27th, and from 23 Sept over the West Pennine Moors where 18 roosting overnight at Belmont Reservoir on 23-24 Sept was very unusual.

The peak counts in the Chorley area came in the second winter period, notably 2000 at Bretherton Eyes on 28 Sept and Mawdesley Moss on 2 Dec. On the Fylde counts included 5000 at Rawcliffe Moss in October, 7150 at Cocker's Dyke and 10000 at Lytham Moss in November. Larger totals in the south-west are generally reflected in the roost counts table, except for up to 12000 at Marshside on 1-2 Oct and 14000 at Hesketh Out Marsh on 27 Dec. Much higher numbers than usual feeding in the Heysham area at this time included 4600 from a comprehensive count on 17 Nov.

TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE *Anser serrirostris*

Uncommon winter visitor.

There were good numbers of reports of single birds with Pinkfeet early in the year, including In January from Hightown, Ince Blundell and Pilling Lane Ends. The only February reports all came from Over Wyre at Eagland Hill. March was quiet until reports from MMWWT on the 20th and 25th. All remaining records also came from the south-west: one at Churchtown on 2 April, then regularly at Crossens/Marshside birds from 9 April to 6 May, including two on 3-5 May.

The second winter period by contrast was almost a complete blank, salvaged by one at Marshside on the final day of the year.

GREENLAND WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons flavirostris*

Uncommon winter visitor.

There were few reports early in the year. An adult visited Marton Mere with Canada Geese on 6 and 13 Jan. One was on Downholland Moss with Pinkfeet also on 6 Jan. Following a blank February, one was on Cockerham Moss with Pinks on 4 March, while the Marton Mere bird reappeared on 4 April.

The second winter period was busier. One at Marshside on 15 Sept may have been responsible for a record at MMWWT the following day. One was at Crosby on 23 Sept before further sightings of one at Marshside on and off from 30 Sept to 6 Oct. One was at Lunt on 22 Oct, while there were reports of singles in November from Banks, Marshside / Crossens, Lytham Moss and Moss Side and in December from Mythop, Todderstaffe Hall, Out Rawcliffe, Upper Thurnham and also Lytham Moss and Marshside/Crossens again.

All records that were aged referred to adults, and there is undoubtedly some duplication in the above records but on the other hand there were three birds at Marshside on 30 Dec and one observer considered that four had been involved at Todderstaffe Hall.

EUROPEAN WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons albifrons*

Uncommon winter visitor.

Unusually, the highest count of the year came from east Lancashire. Nine, three adults and six juveniles, were present from 15 to 24 Dec in a field by the small reservoir at Rishton, where they associated with the Canada Geese flock. The only other in the second half of the year was in the Marshside and Mere Brow areas on 30-31 Dec.



European White-fronted Geese, Rishton Reservoir, 17 December (Craig Bell)

The first winter period produced a scatter of records with the Pinkfeet flocks, particularly later in the season. In January there was one at Hightown on 5 Jan, while one was seen at several Over Wyre sites in February and there were two separate birds on the 12th. There were three at Eagland Hill on 11 March, two at both Warton Bank and Cockerham Moss on the 4th, and several singles in Over Wyre and at Churchtown and Marshside during the month. In April all reports were from the south-west, and other than Churchtown they were at Crossens where there were a maximum of three on the 28th and one lingered to 5 May.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

Uncommon winter visitor.

The majority of records which were not specified to subspecies could be attributed to one or other on the basis of date and location. The exceptions were singles at Marshside on 7 Feb and Leighton Moss on 4 May.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Fairly common breeding resident.

International importance: 2400; National importance: 500

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS	49	23	16	13	101	49	75	33	46	67	43	20
Lune WeBS	23	18	16	20	19	24	60	8	20	30	32	21
Brockholes	34	18	32	15	11	59	72	52	32	26	43	32
Ribble WeBS	50	55	33	117	113	65	21	82	39	44	30	20
Southport ML	100	96	61	64	69	102	135	163	159	159	155	129

Warton Marsh held 51 on 21 Jan and other Fylde counts included 93 on 16 Feb at Cockerham Sands and 110 at Glasson on 24 April; 72 were at Thursland Hill Fishery, Thurnham on 8 April. In the south-west, 70 were at Marshside on 10 May and Seaforth had a peak of ten that month.

Some of the highest inland counts were eight in flight over Longridge on 11 March, nine at Alston Wetland on 11 April and eight there on 18 April.

Breeding reports were thinly spread. For instance, in the east a pair with six juveniles were at Rishton, Blackburn on 4 June, a pair with six juveniles at Barnoldswick on 20 May and a pair on the Leeds/Liverpool Canal at Hapton had seven juveniles on 31 July. Birds also fledged along the canal in Burnley but died when dry weather affected water levels and quality.

On Merseyside a pair nested at Seaforth but it is believed fox predation meant no fledged young survived, four pairs bred at Marshside and three pairs on Hesketh Out Marsh, two at Lunt Meadows, without success, seven cygnets hatched at Princes Park, Liverpool but all young succumbed to botulism poisoning, while the female in Sefton Park, Liverpool died after the young fledged but the male successfully reared the four young through to the end of the year.

In Chorley a pair in Astley Park, only hatched two young from six eggs, while on 11 June a pair with six young were recorded at Smith's Lodge, White Coppice, the adults having walked the young up through the local fields and stream, with help from local people opening the field gates.

In the post-breeding period, six flew over Eccleston, Chorley on 17 Oct, Seaforth had a peak of twelve in November, while on the Fylde, 51 were at Lytham Jetty on 12 Aug, 42 at Stanley Park, Blackpool 19 Nov and 15 at Thurnham on 28 Dec.

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

Fairly common but declining winter visitor.

International importance: 200; National importance: 44

Nine were at Cockerham and Thurnham in January, eleven in February then four in March, and seven were on Lytham Moss in January and February. The last in spring was on 5 March at Cockersand.

The first back was one at Thurnham on 21 Nov. Numbers increased to four there during the month then 14 in December. A single bird was at Todderstaffe Hall on 13 Dec.

In the south-west, seven adults were the freshmarsh at Marshside on 2-3 Feb and then five on the 16th with seven there on 3 December; three on 18 December at Banks increased to eight by the 29th.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Common winter visitor.

International importance: 210; National importance: 160

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lune WeBS	33	35	52	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	24	27
Cockersand	350	490	490	240	1	1	0	0	1	211	356	394
Over Wyre	114	30	13	11	0	0	0	0	3	167	373	150
South Fylde	200	86	42	0	0	0	0	0	2	22	31	4
Ribble WeBS	11	237	134	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	26	148
MMWWT	400	500	356	31	4	3	1	4	11	420	802	722

An impressive group of 340 were on Hutton Marsh on 20 Jan. Small numbers continued to feed at Bretherton Eyes, Chorley where three were on the floods on 3 Jan, but subsequently they were more likely to be found on Croston Moss, including 30 on 14 Jan 20 on 22 Jan and ten on 5 Feb, after which a herd of up to 21 spent a few days on Bretherton Eyes from 7 Feb.

In the east one was at Hurstwood Reservoir on 10 Jan, four flew south-east at Barrowford Reservoir on 11 Jan and two landed on Clowbridge Reservoir on 23 February.

The departure from MMWWT between 21-27 March left 34 there by the month's end. At least 293 moved north over coastal Fylde between 11 March and 14 April. One was asleep on the island at Stocks Reservoir 27 March and the last report was 22 flying north over Stocks on 1 April. Five flew north-west over Belmont on 14 March and two were there on 18 March. On the Fylde, one over-summered between Clifton Marsh and Warton Marsh and one lingered between Cockersand and Conder Green until 28 June.

The first of autumn were nine over Stone Jetty, Morecambe on 22 Sept and two at Fleetwood, Marton Mere and Brockholes the same day. Three were at Pilling on 23 Sept and two on the Eric Morecambe Complex on 24 Sept. Eleven were the first to arrive at MMWWT on 23 Sept and there no

further sightings there until two adults and three juveniles arrived on 1 Oct; possibly the same five birds were at Lunt Meadows the same day. One was at Brockholes on 30 Sept.

Two new adults and four juveniles appeared at MMWWT on 2 Oct, increasing to 107 (nine juveniles) by the 9th.

More birds were seen inland, including three over Belmont on 7 Oct and five over Champion Moor on 19 Oct, when eleven fed at Bretherton. Then 16 were at Upper Foulridge Reservoir on the 20th.

Numbers on the Fylde rose to 69 at Pilling Lane Ends on 21 Oct when at MMWWT numbers increased to 290 (including 16 pairs with juveniles). The same day two adults and four juveniles landed on the shore at Oglet, Liverpool. On 22 Oct seven adults and two juveniles were at Hurstwood Reservoir and later at Cant Clough Reservoir the same day. Six were noted at Lunt Meadows on 23 Oct. On 26 Oct the first blast of arctic air brought four over Mellor, eight adults and two juveniles to Dean Clough Reservoir, 36 over Brockholes and 38 over Belmont. The same day 20 returned to Croston Moss and numbers at MMWWT increased to 420. Four fed in fields by a small pond near Belmont on 30 Oct.

The wintering group at Bretherton Eyes included 14 on the 10 Nov, whilst 120 were feeding at Croston Finney on 24 Nov. Numbers feeding on Bretherton Eyes increased to 30 by 8 Dec. Eight were at Clowbridge Reservoir on 2 Nov. A total of 690 at MMWWT on 2 Nov increased to 802 at the evening roost on 13 Nov. Two were at Stocks Reservoir on 16 Nov and six at Parsonage Reservoir on 22 Nov. Two flew west over Slipper Hill, Pendle on 3 Dec. Five flew over Whittle-le-Woods on 9 Dec. Five visited Fishmoor Reservoir on 22 Dec. 568 were at Holmes Cross, Tarleton on 30 Dec.



Whooper Swan Thurnham, 11 March (Paul Slade)

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

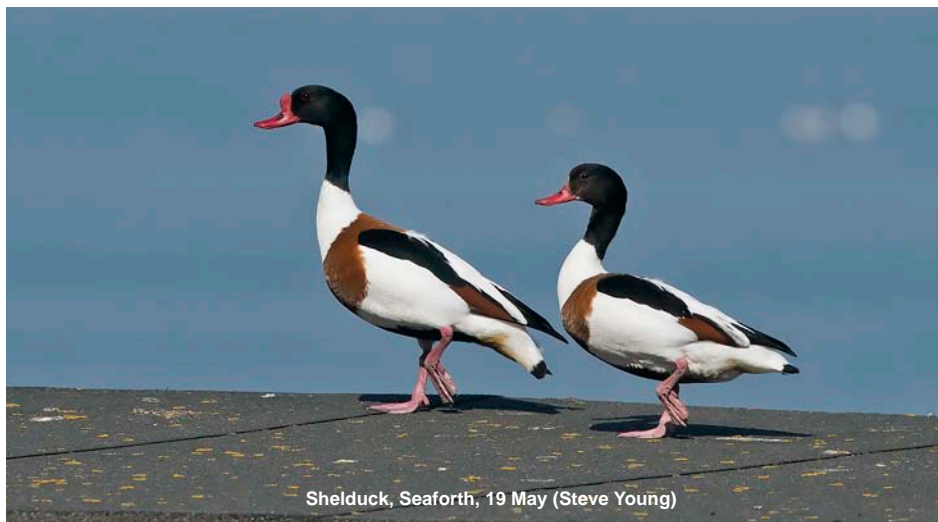
Common winter visitor at coastal sites, common breeder. Scarce in east.

International importance 3000; National importance 470.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	830	1669	706	855	747	640	252	157	637	1996	1702	2452
Ribble WeBS	744	2253	1224	1062	1848	1350	927	1350	2650	2797	4124	1162
Alt WeBS	236	198	152	89	126	180	124	68	204	234	77	302
MMWWT	671	318	443	49	194	141	/	38	12	25	416	544

The November count on the Ribble Estuary was the second highest of this century and saw the five-year average climbing back towards the level of its peak in the late 1990s. There was little change in Morecambe Bay, where the annual peak increased slightly, while that on the Alt Estuary was the lowest in six years, although the five-year average also remains remarkably consistent.



Shelduck, Seaforth, 19 May (Steve Young)

Away from the major estuaries, the floods at Bretherton Eyes held 79 on 16 Feb which was a larger count than usual for the Chorley area. Birds were reported in east Lancashire every month except October and December but the only double-figure count was of 21 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 20 Aug.

The best single site for breeding numbers was unsurprisingly MMWWT where 34 pairs nested. Breeding was confirmed at Lunt Meadows where there were three pairs. An estimated 25 pairs bred on the RSPB Ribble Estuary reserves. At least five different broods were seen on the Wyre Estuary in July and the 34 juveniles were seen at Skippool Creek in August, indicated a successful season here. There was one breeding record from east Lancashire, a pair with two juveniles at Alston Reservoir.

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

Uncommon feral resident and escapee.

In east Lancashire reports were received from at least seven sites. Up to three pairs were seen regularly at Foulridge Upper Reservoir where one pair was seen with 14 young on 13 June. There were 15 at Slipper Hill Reservoir on 6 Aug. At least one brood was found along the River Yarrow around Eccleston, a group of six young went on to fledge there.

The most seen at Mere Sands Wood was nine during July. The year's peak count came on 11 Nov when 25 were seen at Anglezarke Reservoir. Unusually there were only two records from the Fylde and neither of these were from the traditional Bispham area. Single males were seen near Preesall in April and September. At least 17 birds were present at High Tatham during the year.

GARGANEY *Spatula querquedula*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant and rare, occasional breeder.

The year began with an unusual winter record of a male at Hesketh Out Marsh on 18-22 Jan.

The first spring arrivals were fairly late with a male at Leighton Moss on 17-20 April, followed by another at Newton Marsh on the 23rd. Single males were then seen at Marshside and Lunt Meadows on 1 and 8 May, Marshside on 5-11 May and Seaforth on the 7th. A male was at Leighton Moss on and off between 12-27 May, with two there on the 16th and also at nearby Silverdale Moss on the 18th. The only sighting of the year at MMWWT was a male on 17-23 May.

No broods were seen but it was considered probable that breeding took place at Lunt Meadows, where a male which was present from 24 May onwards was joined by a female on the 30th, two males were then seen on 9-12 June and finally a pair on 18 July was soon followed by two males in eclipse plumage on 22nd.

The first returning bird of the autumn was at Leighton Moss on 8 July and again on 31 July. This increased to three by 12 Aug and then five on 26 Aug before peaking at six on 4 Sept; one then remained until 28 Oct. Other autumn records came from Lunt Meadows where there were two on 2 Sept and one on the 16th, and an eclipse male at Brockholes from 6-11 Sept. An eclipse male was present at Myerscough Quarry on 8-9 Sept.

A late female or immature was at Marton Mere on 22 Oct then again at nearby Herons' Reach Golf Course on the 27th before reappearing at Stanley Park, Blackpool on 26 Nov.

SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata*

Common winter visitor to west and far north. Scarce breeder.

International importance 400; National importance 190.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	35	27	4	25	11	7	1	1	9	11	13	158
Leighton / EMC	123	143	165	64	30	12	11	68	120	170	135	190
Ribble WeBS	278	241	138	112	16	7	1	13	11	79	101	53
Stanley Pk/M Mere	78	118	100	30	2	2	6	8	76	94	44	38
Mere Sands Wood	132	121	63	52	16	4	4	4	62	86	66	135
MMWWT	24	22	12	46	8	3	1	10	20	44	36	19
Lunt Meadows	/	28	/	20	/	/	/	89	80	68	34	16

In the first winter period there was a similar number of birds on the Ribble Estuary as in 2017. However, numbers in the second winter period were much reduced compared to normal, hopefully just as a result of the generally dry and mild weather.

A gradual increase at Mere Sands Wood continues, although it may be concerning that there was only a quarter of the number of birds at MMWWT as in 2017.

Notable counts from other sites included 48 at Brockholes on 8 Nov and 47 on a flood at Cuddy Hill near Bilsborrow on 27 Dec. In east Lancashire the largest count was 15 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 5 Nov but other sites registering double figures were Slipper Hill Reservoir and Alston Reservoirs and Wetland.

Ten pairs bred on the RSPB Morecambe Bay reserves. Five broods were noted at Lunt Meadows and another three were seen on the Fylde at Newton Marsh. Three pairs bred at MMWWT but just one pair at Marshside.

GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

Fairly common in small flocks at western wetland sites. Scarce in east of county. Scarce breeder in south-west and far north of county.

International importance 600; National importance 310.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ribble WeBS	21	44	10	52	51	5	0	8	7	22	9	20
Leighton / EMP	205	210	145	26	12	43	14	80	85	220	180	162
Stanley Park /												
Marton Mere	58	35	17	7	6	5	9	33	52	77	99	113
Brockholes	161	85	64	10	6	15	5	28	56	68	135	91
MMWWT	/	/	2	12	10	63	/	14	23	4	/	/
Mere Sands Wood	43	47	16	21	6	4	2	22	55	42	32	49

Co-ordinated counts across Leighton Moss and the Eric Morecambe complex on 9 Oct recorded 232, a significant improvement on 2017.

The largest count from east Lancashire came from Grimsargh Wetland where there were 28 on 11 March.

Across the RSPB Morecambe Bay reserves 33 pairs bred. A minimum of four pairs had young at Middleton NR and at least three pairs bred at both Lunt Meadows and Marshside. Three different broods were seen at Brockholes. Only two pairs bred at MMWWT. A female with eleven young on a reservoir near Longridge was an unusual breeding record for east Lancashire.

AMERICAN WIGEON* *Anas americana*

Rare winter visitor from North America.

A male returned to the Ribble marshes again, being seen at Hesketh Out Marsh from 30 Sept on and off into 2019 (S Darbyshire *et al.*). Possibly the same male was seen on the Eric Morecambe complex from 13 Nov until 23 Dec (J Carter, K Kelly *et al.*).

HYBRID WIGEON

Hybrids of Wigeon x American Wigeon were present in both winter periods at Hesketh Out Marsh with two there on 9 and 10 Nov and three on the 11th. A male of the same parentage was recorded in the Lune Valley at The Snab on 16 Feb.

A male Wigeon x Gadwall that had previously been seen in 2017 was present on Hare Tarn near Carnforth from 23 Feb until 2 March. It reappeared with Wigeon for another winter at Barrow Scout Fields on 4 Nov and then roamed between there, the Eric Morecambe complex and Hare Tarn from into 2019.

A male Wigeon x Mallard hybrid was present at Marton Mere on 14 Dec.

WIGEON *Mareca penelope*

Common winter visitor to coastal sites. Smaller numbers at some eastern sites.

International importance 15000, National importance 4500.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	4218	4481	998	60	6	1	2	/	259	1936	3681	5664
Ribble WeBS	12781	23505	8138	244	7	2	2	6	466	1944	41669	68079
Leighton / EMP	545	458	394	49	5	0	1	1	65	244	378	492
MMWWT	495	629	386	16	2	/	/	/	/	31	770	600

The annual peak count on the Ribble Estuary increased again, although still not remotely close to its record levels. A very slight increase occurred in Morecambe Bay but encouragingly was well above the current five-year average. Only relatively low numbers were present at MMWWT in both winter periods.

Inland counts of note included 469 at Silverdale Moss in January, 420 at The Snab in November and 750 at Myerscough Quarry in December. The 202 at Alston Reservoirs in December was notable but a contrast to the drop off in numbers seen at Stocks Reservoir compared to earlier years.

Birds were present during the breeding season at MMWWT (four), Eric Morecambe Complex (three), Newton Marsh (two) and Marshside (one) but breeding was not suspected.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Very common and widespread winter visitor and common breeding resident.

International importance 20000; national importance 6700.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alt WeBS	233	84	44	21	13	54	81	54	156	221	197	241
Leighton Moss	128	85	73	44	34	210	580	320	179	107	132	87
MMWWT	900	1365	464	40	22	701		1464	1144	892	2909	622
MBS WeBS	375	146	120	69	98	219	260	432	413	506	370	315
Ribble WeBS	927	546	322	296	357	425	329	797	598	915	737	452
Stocks Res.	221	40	20	31	149	148	700	753	750	680	270	1100

This year's count on the Ribble Estuary was the lowest on record following five years of a decline in the annual peak count. The five-year average has remained fairly consistent for the last twenty years so it will be interesting to see whether this also falls in the coming years. A sharp decline appears to be taking place in Morecambe Bay over the last few years; it is now six years since a count of over 1000 was made. A more gradual decline is evident on the Alt Estuary where annual peak counts have halved since the turn of the century.

There were numerous three-figure counts from other sites around the county. Notable amongst these were 346 at Arbour Quarry, near Longridge, in August, 490 at Alston Reservoirs and Wetland

in January, 850 at Preesall Flashes in October and in the West Pennine Moors, Wayoh Reservoir held 355 in December and a new site record 239 at Belmont Reservoir on 7 Jan.

A total of 78 pairs bred on the RSPB Morecambe Bay reserves. Other notable site counts included MMWWT (34 pairs), Belmont Reservoir (at least 29 pairs), Lunt Meadows (20 pairs) and RSPB Ribble Estuary reserves (18 pairs).

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Common winter visitor to coast and western wetlands. Very rare breeder.

International importance 600; National importance 200.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	685	205	33	17	0	0	0	0	0	514	457	389
Ribble WeBS	641	420	105	22	0	0	0	0	0	282	1073	395
Leighton Moss / EMP 102		106	65	17	0	0	0	0	0	154	65	139
MMWWT	517		180	7	2	0	1	2	1	15	51	102
Stocks Res	16	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	1	3	17

After a slightly more encouraging year in Morecambe Bay in 2017, numbers dropped back to a level more typical of the last few years. The number of birds on the Ribble Estuary was similar to the last few years, albeit only a third of what was present during the 1990s.

Stocks Reservoir did not experience the cold weather influxes that have been typical in recent years. However, the site did produce an interesting record of a pair on 4 and 2 May only.

Summering birds were present at Leighton Moss / Eric Morecambe Complex, MMWWT and Marshside but breeding was not suspected. The first sizeable returning flock of the autumn was relatively early, there were 250 at Pilling Marsh on 14 Sept.



Pintail, Marshside, 4 Nov (Craig Bell)

GREEN-WINGED TEAL *Anas carolinensis*

Rare winter visitor from North America.

A male at Leighton Moss on 1-2 Jan was accompanied by a Eurasian x Green-winged Teal hybrid. Further males, possibly the same, were seen at MMWWT on 24 Jan and at Marshside on 3 Feb.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor to western wetlands, smaller flocks in east. Rare breeding species.

International importance 5000; National importance 4300.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	874	694	292	53	2	7	40	26	750	1592	1017	2134
Leighton Moss	615	460	414	430	2	66	56	145	480	380	496	480
Ribble WeBS	2530	3198	1129	467	1	23	12	187	557	1866	3377	8873
MMWWT	2881	1595	594	137	2	20	30	200	650	1068	2666	1015
Marton Mere	300	67	123	18	0	6	3	13	25	88	100	500
Mere Sands Wood	259	170	156	35	5	1	13	30	261	260	650	347
Seaforth	450	260	20	10	1	4	9	70	90	146	480	300
Stocks Res.	60	42	18	28	13	2	16	13	42	79	266	500

It was a much better year on the Ribble Estuary where the December count was the highest since November 2005. By contrast, there was no repeat of the spectacular gathering at MMWWT in November 2017 and numbers returned to a more typical level. There seems to be no clear trend in Morecambe Bay. This year's peak count was unremarkable and more notable was the relative absence of this species during the first winter period.

Large counts from sites not listed in the table include 600 at Lunt Meadows on 5 Feb and 345 at Belmont Reservoir on 28 Oct, a new site record. On a smaller scale, birds appeared at Rishton Reservoir from the end of October, taking advantage of the food exposed by the low water levels, reaching a peak of 61 on 16 Dec, a record for the site.

Two pairs bred at Marshside. One or two pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir but were unsuccessful. Birds were present during May or June at Leighton Moss, Marton Mere, MMWWT, Mere Sands Wood, Seaforth, Stocks Reservoir and four sites in the West Pennine Moors but there was no evidence of breeding.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Fairly common but declining winter visitor, scarce breeder.

International importance 3500; National importance 230.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dockacres	28	15	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	14	17	22
Leighton Moss	0	22	22	42	10	18	14	6	2	1	0	0
Myerscough Quarry	21	23	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	23
MMWWT	20	34	11	5	5	3	2	1	3	4	30	49
Seaforth	17	17	11	0	0	0	3	1	2	6	12	11

Sixteen were at Mere Sands Wood on 13 March but other double-figure counts were few and far between. Brockholes had a peak of 13 on 3 Nov and Stocks also had twelve males on 4 July (highly unusual) and 13 on 31 December. Stanley Park in Blackpool had a maximum of 10 in January then only two in the second winter period; the largest counts on the Fylde this year came from Myerscough Quarry instead.

The freshwater wetlands of the RSPB Morecambe Bay reserves remain the best breeding site in the county, 16 pairs bred this year. At least four broods were seen and at least six young fledged.

AYTHYA HYBRID

A male Pochard x Ferruginous Duck hybrid was present with Pochards at Stanley Park during 2017 and remained until 17 Feb. A male that appeared to be a hybrid of Ring-necked Duck and Tufted Duck was at Brockholes on 15 April.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Common winter visitor, uncommon breeder.

International importance 1200; National importance 1300.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dockacres	124	114	92	28	20	2	2	8	26	42	110	158
Leighton Moss	30	76	98	78	20	10	1	8	3	6	20	32
Ribble WeBS	136	124	218	119	73	65	24	8	38	5	47	183
Brockholes	100	72	73	47	30	17	28	27	37	30	75	63
Seaforth	6	6	4	14	11	67	80	104	101	64	27	11
Stanley Park, B'pool	95	84	69	65	6	0	6	3	19	40	47	58

The Ribble WeBS count in March was the highest on record. However, there are often more than this at Marshside – the biggest count of the year was 302 on 31 Dec.

In contrast to most Lancashire sites, Seaforth usually sees its annual peak in early autumn. This was the case again in 2018 where the annual peak increased for the fourth year in a row. The same early autumn peak was evident at Alston Reservoirs and Wetland where there were 67 in August.

Maximum counts from sites not included in the table were 56 at Fairhaven Lake in January, 76 at Mere Sands Wood in October, then in December there were 48 at Stocks Reservoir, 58 at MMWWT and 64 at Glasson.

A total of 27 pairs bred across the RSPB Morecambe Bay reserves. The 13 pairs that bred at Marshside was reportedly good. Ten pairs bred at Lunt Meadows and two pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir. Single broods were noted in east Lancashire at Alston Wetland and Grimsargh Wetland, on the Fylde at Fairhaven Lake, Lightfoot Green and Pilling Lane Ends, and also in the Chorley area at High Bullough Reservoir.

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Uncommon winter visitor to coast, scarce inland.

International importance 3100; national importance 39.

There were no regular sightings from either Seaforth or Morecambe Bay. A male on 3-5 Feb and a female on 27 Sept to 6 Oct were the only records from Seaforth. There was only a handful of isolated records from Heysham despite daily coverage: three on 5 Jan, five on 4 Feb, three on 12 Nov and one on 16 Dec. Other coastal sightings of note included five off Formby on 21 March and four there on 4 Nov, also four flew south past Starr Gate on 12 Dec.

As always there were numerous records of single birds at waterbodies across the county and it is difficult to calculate a minimum number present. Records were received from the following sites: Fleetwood Marsh NP, the Lune at Glasson (two), Marshside (two), MMWWT, Pine Lake, Southport Marine Lake and Alston, Lee Green, Rishton and Stocks Reservoirs.

Unseasonal spring records consisted of a pair at Hightown on 3 May and a second-calendar-year male at Leighton Moss from 25 April until 27 May.

An early returning male was at Alston Reservoir on 25-28 July, shortly followed by one at Mere Sands Wood on 2 Aug. The second winter period then saw individuals recorded at Lee Green Reservoir, Leighton Moss, MMWWT, Mere Sands Wood, Myerscough Quarry, Rishton Reservoir and Stocks Reservoir. Both a young male at Marshside and two at Pine Lake during December remained into 2019.

EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

Common winter visitor to Fylde coast and Morecambe Bay, scarce elsewhere. Scarce breeder.

International importance 12850; national importance 770.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	349	1411	153	160	306	229	381	77	159	340	656	160
Heysham	1410	720	620	290	124	/	71	35	196	954	510	150
Ribble WeBS	10	18	23	99	238	43	39	59	35	11	12	2

Last year's exceptional congregation along the Heysham and Morecambe coastline continued into January and February. There was no repeat of these numbers in the second winter period even though the counts in October and November were still impressive. The significant spring peak of non-breeding birds on the Ribble Estuary is the second highest on record.

Crèches comprising at least six broods were observed on the Lune at Glasson. A brood of four was reared on the Wyre Estuary at Arm Hill. One nest was found on Carnforth Marsh. Breeding was not reported from the Ribble Estuary but there were no doubt several pairs nesting again across the extensive marshes.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

Uncommon winter visitor.

An adult male that had been seen at the end of 2017 was with the large Eider flock off Heysham and Morecambe Stone Jetty occasionally between January and 6 April. On the Sefton Coast two were seen off Ainsdale on 18 Feb and five were off Formby on 21 Feb. Three males were seen with Common Scoters off Starr Gate on 21 March.

A male off Blackpool North Shore on 10 Sept and one on the sea at Ainsdale on 9 Dec were the only records in the second half of the year.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Abundant visitor to Liverpool Bay, especially in winter, although main flocks are hardly visible from land. Scarce passage migrant on inland waters.

International importance 16000; National importance 1300.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Blackpool	2540	5000	3000	7000	625	629	1055	1150	2600	400	520	1200
Sefton/Alt WeBS	8000	13000	11500	684	84	58	100	733	6000	8000	4001	3000

The largest gatherings were recorded as usual off the Sefton Coast but of course it must be remembered that even larger numbers occur each year further offshore, particularly over Shell Flat off Fleetwood.

It was a generally poor year for inland records. A total of 61 bird-days were logged in east Lancashire including ten at Stocks Reservoir on 28 May and nine over Alston Wetland on 24 July. Besides the east Lancashire records, the only other inland birds were a female at Brockholes on 14 April, three males there on 2 June and a pair at Carr Mill Dam on 23 June.



Common Scoter, Barrow Lodge, 12 Feb (Craig Bell)

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Scarce winter visitor, rare inland.

It was an incredibly poor year for this species in Lancashire. A pair off Rossall Point on 15-16 March was the only record of the year.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Fairly common winter visitor.

International importance 4000; National importance 190.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	43	38	21	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	17	34
Lune Estuary	18	41	/	31	12	0	0	0	0	12	10	28
Leighton Moss	2	7	19	10	0	0	0	0	0	5	10	10
Dockacres	18	19	14	5	0	0	0	0	0	6	9	16
Brockholes	16	34	33	12	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	9
Seaforth	14	20	28	18	2	0	1	1	2	11	20	20
Stocks Reservoir	12	21	5	5	1	0	0	0	0	1	8	58

The overall pattern was of slightly reduced numbers reaching most sites this year. It is now five years since any site count reached three figures. Away from the sites listed in the table there was 18 at Slipper Hill Reservoir on 28 Jan.

The last bird of the spring was a female at Stocks Reservoir on 2 May. The first bird of the autumn was at Seaforth on 26 July. The second winter period generally resulted in lower counts at most sites than in the first winter period with the exception of Stocks Reservoir, where an impressive 58 on 29 Dec was a new record count for the site.

SMEW *Mergus albellus*

Scarce winter visitor.

A female at Hesketh Out Marsh on 23-26 Nov was the only record of the year.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

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

International importance 2700; National importance 150.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	12	41	8	5	5	23	9	21	20	13	21	13
River Lune	40	31	49	62	23	63	7	36	42	46	21	25
Delph Res	63	42	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	66	85
Yarrow Reservoir	49	54	42	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	78
Mere Sands Wood	20	14	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	9	21	38

There appears to be a genuine increase in wintering numbers in the West Pennine Moors. Delph Reservoir just held on to its place as the top site in the county, the 85 on 24 Dec was yet another site record.

Yarrow Reservoir is also seeing an increase in numbers at the roost. There were 54 in February and an impressive 78 were counted on 31 Dec. At Cuerden Valley Lake the 29 recorded on 29 Dec was an excellent count for this site.

Dockacres saw a continuation of the recent lower numbers as the peak count was 17 in January. In east Lancashire, low double-figure counts were made at nine waterbodies in the first winter period; the best was 22 at Swinden Reservoir on 3 Feb. Larger numbers appeared to be present in the second winter period including 36 at Barrowford Reservoir, 30 at Slipper Hill Reservoir and 82 at Foulridge Reservoirs all during November, then 30 at Fishmoor Reservoir on 22 Dec.

It is difficult to interpret breeding records as most reports consist of females with broods and these can appear a long way downstream of the nest site soon after hatching. Some of the broods seen on the Lune may have even hatched in Cumbria or North Yorkshire. The Lune Waterways

Survey between Lancaster and Kirkby Lonsdale recorded 19 pairs breeding, with ten broods seen later in the season. An absolute minimum of four broods were seen in east Lancashire and at least a further three broods were noted on the Yarrow and Douglas catchments around Chorley.



Goosander with chicks, Conder Estuary, 20 May (Stuart Piner)

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Fairly common coastal winter visitor. Scarce breeder.
International importance 1700; National importance 100.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	25	36	6	19	0	0	0	0	3	21	25	32
Stocks Res.	0	0	3	13	9	10	6	0	0	2	0	1

The WeBS totals for Morecambe Bay remained fairly stable. There were very few records received from the Sefton Coast with the exception of 23 at Formby in March. It was largely absent from the Ribble Estuary too, with just one at Southport Marine Lake in February, two at Hesketh Out Marsh in October and 14 off Ainsdale in November.

Inland records outside of the breeding season were limited to females at Lower Foulridge Reservoir from 11 Jan to 12 Feb, Black Moss Lower Reservoir on 25 Feb and the River Calder at Altham on 7 Dec.

During April, display was noted at Stocks Reservoir between up to seven males and four females. Breeding was confirmed here when a female with nine young was seen on 28 June. It was thought that breeding may have taken place in both Hareden and Langden Valleys as pairs were seen in suitable habitat in May.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Very rare visitor. Extinct breeder.

A female on Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 17 April was the only record of the year and the first since December 2014.

RED GROUSE *Lagopus lagopus*

Common breeding resident.

The annual systematic counts undertaken by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust on four shooting estates in Bowland gave a high mean spring density of 81.5 birds/100ha, well up from the 69.5 birds/100ha the previous spring, as a result of the excellent 2017 breeding season. However, production in 2018 was poor with a ratio of 1.4 young to one old (2.3 in 2017), with the July density crashing to just 88 birds/100ha from the 207 birds/100ha in 2017.

The collapse in 2018 was linked to three events. Firstly, anticyclone Hartmut (the so-called 'beast from the east') which together with severe outbreaks of Heather Beetle combined to kill or 'brown' vast areas of heather across Lancashire. These, together with the drought conditions that prevailed in late spring and early summer conspired to limit production of young. This resulted in shooting being cancelled or severely limited on most Lancashire moors with the Abbeystead Estate shooting just 170 birds on its first day (960 on a comparable day in 2017). The unbroken distribution and sizeable population across the Bowland Fells was well illustrated by over 370 casual records received from over 60 areas of moor. The most notable of 14 double-figure counts were 80 (including three nests and several broods) on Brennand Fell on 23 May, 30 in The Trough itself on 24 March, 20 in Croasdale on 22 Aug, 15 at Raven Scar on 16 Feb and twelve on Loftshaw Moss on 13 March.

There were several reports from the outlying Bowland fells including 19 on Bradford Fell on 21 Feb and 15 on Waddington Fell on 16 April with birds also recorded from Longridge Fell and Jeffrey Hill and the maximum count from Pendle being 15 on 22 April

Away from Bowland, 14 were on White Moor above Colne on 20 July, 20 on Boulsworth Hill on 24 May with four pairs in a sample area there on 25 May but no records were received from the central Rossendale moors where the species is scarce.

In the West Pennine Moors, a survey of Darwen and Turton Moors realised 130 territories, with an average density of 26 territories/km², but varying from over 40/km² to less than 8/km². Nearby, several disorientated birds were flying repeatedly around through the smoke and flames on Winter Hill during the major fire there on 30 June. Just 31 were reported during a shoot on Belmont Moor on 18 Aug plus casual records were received of 15+ on Withnell Moor on 11 Nov and 16 on Anglezarke Moor on 16 Dec. Reports from the eastern parts of the West Pennine Moors included a minimum of ten on Hoddlesden Moss on 8 Sept and ten on Haslingden Moor on 14 Oct whilst four pairs were reported breeding on Bull Hill.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Fairly common resident. Population maintained by regular releases in many areas.

The number of records received was very similar to last year with 520 reports (532 in 2017) from 149 sites (170 in 2017). As with Pheasant, releases are widespread and often vast in number with 10,000 turned down on at least one Lancashire estate. Casual records received are hence totally unrepresentative. Less so is the number of confirmed breeding records as the species breeds poorly in the Lancashire climate; just five were reported in 2018, three in the east and two on the Fylde.

The largest counts submitted included 60 at Fluke Hall on 24 Nov, 30 near Banks on 25 Nov, 26 near Newton-in-Bowland on 31 Oct, 24 in Knowsley Park on 19 Sept, 19 on Bretherton Eyes on 30 Sept and 15 on Simonswood Moss on 4 Oct.

The species' reputation for turning up in unusual locations again did not disappoint in 2018; one was on the island in Stocks Reservoir on 11 Nov with singles at Seaforth in April and May.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Common resident in the west, scarce resident in the east. Long term decline.

The number of records submitted was slightly higher than last year with 219 received in comparison to the 201 in 2017 with the number of locations slightly down from 107 to 103. Given the good summer, there was a worrying dearth of double-figure counts with only eleven received in 2018; albeit the weather could have actually been too dry for sawfly larvae (the main food of Grey Partridge young) and hence good brood production.

The south-west moors were described as 'one of the major areas for Grey Partridge in Great Britain' as recently as 2008. Survey work from the road network across a section of this area (north of the M58), recorded birds on seven areas of moss. Key areas with up to 14 pairs/site were Altcar

Moss, Lunt, Halsall Moss, Sollom Moss and Martin Mere. The observer stated "if there's as many as 500 pairs (in his survey area) I would be very surprised". Even allowing for any limitations with the survey methodology plus the core areas outside this survey area (i.e. the mosses south of the M58, farmland SE of Liverpool, Bretherton/Croston/Farington Mosses and several parts of the Fylde, particularly Over Wyre), the county population is now undoubtedly sub-1000 pairs as alluded to in the 2017 LBR. A switch from 'traditional' 'keeping of wild Grey Partridge stocks to the mass releasing of Red-legged Partridges for shooting is implicated on some mosses in parallel with the more general issues of a farmed landscape that is generally hostile to wild Grey Partridges (herbicide and pesticide use plus lack of nesting cover) coupled with a rise in generalist predators.

Casual records from the south-west included coveys of 23 at Lunt Meadows on 26 Sept, 14 at Lathom on 13 Oct, ten near Rufford on 7 Oct with coveys of between five and nine at nine other sites. On the reclaimed land south of the Ribble, nine were on Hesketh Out Marsh on 23 Jan, nine on Longton Marsh on 18 Oct and seven on Hesketh Out Marsh on 20 Feb. The mosses west of Chorley reported records from eight sites with the maximum being 19 near Coppull on 28 Jan and eight on Croston Moss on 25 Sept.

On the Fylde, pairs were at Bradshaw Head, Eagland Hill, Cockerham Moss Edge, Ballam, Swillbrook and Lytham Moss (two) areas in the spring with coveys of nine at Wesham on 13 Dec and eight on Lytham Moss on 7 Jan. Further north, a pair was at Aldcliffe early in the year. Eight sites supplied 16 records from east Lancashire (nine sites, 15 records in 2017) with a maximum of ten at Cant Clough on 20 Aug. A pair at Hawthornthwaite in Bowland early in the year was of note. Encouragingly, twelve records were received from eleven sites (just seven sites in 2017) in Rossendale with the maximum being a notable covey of twelve near Bacup in July. In the West Pennine Moors, two males were territorial on the moorland edge near Belmont in the spring, with coveys of 15 and nine near Belmont on 8 Dec thought to be from released stock. The species was recorded from eight sites on the farmland immediately south-east of Liverpool including six territories at Oglet on 5 April where later coveys of five were seen on the saltmarsh and shore on 21 Oct and 16 Nov with a covey of 14 there on Christmas Day.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce summer visitor to west, often in influxes. Occasional evidence of localised escapees.

A poor year with seven birds calling from just four sites and even then the duration of sightings indicated migrant birds that subsequently moved on.

The first was at Lees, Clitheroe on 9 May. One calling at Cockersand Abbey on 30 May and 4 June was the only bird that was recorded for more than a single day with the four calling on Tarleton Moss on 13 June exceptional in number for such a poor year. The last was, like the first, a bird in the east, this time at Cant Clough on 19 June.

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

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

As in 2017, some 4000 records were received. It is known that at least one Lancashire estate is releasing in excess some 20,000 birds and this is certainly not an unique occurrence. Concern as to the potential impact of such numbers on native flora (particularly in woodland and dunes), breeding waders, herptiles and even native gamebirds is being raised. The 1500 released at Altcar Rifle Ranges adjacent to Ravenmeols Hills LNR (Sefton Coast SSSI) and the 1000 males released (in the spring!) on the edge of Anglezarke Moor (West Pennine Moors SSSI), being perfect cases in point with respect to dune flora/herptiles and breeding waders respectively.

Casual counts from sites across the county included 500+ near Belmont on 11 Nov, 350 at Leighton Moss on 1 Oct, 120+ along the Old Coach Road, Rainford on 2 Nov, 100+ on Bretherton Eyes on 11 Nov, 65 on Silverdale Moss in January, 40 at Newton-in Bowland in November with 40 near Formby and 35 on nearby Altcar Withins both in April; whilst a breeding bird survey of Darwen and Turton Moors realised 40 birds along the moorland edge. Small numbers (up to eleven) were recorded along the Liverpool fringe from Kirkby, through Croxteth and Stockbridge Village, down to Speke, Halewood and Oglet.

Whilst released female Pheasants experience notoriously poor breeding success, the report of broods at just six sites (four in the east) must represent mass under-recording.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

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

International importance: 10000. National importance: 210.

Monthly Peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Formby Point	24	42	63	31	24	/	/	/	1	17	13	/
Blackpool	4	18	52	36	23	1	1	/	4	15	64	21

The first records were one at Blackpool 3rd Jan, three off Blackpool on 11 Jan, three off Rossall Point on the 14th and 24 off Formby on the 21st. The busiest period for double-figure counts was daily between 25-31 March, all off Blackpool, with 63 at Formby on the 21st. The last bird of spring passage was 6 June with the first returning on 17 July.

Elsewhere, unusually, one was present in Heysham Harbour from 1-9 Jan and two birds, considered to be this species, flew south over Swinden Reservoir, Burnley, on 20 April.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica*

Scarce annual winter visitor, mostly on coast.

A juvenile was present frequently on Blea Tarn Reservoir during daylight hours between 21 Jan and 12 Feb, commuting to and from the sea area between Morecambe and Heysham or the Lune Estuary. There were singles at Rossall Point (31 March), Heysham (7 April), Formby Point (26 April, 2 May, 9 Sept) and during the Alt WeBS count in September. The only count of two was from Blackpool on 11 May.



Black-throated Diver, Blea Tarn, 25 Jan (Craig Bell)

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Scarce, less than annual, mostly on coast.

There were five records of singles: off Formby Point on 7 Jan, Blackpool on 17 Feb, Fleetwood on 13 May, Knott End and Rossall Point on 13 Sept and Formby 4 Oct. Two were reported from Formby on 18 Feb.

STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

2012 was the last good year for this species. Since then one was seen off Blackpool on 3 Aug 2016, and this year all records, possibly not all separate individuals, were on the same day (14 June) from Heysham and Fleetwood (single(s)) and Blackpool (two).

LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

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

Typically a bird of September and October, so one reported from Blackpool on 17 Jan was unusual but not unprecedented, usually following gales; the last midwinter record was in February 2002.

Most birds were seen during the period 13-22 Sept - from Heysham in the north to Formby in the south. Birds seen on fifteen dates were all singles except for two at Heysham on the 19th and Formby Point on the 21st, four off Blackpool on the 13th and Formby the following day, six at Blackpool on the 14th and eight at Morecambe Stone Jetty on the 19th.

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

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

The only winter records at either end of the year were single(s) off Heysham and Blackpool on 19 Jan - this appeared to be a 'dark' (not 'double-dark') bird, but the head was not seen well enough to be absolutely certain.

All other records were from the period April to September, excluding July. Two were off the north Fylde coast on 16 April, with nine at Blackpool and eleven at Formby Point on the 26th. Into May singles were off the north Fylde coast on the 11th, 26th and 27th with two on the 10th; ten were off Formby on the 2nd with five on the 10th, while June produced three at Heysham and six at Blackpool on the 14th. There were three records in August – two at Formby on the 15th, one at Heysham on the 19th and five at Blackpool on the 27th. The final birds were singles off Formby and Heysham on 9 Sept.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

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

Monthly peak counts

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Fylde coast	c1000	1603	207	237	563	9	1
Formby Point	81	294	234	16	123	1	/

The first birds of the year were seven north at Blackpool 11 April with 18 south there the following day, followed by singles off Fleetwood on the 15th, Formby point on the 16th and north Fylde on the 28th.

Counts peaking at 487 off the Fylde coast in May were interspersed with eleven dates with counts of 100 or more and six with counts between 150-400. Additional large counts for Fylde included 237 on 25 July, 216 on the 26th, 563 on 5 Aug and 280 on the 23rd. The last bird of the year was seen heading north off Blackpool on 3 Oct.

A storm-driven bird was found dead, inland at Coppull (near Chorley), on 16 Sept.

BAROLO (LITTLE) SHEARWATER *Puffinus baroli*

Vagrant.

One was seen off Heysham on 20 Sept (PJ Marsh) and later in the day off Rossall Point (I Gardner). The record is still under consideration by the BBRC and if accepted by them will become the third county record, after one found dead at Cleveleys in March 1975 and one flying out of the Mersey Narrows at Seaforth in September 1992.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Uncommon but increasing breeding bird. Fairly common in winter.

International importance: 3400. National importance: 150.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	13	14	13	8	12	4	21	48	39	23	13	13

Individuals or pairs were reported from more than eighty sites across the county with double-figure counts from Thornton ICI Reservoir Fleetwood (13 in January), Conder Green (up to 18 during August to December), Leighton Moss and the Eric Morecambe complex (18 in August), Myerscough Quarry (17 in September), Ream Hills (10 in October) and Silverdale Moss (10 in July).

Breeding was reported from: Aldcliffe, Alston Wetland, Barrow Scout, Brookside Lodges, Brockholes, Common Bank Lodge, Conder Green, Fell End NR, Fleetwood Nature Reserve (5 juveniles), Hougher Fell Reservoir (8), Lee Green Reservoir, Leighton Moss, Lunt Meadows, Marshside/Crossens, Middleton, MMWWT, Myerscough Quarry, Pilling Lane Ends, Roby Mill, Sefton Park Liverpool, Silverdale Moss and Wardley's Creek. There was no breeding at Belmont Reservoir this year.

Sightings on the River Ribble came from Brungerley Bridge (with seven in November), Calder Foot (four in January), Grindleton and Ribchester. Five were on the Calder at Altham and Whalley in October. Nine were on the Lune between Skerton Weir and Kirkby Lonsdale in December and five in September.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

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

International importance: 4800. National importance: 170.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	5	10	4	12	4	/	2	16	4	41	25	12
Alt WeBS	15	7	14	5	1	2	2	/	10	13	1	1
Foulridge Res	19	20	21	16	15	2	14	6	7	14	14	4
Brockholes	/	1	3	5	8	8	10	15	10	10	10	4
Carr Mill Dam	9	/	45	42	/	/	/	29	35	30	35	25

NB: all post-breeding counts, especially August onwards, include juveniles

Another year when fluctuating water levels affected breeding outcomes. Breeding was reported from Anglezarke, Belmont (1 juvenile), Brockholes (2 juveniles), Croston Twin Lakes (2 pairs, seven young), Dockacres complex (2), Glasson, Heapey Lodges (2), Lower Foulridge, Leighton Moss, Lunt Meadows – first breeding at the reserve (2), Rishton Reservoir (3, of which only one fledged successfully), Sefton Park Liverpool, Silverdale Moss, Slipper Hill Reservoir and Wyreside Fisheries. Unsuccessful breeding occurred at Cuerden Valley Park, Seaforth, Springs Reservoir, Stocks Reservoir and Yarrow Valley Park. Elsewhere, at least one pair was reported from over fifty sites including Alston Reservoir, Clowbridge Reservoir, Dean Clough Reservoirs, Parsonage Reservoir, Longton Brick Croft, New Lodge Reservoir, MSW, and MMWWT.

Counts offshore included 17 at Heysham in May and 14 in November; 14 at Jenny Brown's Point in April, 22, in May and 25 in December, while there were 13 off Formby Point in October. Birds were offshore in Morecambe Bay in all months except June and July; the peak months were April with eleven and November with 35.

Unusually there were two sightings of single birds on the River Ribble in east Lancashire, at Calder Foot on 31 May and Dinckley on 3 Nov.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce winter visitor.

There were three records of singles: at sea off Blackpool 14 April, at Alston Reservoir, Longridge on 21 Oct and offshore from Heysham Head 31 Oct.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Scarce visitor, mostly in spring and autumn.

April started the year with two at Eccleston Mere, St Helens on the 26th and one off Blackpool on the 29th. Others were at Kincaig Lake, Bispham from 4-10 May and Stocks Reservoir on 20 July but was gone by the next day.

There were no further records until October with a long-staying individual at Barnacre Reservoir from the 7-25th followed by another staying at Spade Mill Reservoir, Longridge, from 15-19 December.

GLOSSY IBIS* *Plegadis falcinellus*

Scarce visitor.

Two first-summers were at Marshside on 3 May (K Morrison) before flying off to the north when they seen flying over Brockholes the same day (M Fanshawe). They had returned to Marshside on the 4th and at least one remained there on the 11-12th and again on the 16-18th.

SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

Scarce visitor, has bred.

None was seen in either winter period.

The first were singles at Leighton Moss/Eric Morecambe complex on 7 April and Marshside the following day. It is possible that these involved just one bird as there was just one further sighting at Leighton Moss during April and records were sporadic at Marshside – with no definite overlaps of

dates at the two sites. Two adults were at Marshside on 29 April to 3 May with one remaining until the 4th.

One was back at Leighton on 9-11 May and again on the 21st-22nd and 6 and 30 June, while further south single(s) were on Hesketh Out Marsh between 12 and 21 May and Lunt Meadows on the 31st when presumably the same bird was at MMWWT and perhaps the same at Marshside between 15 and 26 June. An adult was at Leighton Moss on 30 June but no more were seen until three at Pilling Marsh on 21 Aug and four at Leighton on the 25th, then finally three on 24 Sept on Hesketh Out Marsh, one at MMWWT on 17 Oct and a juvenile on the Lune Estuary at Glasson Marsh the following day..

Given Spoonbills' propensity for wandering it is possible that as few as two were present in the county in spring and four or five later in the year.

BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

Rare breeding bird, uncommon winter visitor there and elsewhere.

After several years of uncertainty it seems that Bittern may have become re-established as a Lancashire breeding species.

One was tuning up briefly on Barrow Scout on 24 March but there was no further indication of breeding there, while on the main reserve at Leighton Moss one was booming strongly south of Causeway during March and April, and regular feeding flights were seen in late June to early July, when two young were seen briefly, proving successful breeding.

Possibly even more gratifying was the presence of a booming bird at MMWWT from 10 April and throughout the summer; although no nest was located this certainly indicated at least probable breeding.

At least four were at Leighton Moss in the first winter period and three at Marton Mere, with singles elsewhere at MMWWT, Mere Sands Wood, Brockholes and Heysham.

One was at Middleton NR on 13 July and one from 9 Aug at Marton Mere, where numbers grew to at least two by the end of the year. One arrived at Lunt Meadows on 5 Oct and two were present from early November into 2019 as were at least three at Leighton, while one at MMWWT on 24 Oct was the last reported there. The only other late year records were singles at Rowley Lake, Burnley on 11-16 Oct and Brockholes on 23 Nov.

CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

Scarce visitor but in increasing numbers.

One remained at Leighton Moss from 2017 until 2 Jan. No more were in seen in north Lancashire until singles appeared at Leighton on 15 April and The Snab on 26 Oct, followed by up to three at Leighton and feeding at Yealand Storrs from 11-20 Nov

Up to three were on the north bank of Ribble in the Warton Bank/Freckleton Naze area from 4-10 Jan with two on 31 March to 12 April and one on 29 April to 11 May, and up to four – presumably with large overlap – on the south side at Birkdale and the Ribble Marshes on and off from mid-January until 18 May, with five there on 6 March.

One at Wesham Marsh, Kirkham on 14 Nov was the only Fylde record in the second winter period but after singles at Marshside on 15 June and 15 Aug Merseyside numbers grew to eight or nine from mid-October, some remaining into December; these birds were seen at Marshside and Birkdale and roosted at Southport Marine Lake.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Scarce breeding resident.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	11	14	12	17	25	14	33	18	28	25	13	13
Ribble WeBS	9	7	0	9	22	17	41	57	24	37	33	17
Lune Valley	14	5	6	11	17	9	16	14	30	21	14	20

Double-figure counts apart from those in the table and away from breeding colonies included 20 at Foulridge Reservoirs on 13 July (where they had congregated to take advantage of the large numbers of dead fish caused by low water levels), 18 on Hesketh Out Marsh on 12 Sept, 15 at Leighton Moss on



Grey Heron. Lee Park Golf Course, 18 June
(Steve Young)

27 Sept and at Brockholes on 15-16 July, 14 at MMWWT on 5 Sept, 13 at Barnaby's Sands on 9 Sept, and twelve at Calder/Hodder Foot on 31 Jan, at Slipper Hill Reservoir on 6 July and at Balderstone on 4 Nov,.

The breeding situation is unclear as not all heronries are reported on but, although one or two appear to be increasing and there was at least one new one established this year, the impression we get is of a slow decline in numbers.

One was found dead, tangled in fishing line at Haydock Farm in June – sadly a not rare fate for this species.

The Rivington heronry continued to increase to 31 active nests in 2018, making it now the largest heronry in the West Pennine Moors. This is ironic, as it was the Entwistle heronry that received statutory protection as a SSSI in 2016 as it then (at the time of the West Pennine Moors SSSI notification) fitted the criteria as the largest heronry in the Southern Pennines Natural Character Area.

Number of Active Nests at Heronries

North Lancashire		Fylde	
Ashton Hall Lake	6	Hackensall Wood	5
Skerton Weir	9	Stanley Park	27 (individuals)
Centre Farm, Forton	Occupied	Kincraig Lake	3
Tunstall	23	Lytham Hall	5
Claughton (Garstang)	16	Lea Gate	3
Silverdale Moss	2	Chorley	
East Lancashire		Cuerden VP	3
Winckley Hall	35	West Pennine Moors	
Skirden Beck	Occupied	Rivington	31
Stocks Reservoir	Occupied	Delph Plantations	6
Jackhouse	Occupied	Entwistle Plantations	30
Townley Park	Occupied	Rossendale	
Merseyside		Warth, Waterfoot	10
Little Crosby	Occupied		

GREAT WHITE EGRET *Ardea alba*

Scarce but increasing , mostly in winter.

A small population was once again centred on Leighton Moss, roosting with Little Egrets but wandering widely. January to late April saw one to three with only one May record then one or two daily from mid-June to late August. Numbers increased to a peak of six in early September and from late September with up to three until the year's end. These birds wandered widely and likely accounted for most of the many records in the north of the county as far apart as Cockersand and Arkholme.

As usual, there was another – probably separate – wintering population on the Ribble, seen primarily in the early year on the north bank at Warton Marsh and surrounding sites, and during the second winter period equally on the south side at Hesketh Out Marsh, Crossens, Marshside and other saltmarshes. At least three were present from January, with eight on Warton Marsh on 2 Feb, until the start of May and up to four from late September until the end of the year. With five

seen flying over Lytham Marsh on 22 Oct. As in the north, there were several records of presumed wandering birds on both sides of the river.

Further afield there were records of birds that may not have been separate to these two populations, including monthly singles at Brockholes between June and December. One was on Croston Moss throughout January and singles were at MMWWT and Lunt Meadows in late autumn.

The first record in east Lancashire came in 2010, since when they have been seen annually, this



year on Chipping Moss on 8-16 April, at Rishton Reservoir on 3 Sept, Paythorne Bridge on 15 Sept, Martholme on 10 Oct, Gawthorpe on 22-23 Nov and Osbaldeston on 9 Dec.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Common and increasing visitor, mainly to coastal marshes. Rare breeder, first in 2014.

National importance: 50

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	23	29	26	60	36	33	77	188	160	115	57	32
Leighton Moss / EMP	39	15	61	52	7	12	64	118	176	101	87	47
Ribble WeBS	15	33	11	27	49	48	73	96	182	113	106	36
Fairhaven	/	5	3	5	2	13	20	123	158	31	15	13

Large site counts in Morecambe Bay included 54 at Pilling Lane Ends on 27 Jan with 60 there in October, 78 at Sunderland Point on 1 Aug, 55 on Glasson Marsh on 29 Aug and 117 at Colloway Marsh on the 29th. Other notable roosts included 228 at Ashton Hall in September with 154 there in October, 130 at Freckleton Naze on 12 Sept and 55 at Southport Marine Lake on 1 Dec.

Numbers remain far lower away from the coast but they are increasing year on year. One or two were seen in east Lancashire throughout the year, mainly between July and February; larger counts included 13 roosting near Sawley on 30 Nov and 7 Dec, and eight roosting between Lower Foulridge and Slipper Hill Reservoirs on 27-30 Nov.

There were records in Chorley of ones and twos from January to April and again from August to December, while numbers peaked at 16 at both Brockholes and Lunt Meadows and twelve at Mere Sands Wood. Little Egrets remain relatively uncommon in Rossendale but there birds at five sites this year, notably four at Alderbottom on 7 April and Holden Wood Reservoir on 4 Aug.

The species now breeds at three sites in the county: twelve pairs nested at Ashton Hall and five pairs near Tunstall – a new site in north Lancashire. There was no nest count at Southport Marine

GANNET *Morus bassanus*

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

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Fylde Coast/MBS	15	/	12	247	171	39	23	42	12	2	2	1
Sefton Coast	/	4	/	495	391	31	5	44	4	/	/	/

Typically a spring passage bird, all records this year were coastal sightings.

The table shows maxima for the month with counts for the Fylde Coast and Morecambe Bay (MBS) coming principally from six observation points – Rossall Point, Cleveleys, Blackpool, Heysham, Knott End and Fleetwood.

This table misses numerous counts of smaller numbers, e.g. a total of 302 past Heysham between 22 April and 30 May, and at least 161 past Formby in the month of May. These numbers, however, reflect observational days and in no way represent true numbers which may be considerably more.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

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

A second-year bird was, in unprecedented fashion, present almost all year off Heysham between the Head and the wooden jetty/harbour, often feeding off the Head in the low tide channel. A juvenile was present in the harbour for two weeks in mid-December before being found dead.

Singles were present off Blackpool, 17 Jan, 28 Feb, 15 & 18 May, 14 & 23 June, with two in April, and an adult and second-calendar year on 15 June. Further singles were at Cockersand and Bolton-le-Sands on 16 April. A bird found dead on St Anne's beach on 11 Jan had been ringed on Puffin Island in 2016 (see ringing report).

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

International importance: 1200. National importance: 620.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS+	192	155	129	71	30	32	130	110	269	170	172	184
Ribble WeBS+	410	373	106	257	115	105	34	213	156	467	695	1122
Alt WeBS+	156	193	81	188	96	132	90	190	390	303	824	155
Seaforth	75	90	100	90	28	34	71	150	400	350	76	101
Brockholes	25	21	19	32	6	3	18	32	19	22	11	13
Mere Sands	14	27	36	17	3	7	118	234	98	384	18	21
Rivington Res	67	80	89	/	/	/	/	/	/	68	/	65
Foulridge Res	47	49	36	17	3	2	18	27	38	44	65	71
Stocks Res	24	36	35	26	11	3	17	55	68	50	48	14

+ includes counts from additional days where numbers exceed WeBS totals

The number of sites reporting the presence of Cormorants at some time of the year continues to grow as do numbers both inland and on the coast. Peak monthly counts from main coastal areas and inland sites are shown in the table

Other peak records from inland waters included 27 at Lunt Meadows in December, and from various reservoirs 15 at Adlington in October, 17 at Alston in July and Black Moss in September, 13 at Clowbridge November, 13 at Delph in October, 24 at Holden Wood in December, 24 at Ogden in September, 30 at Slipper Hill in November, 24 at Upper Rivington in December, 29 at Whitemoor in February and 46 at Yarrow/Anglezarke in September.

Riverine sightings, also increasing, included two on the Douglas at Bretherton in November, eleven on the Calder at Altham-Martholme in January, 51 on the Lune at Glasson in August and 20 between Skerton Weir and Kirkby Lonsdale during September, November and December.

Individuals of the race *sinensis* were reported from Preston Dock in February, Cuerden Valley Park in March and December, and Southport Marine Lake in September.



Cormorant, Seaforth, 5 June (Steve Young)

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Fairly common passage migrant.

The first was seen on 21 March at Rivington Reservoirs with five more during the month. A minimum of 40, probably closer to 50, headed north during April and 20 or so were seen in May. The majority of June records, and throughout early summer, were at Leighton Moss and surrounding areas; all fishing birds at Leighton Moss were seemingly the Foulshaw Moss male (White YW) and nearby nesting male (Blue 9C). A handful of migrants were seen during June, at Mere Sands Wood, Crosby, Brockholes and Newton Fells. Although there is likely to have been some duplication of records in spring it is equally likely that many passed through unnoticed; whatever the actual figure it looks as if a substantial proportion of the British breeding population flew through the county.

The autumn passage was, as usual, very significantly smaller. Beginning with four July records a total of around 15-20 passed through, mostly from late August and throughout September with the last over Stanley Park, Blackpool on 29th Sept.

Migration took place over a very broad front in all parts of the county with just a slight preponderance of records in the western third.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Fairly common breeding resident.

Although it is clear from the plethora of reports received that Sparrowhawks remain widespread throughout the county away from moorland it is very difficult to judge how well they are doing. The national population appears to have at least stabilised and is possibly increasing after recovering from the earlier severe decline; the Lancashire population was estimated at 600 pairs after the 2008-2011 atlas and there is little reason to suspect it has changed.



Sparrowhawk, Roby, 23 October (Steve Young)

The only nesting records received, however, came from Heysham, Aintree and a garden in Euxton.

Some detailed information was received from south Liverpool which indicated that birds were seen throughout the year hunting in the city's parks and suburban gardens.

As usual Sparrowhawks were almost always seen singly but there was a handful of reports of two or more together, the largest group four at Stanley Park, Blackpool on 24 July.

No clear-cut migrants were reported this year from Seaforth but at Heysham three headed north-east together on 26 March and singles on three dates between 20 March and 9 April, while in autumn three southbound birds were seen on 9 Nov and singles on 15 Sept and 6 & 15 Oct.

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Rare breeding resident and escapee.

It seems that Goshawks have not left the Forest of Bowland; a pair was seen on 25 March with other sightings in the same area on 8 & 26 April and three together on the 12th. A pair was breeding there but the nesting attempt failed.

There were no reports from the West Pennine Moors this year and the only other record was of a juvenile in the Oswaldtwistle area on 13 & 19 Nov and 1 Dec.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Rare breeder, fairly common passage migrant and increasing winter visitor.

Marsh Harriers had a good breeding season at Leighton Moss where there were three males and three females and two nests were successful, both fledging three young. Since up to four were seen there during January to early March it was difficult to say when the breeding birds arrived but numbers had built to six by the end of April.

Judging by the regularity of sightings of up to three during the breeding season in the vicinity, a single pair also probably nested at the usual site on the south-west mosses but it was not monitored this year.

Spring migrants included singles at Belmont Reservoir on 24 Feb, Haslingden Grane on 31 March, Aldcliffe on 13 April and 25 May, Bretherton Eyes on 28 April, Longridge on 27 May and Cross of Greet on the 31st. There were returning migrants at Stocks Reservoir on 13 July, Gorpel Track on the 25 & 27th, Glasson on 5 Aug, Champion Moor on the 12th, Bank End on the 18th and Seaforth on the 20th, and Clowbridge Reservoir on the 30th, Dunsop Valley and Glasson on 5 Sept and 19 Oct, Formby Point on 9 Sept and 10 Oct, Cockersand on 16 and 20 Sept and 21 Oct, and Croston Finney on 1 Nov.

These records undoubtedly underestimate the size of both passage movements, however, as the increasing wintering population makes it very difficult to distinguish migrants, although multiple arrivals such as the six juvenile/immatures at Marshside on 10 Oct best fit into the latter category.

Up to twelve remained at Leighton Moss from September to the end of the year but numbers on the Ribble Marshes were harder to judge but included three at Marshside from autumn to the end of December, and up to four during the same period on the north bank of the river at Warton Bank. Numbers on the south-west mosses peaked at five at MMWWT and one or two were seen regularly at several other sites including Lunt Meadows.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Rare and declining breeder, uncommon winter visitor.

The ornithological event of the year was undoubtedly the successful breeding in the Forest of Bowland and attempted breeding in the West Pennine Moors.

There were three nests in Bowland, two of the females being paired with one mature male; between them they fledged 13 young. This came after a long run of poor breeding seasons but unfortunately a few months after fledging two satellite-tagged juveniles had disappeared in highly suspicious circumstances, one of them on the edge of Bowland in the same place that two young birds had disappeared in 2014, the last year of successful breeding in Bowland. The second disappeared on an estate in Yorkshire where a satellite-tagged harrier called Bowland Betty had been found dead with shotgun wounds in 2012.

Over a third of the Hen Harriers fitted with satellite tags by the RSPB since 2015 have disappeared in similarly suspicious circumstances. An overwhelming body of scientific evidence suggests that the main reason for the low number of Hen Harriers in England is illegal killing associated with driven grouse shooting – a conclusion that Natural England has finally acknowledged after years of hesitation. Although 2018 was a better breeding season than 2017 for Hen Harriers in England with 14 nesting attempts and nine nests successfully fledging 34 chicks – considerably better than last year's three pairs – it is still way below the approximately 280 pairs for which there is suitable habitat in England.

In the West Pennine Moors a male Hen Harrier that had overwintered was sky-dancing for several weeks in spring and was joined by a female which prospected several potential breeding sites over a four week period. This followed occasional breeding-season records in the area over the last two decades, including a probable breeding attempt in 2001 and prospecting birds in 2002 and 2005. This male was first observed in sky-dancing display flight on 19 March, the same day that the female was also first seen. Subsequently, the pair were seen together on several occasions with the female observed prospecting suitable breeding sites whilst the male continued to display. RSPB, Natural England and United Utilities were informed at this stage as it was considered that a nesting attempt was highly likely. However, sightings became less regular in early April with the male last seen on the 6th and the female becoming irregular from the 24th onwards, being last seen on 3 June. However it is possible that these birds were one of the pairs that subsequently bred, albeit unsuccessfully, in the South Pennines some 30km to the north-east.

As usual almost all wintering records came from the Ribble marshes. There were numerous records of up to three at Marshside and Warton Bank/Marsh at both ends of the year, but one observer saw four different birds on the southern marshes and in discussion with others estimated that at least six had been present at some during the second winter period.

The only winter report from the south-west mosses was one on Formby Moss on 20 Feb and there was also just one in north Lancashire at High Tatham on 28 March – although both may have been early migrants.

Spring migrants were thin on the ground: singles at MMWWT on 3-4 March and 7 June, and Leighton Moss on 4 & 7 March and 6 June. Birds were considerably more regular after the breeding season with several migrants seen away from the wintering grounds on the north Fylde coast and at MMWWT, and singles at Speke on 25 Nov and at Middleton and Lunt Meadows on 26 Nov. None was seen in these areas, however, after the end of November.

PALLID HARRIER *Circus macrourus*

Very rare passage migrant from Fennoscandia and western Russia.

Coming hard on the heels of our first and second records, a 2CY at Brockholes on 7 May and an adult in Bowland in spring 2016, our third, a juvenile female, appeared at Bank End on 16-18 Sept (I Hartley). The record has been accepted by the BBRC.



Juvenile female Pallid Harrier, Bank End,
16 September (Paul Ellis)

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

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

One remained over a wide area of the south-west mosses and Ribble marshes from 2017 until at least mid-March. What may have been a different bird was seen at Lunt Meadows on 3 April with possibly the same over Seaforth on the 8th and finally on 11 May and MMWWT on the 13th. Another at several sites in north Fylde from January to the first week of March was the only other record in the early year, apart from one near Simms ruin, Chorley on 7 March.

Records were a little more frequent in spring; the earliest, one at Yealand Storrs on 4 April, may have also accounted for three other records in north Lancashire in late April and early May. Another was at Tarbock, Knowsley on 15 April. Two were in the Mawdesley area on 18 April with possibly one these at Clayton-le-Woods on the 28th and another at Hic Bibi on 1 May. One was in Bowland in late May and was seen scavenging food cached by a Hen Harrier. Other May birds were at Alston Reservoirs on the 7th, Rishton on the 12th and Whitworth Quarry on the 26th.

June sightings came from Lunt Meadows on the 4th & 25th with presumably one of the same at MMWWT on the 13th, at various sites in south Fylde throughout the month and Stocks Reservoir on the 25th. One at Brindle on 18 July was the only record that month.

There no further sightings until one at Alston Reservoirs on 5 Aug and two south over Banks and Crossens Marshes and Churchtown on the 12th, followed by a further gap until singles over Clough Head, Grane on 1 Sept and Lancaster on the 25th. Only a handful appeared during October: at Morecambe on the 5th and Glasson two days later, Lunt Meadows on the 20th and MMWWT on the 28-30th, and at Allerton Golf Course in south Liverpool in the last week of the month. Finally, one flew over Crosby on 4 Nov.

There is still no evidence of even attempted breeding in the county but the concentration of records in spring does perhaps suggest that several birds were prospecting.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Fairly common and increasing breeding resident.

Although very little detailed information of breeding was received it is clear from the vast number of casual sightings recorded that Buzzards remain very widespread across virtually all parts of the county and are our most common and numerous raptor. A dozen potential breeding sites were identified in Chorley, where a population of 20 pairs was estimated, while in Rossendale probable breeding pairs were seen at least nine sites.

By way of example 573 records were reported on the ELOC website and 972 on the Fylde Bird Club's, while 64 birds were reported by a single observer in a relatively small area of south Liverpool/Knowsley.

Counts of ten or more came from more than a dozen sites, including 18 at Lunt Meadows on 18 March and 15+ at Alston Reservoirs on 11 March. Fifteen in four groups going high south-east at Marton Mere were presumably migrants, as were singles at Heysham on 26 March, 24 Sept and 10 & 26 Oct, and five heading south over Middleton NR on 1 Oct. Although Seaforth does not get the coverage it once did there were 14 definite migrants recorded there in spring, mostly in April and May, and nine in autumn, eight of these in October.

One was hunting at the head of the major Winter Hill fire on 30 June.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

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

Water Rails were seen or more usually heard throughout the county on more than 75 sites during the two winter periods. Almost all records were of singles or occasionally twos but it is almost impossible to get anywhere near an accurate count of this species and there is no evidence to suggest any significant change to the 600 birds produced during the winter atlas. The only larger counts included seven or more at Marton Mere in January with six in the second winter period, when at least four were at MMWWT.

One on the Mersey at Garston on 21 Oct was an unusual record there.

The breeding survey at Leighton Moss took place a little later than usual meaning that birds were less responsive to the tape, and some areas were avoided due to Marsh Harrier and Bittern activity so the figure of 74 pairs was thought to have been an underestimate. Six pairs were located

at Barrow Scout and calling birds were also present at Silverdale Moss. No information was received from Marton Mere for the breeding season but birds almost certainly nested there as usual. Four territories were established at Marshside and at least one pair bred at MMWWT and probably at Lunt Meadows – and almost certainly at several other sites.



Water Rail, Leighton Moss, 14 December (Craig Bell)

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Very common resident breeder.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	26	17	8	9	12	7	10	30	30	23	40	17
Ribble WeBS	24	39	23	28	14	13	19	30	4	27	23	16
MMWWT	140	86	10	9	9	62	/	116	166	167	178	150

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 119 compared to 108 in 2017. Peak counts elsewhere included 74 on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal from Litherland to Old Roan on 7 March, 85 on the canal from Litherland to Bootle on 31 Dec, an estimated 60 at Lunt Meadows in October, 33 in Stanley Park, Blackpool in December and 22 at Brockholes in October.

Breeding was typically widespread, especially in the western half of the county. Site breeding totals were typically fairly low; they included a record 15 pairs at Belmont Reservoir which included seven pairs amongst the Black-headed Gull colony. Ten or more died during an outbreak of botulism there in July but twelve or more remained there in late August. Elsewhere there were ten pairs at Leighton Moss and MMWWT, nine at Lunt Meadows and seven at Middleton NR, together with smaller numbers at a host of other sites. Breeding was confirmed at 11 sites in east Lancashire; many more must have gone unreported.

COOT *Fulica atra*

Common resident breeder; very common 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
MBS WeBS	138	110	52	9	29	27	50	115	57	138	115	119
EMP	185	82	45	24	16	16	22	32	108	105	190	130
Leighton Moss	130	110	114	52	15	45	99	115	125	66	45	27
Brockholes	382	223	117	49	34	140	210	331	334	289	373	328

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ribble WeBS	102	102	128	95	57	78	45	33	67	8	33	11
Marton Mere	300	148	200	62	20	56	76	80	130	330	257	120
Southport ML	406	184	87	12	9	80	33	131	68	374	340	455
Lunt Meadows	/	56	138	/	/	/	/	260	/	29	20	40
Seaforth	10	10	8	10	10	37	28	42	85	53	28	15
Mere Sands	11	21	11	12	12	38	62	69	220	107	11	12
MMWWT	153	90	35	18	9	31	11	84	17	76	104	215

Additional large counts included 160 on Southport Marine Lake and 130 at Silverdale Moss in January and 122 at Lunt Meadows in August. Large numbers continue to be found on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal in Merseyside, where counts included 54 between Litherland and Old Roan on 7 March and 73 from Litherland to Bootle on 31 Dec. Peak counts in east Lancashire were 65 at Alston Reservoirs in August and 73 at Spade Mill Reservoir in December.

Breeding was widespread in most parts of the county although as usual rather few reports were received. They included 20 pairs at Lunt Meadows, 18 at Leighton Moss, 14 at Carr Mill Dam, 13 at Marshside, ten on the canal in Aintree, eight at Barrow Scout and seven at MMWWT. Breeding was also confirmed at nine sites in east Lancashire, with possible other instances going unreported.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Abundant winter visitor. Common breeding bird.

International importance: 10200. National importance: 2900.

WeBS counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	4158	13280	8260	3303	1799	1054	6613	5797	13271	3746	19020	16536
Ribble WeBS	5504	10735	2933	1560	1049	948	2146	13978	8684	7763	7618	8439
Alt WeBS	2472	2131	841	716	446	184	2000	2814	2110	1852	1494	1222

Inland birds at the start of the year included five on 1 Jan at Alston Reservoirs with the first back at Belmont Reservoir on 25 Jan and 68 at Burholme on the 30th. In the Chorley area, birds began to return in February with four on Bretherton Eyes on the 3rd, nine on Croston Finney on the 9th and 20 at Ulnes Walton on the 19th, and in the West Pennine Moors 24 at Belmont the 24th. WeBS counts along the Lune valley had a year-round peak of 797 in February. Peak counts at sites in Bowland included 155 at Burholme on 11 Feb and 118 at Sawley on the 16th. Some of these early birds were affected by cold weather in late March, for instance twelve were found dead at Laneshaw Reservoir, Colne and two found dead at Barnacre Reservoir. Maximum inland pre-breeding counts include 47 at Alston Wetland on 13 Feb, 52 at Ribchester on 25 Feb, 90 at Stocks Reservoir on 20 March and 61 at Langden Bridge on 21 March.

Breeding along the coast included 34 pairs on Hesketh Outer Marsh, 29 on the Eric Morecambe complex and 14 at Marshside. Inland, breeding remains thin and widespread. For instance, four pairs bred at Brockholes. At Lunt Meadows four pairs were present during breeding season but with no evidence of success. Three pairs bred in the Langden Valley, at least four pairs raised chicks in the Brennand Valley and four pairs bred in the Calder Valley between Altham and Martholme. Elsewhere, there were at least five pairs at Belmont Reservoir, including one in the centre of an adjacent in-bye field, and three at Delph Reservoir with one nest again in the middle of the sailing club car park. Three pairs bred at Jamestone Quarries. However, there was a complete breeding failure at Belmont, Delph & Springs Reservoirs, considered likely to be due to the drought conditions making earthworms inaccessible. Two young fledged at Withnell, three at Sunnyhurst and at least four at Jamestone Quarries. Rooftop nesting was noted at a factory in Colne. In Bowland on in-bye land there were a total of 77 pairs, 2.41 pairs per farm.

Post-breeding groups across inland areas were small, with some of the highest counts being 31 at Parsonage Reservoir on 11 July and ten at Stocks Reservoir on 16 July. The last birds at Anglezarke Reservoir, Chorley were seen on 15 Aug (with birds recorded there since 9 March). Very few were reported inland in late autumn or early winter.

A peak of 2000 at Seaforth in Oct was more than the WeBS count for the Alt that month.

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Recently established scarce breeding bird, uncommon passage migrant.

National Importance: 87.

The first of the year were three on 13 Feb at MMWWT 17 there on the 18th on the Eric Morecambe complex and five at Marshside on the 20th.

Peak counts at Marshside included 76 on 19 March, and 120+ on the 25th when two at Fleetwood were the first of spring on the Fylde. Four were at Glasson on 4 April. One flew south at Heysham on 22 April and a flock of three flew north there on 21 May.

Almost all breeding birds continue to be reported from the main coastal wetland reserves. At Hesketh Out Marsh numbers continued to increase and 70 pairs fledged 24 young while 30 pairs at Marshside fledged 44. At The Eric Morecambe complex, almost all eggs of 29 breeding pairs hatched but chicks were lost within three days of hatching; just four pairs re-laid and only one succeeded, producing one fledgling. A total of twelve pairs at MMWWT was the lowest in recent years. Peak counts at MMWWT included 81 on 16 March and 67 on 2 April. Three fed on the banks of the River Douglas at Little Hoole Marsh in early July – this site is inaccessible except by boat, so it was not possible to confirm breeding in the area. A pair at Conder Green had one young on 8 July.

At Lunt Meadows, two arrived on 24 May, increasing to eight by 11 June. Birds presumably from here were noted nearby on the Alt Estuary at Hightown in May-June and on 13-14 Aug. Three pairs bred at Lunt, hatching nine young, of which seven fledged. This was the first breeding record for the reserve; most had departed by mid-August, with one staying until 30 Aug. Seaforth had singles on 20 April and 5 May, followed by a pair from 31 May, mating on 5 June, joined by a third bird the same day and regularly up to five to 6 Aug then 3-4 up to the 19th.

There were two records in the east. One at Lower Towneley Scrape 16-19 March and a juvenile at Rishton Reservoir from 13-18 July.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

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

International importance: 20000. National importance: 6200.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	2855	6205	23	56	37	87	524	741	2644	3695	7808	11685
Ribble WeBS	4686	7160	368	251	226	317	287	1009	1105	1257	11941	15611
Alt WeBS	90	30	14	8	4	25	121	60	26	2	30	61

In the east, the largest counts at the start of the year included 150 on Champion Moor on 2 Feb, 300 at Grindleton Flood Pool on 9 Feb with 410 at Alston Reservoirs the next day, and 200 at Igthenhill Bridge on 27 Feb.

In the Chorley area, 200 were at Croston Finney on 2 Jan and 250 on Bretherton Eyes on 10 Jan. Larger flocks in February included 300 at Bretherton Eyes, 300 on Croston Moss, 200 at Withnell Fold. In the West Pennine Moors, 210 were at Belmont in January. The highest total of the year on WeBS counts along the Lune Valley was of 577 in January.

Displaying birds were widely noted from early March. A total of 29 territories were recorded around Belmont Reservoir with success initially appearing good with at least ten broods present in early June. However, these and further young mostly perished during late-June/early-July due to the onset of dry conditions. A breeding bird survey of Darwen and Turton Moors noted 15 territories plus another 16 territories immediately adjacent, however, success again was limited. The breeding season was very poor across the West Pennine Moors with flocks of failed breeders beginning to form in late-May and few juveniles are thought to have fledged with only four present in two post-breeding flocks, totalling 70+, in June. In Bowland, on in-by-e farms there were a total of 239 pairs, 7.47 pairs per farm.

Breeding remains widespread. Less typical were three pairs nesting on a brownfield site within an industrial park in Aintree. The highest reported numbers were 51 pairs at Marshside that fledged 32 young; 15 pairs bred at the Eric Morecambe complex and seven at Hesketh Out Marsh with at least twelve at Lunt Meadows and eight at Brockholes; There were 6-7 pairs at Alston Wetland, fledging just three young and seven pairs bred at MMWWT.

Post-breeding flocks included 100 at Croston Moss in early June, 150+ at Lower Rivington Reservoir on 29 Aug, 500 at Foulridge Upper Reservoir on 4 Sept, 200+ at Lower Rivington Reservoir on 9 Sept and 200 at Parsonage Reservoir on 13 Sept. Flocks of 280 were on the edge of Croston Moss on 25 Nov, 200 on Mawdesley Moss on 2 Dec and 150 at Croston Finney on 11 Dec. There were 300 at Rishton Reservoir on 16 Dec.

The autumn movement back towards the coast was noted at Seaforth and at Glasson from the third week of June, while at Lunt Meadows, the return in numbers was most obvious from late July with 1000+ in August and still 850+ on 15 Sept, 650 on 10 Oct and 1,800 in November. A count of 4000 at Glasson in late November and early December was the largest number for a single site in the county all year.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Very common 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	660	2931	464	246	0	1	15	121	425	396	2700	1600
Ribble	57	30							350	1620	2167	2348
Marshside	2150	500	450	566					200			

An impressive 3290 at Glasson on 9 Feb was the highest count on the Fylde all year and not captured in the WeBS counts that month.

There was a brief flurry of interesting sightings in early spring. In the south-west, 246 on Downholland Moss on 25 Feb was unusual. In cold weather there were eight at Stadt Moers Park, Huyton, an urban location, on 2 March. A group of 31 on Halsall Moss on 26 Feb was a nice local record as were six on Springwood Recreation Ground, Allerton in Liverpool on 28 Feb. Last coastal birds in spring were singles on 29 April at Cockersand and at Marshside, although one was noted in the MBS WeBS count on 17 June.

The first report in the east was 50 on Pendle Hill on 14 Jan. In February 100 frequented the Bretherton Eyes/Croston Moss areas in Chorley until 24 March. Birds were back on breeding territories on the West Pennine Moors by 18 Feb. The Lune WeBS count noted one count during the year, of 296 in March. During the rest of the first winter period, counts included 240 at Meadow Top Farm, Oswaldtwistle on 15 April and a highest count of 600 at Champion Moor on 11 April. A migrant flock of 13 flew high east over Belmont on 12 April. One main feeding site on in-by fields in the central West Pennine Moors was utilised by an almost constant flow of birds: between one and five birds came down to feed from their breeding territories on the blanket bog with a maximum count of 13 on 2 May.

Probable breeding was reported from Boulsworth Hill and Pendle Hill but there were no reports of juveniles. The breeding bird survey of Darwen and Turton Moors noted five territories with the later behaviour of four pairs indicative of having young nearby. A further six breeding territories were identified elsewhere in the western sections of the West Pennine Moors.

The first post-breeding gathering was eleven at Champion Moor 12 Aug, followed with 25 on Pendle Hill on 17 Aug. Inland migrants included five over Belmont on 6 Oct. The only sizable inland counts were from Pendle Hill with 60 on 10 Oct and 25 on 11 Dec.

The first of autumn at the coast were twelve at Glasson on 15 July when two were also at Garston, Liverpool.

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER* *Pluvialis dominica*

Vagrant from North America.

Thorough checking of the plover flocks by one observer was rewarded on 12 Sept when a moulting adult was located at Crossens outer marsh/Marshside (S Darbyshire). Pleasingly, it was present long enough to be much-admired by other local birders and remained until 26 Sept, albeit looking very different at times, depending on the distance observed. The eleventh county record.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Very common but declining, passage and winter visitor to coast. Rare inland.

International importance: 2500. National importance: 330.

WeBS counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS	377	438	506	266	2	0	0	1	56	576	530	568
Ribble	661	581	379	503	79	60	2	68	1641	513	371	150
Alt	210	541	798	840	95	0	1	246	745	360	337	335

At Formby on 20 March flocks of seven and four appeared to migrate, calling a lot then climbing steadily on compass bearing 73 and 90 degrees, at least three hours after high tide. 1000 were feeding there on 30 March, 1300 on 23 April and 580 on 12 May, all of which were higher than the WeBS counts.

The last of spring on the Fylde were six at Cockersand on 22 April and the first of autumn were two at Knott End on 25 Aug. At the Ocean Edge foreshore at Heysham, counts of 210 on 3 Aug, 369 on 6 Sept and 420 on 22 Sept were not captured by the WeBS counts.

In the east where records are scarce, one flew low calling over Crown Point, Burnley on 31 Aug.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

International importance: 730. National importance: 420

WeBS counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS	107	84	134	131	148	2	32	199	311	158	145	131
Ribble	50	29	1	727	1316	95	17	1100	569	71	21	52
Alt	30	0	8	0	0	10	11	603	101	0	10	0

The spring Alt WeBS counts were low, other counts included a peak of 45 at Cabin Hill on 3 April. At Lunt Meadows a total of 22 moved through between 2 May and 26 June, peaking at seven on the latter date. A count of 250 at Cockersand on 22 April was the largest count of the spring in the Fylde.

Numbers at Bretherton Eyes, Chorley peaked at seven on 25 April. In the east, the first returning birds of the year appeared on 12 May with singles at Alston Wetland and Stocks Reservoir.

Very little breeding information was received this year, with no nesting reported from the Liverpool docks, MMWWT, Heysham or the Eric Morecambe complex. One pair was on territory at Southport in April and a pair at Marshside fledged two young. One pair was present at Brockholes in April-August. At Lunt Meadows one pair nested from mid-July, fledging three. In WeBS counts along the Lune valley a peak of 13 were noted in June.

The first birds of autumn in the east included two juveniles at Rishton Reservoir on 20 July. Further passage included four on 3 Aug at Foulridge Reservoirs and two at Belmont Reservoir in September. The biggest counts were an impressive 27 at Foulridge Reservoirs on 21 Aug and 29 at Barnacre Reservoir in low water conditions on 27 Aug.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Fairly common on passage. Scarce breeder.

The first of spring was one at Gressingham in the Lune Valley on 17 March. Other birds arrived at Myerscough Quarry and Brockholes the next day. Singles were at Marshside on 20 March, on a flooded field near Barrowford Reservoir, Colne on 23 March and at Seaforth the same day. Two were at Kew, Southport on 9 April but didn't stay and one was at Marshside on 20 May.

One pair nested on a brownfield site within an industrial park in Aintree, Liverpool. At Lunt Meadows, breeding was suspected; five were there on 1 Aug. At Seaforth, two juveniles were seen on 29 July and fairly regular singles until 20 Aug. Three pairs bred at MMWWT and one pair at the former stronghold of Brockholes with birds present there until 30 Aug.

The highest counts on the Fylde were five at Newton Marsh on 17 May and six at Conder Green on 3 June. No breeding was reported at the Eric Morecambe complex for the third consecutive year. No breeding was noted at Heysham. WeBS counts along the Lune from Skerton Weir to Kirkby

Lonsdale noted ten birds in May, 17 in June and eight in July, many of which were presumably breeding.

The highest site counts in the east, were six on the River Calder on 6 April, three at Alston on 8 April and seven at Clowbridge on 24 April; there were scattered reports of single breeding pairs, including one at Alston Wetland which produced three young.

An adult and two juveniles at Lydiate Lane Quarry, Farington, Leyland on 19 July suggested breeding. The first back at Bretherton Eyes, Chorley was on 31 March and numbers peaked at four there on 26 April. The first returned to Belmont Reservoir on 27 April and two pairs nested, hatching four young and three young. However, at least four of these young died in an avian botulism outbreak in July. At least two pairs held territory at a private site in the east of the West Pennine Moors and one pair bred successfully at (the drained) Sunnyhurst Hey Reservoir.

The highest post-breeding counts included two adults and eight juveniles at Alston Wetland on 2 July, six at Grimsargh Reservoir on 9 July and eight on 23 July at Stocks Reservoir. The last in the east was one at Rishton Reservoir on 29 Aug. On the coast, late birds included one on Hesketh Out Marsh on 8 Sept and two at MMWWT the next day.

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Uncommon, but regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn.

Disappointingly, there were only two spring records of single birds from Pendle Hill on 9 May and 12 May. Unusually, a flock of six were flushed at very close range near Brown Sike, Bowland on 22 Sept, circled and remained in the area.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Common passage migrant, mainly in spring.

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

The first was at Newton-with-Scales and Little Singleton on 13 April and there were regular sightings throughout the county for the rest of the month, culminating in the large count of roosting birds on the 26th (see table).



Whimbrel, Preesall Sands, 6 May (Paul Ellis)

Coordinated evening roost counts:

Site	26 April	4 May	Site	26 April	4 May
Glasson	/	115	Chipping Moss	0	70
Brockholes	65	14	Staynall/Burrow's Marsh/Barna-by's Sands	97	31
Alston Wetland	117	74	Windy Harbour/Shard Bridge	96	22
Grimsargh Wetlands	22	64	Pilling Marsh	40	
Barnacre Reservoirs	423	278	Barns Fold Reservoirs	18	103
Longton Marsh	182	162	Alt Estuary	1	2
Clifton Marsh	109	84	TOTAL	1210	1016
Wenning Foot/The Snab	40	7			

Birds were present at Brockholes between 18 April and at least 4 May, a passage period fairly typical both for the site and the county as a whole. Larger counts away from the monitored roost sites included 77 offshore at Heysham on 4 May and 25 near Syd Brook (Chorley) on 28 April.

Returning birds began to appear in the first week of July but very few autumn records were received. They included the only report from Rossendale all year of three over Grane on 23 Aug, 35 in north Lancashire during July with 24 there in August and four in September and the last on 5 Oct. East Lancashire reported autumn birds from five sites, the largest count 16 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 18 Aug. The last of the year was at Pilling Lane on 6 Oct.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Abundant winter visitor and common but declining 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	968	4423	822	1305	24	229	2812	2609	2517	4285	1388	3894
Ribble WeBS	222	941	280	150	11	25	832	952	493	651	693	595
Alt WeBS	510	1091	258	110	17	95	1074	1187	1257	958	694	1190

Almost all of Lancashire’s wintering birds are found on the coast and are picked up by the WeBS counts, the only inland site reported on this year was at Aintree where numbers peaked on one field at 120 in January, 90 in February and 130 in December with nearby a maximum of 35 on Aintree racecourse.

The WeBS counts showed the typical beginnings of a move away during late February and March from the coast towards upland breeding areas. This was best monitored at Belmont Reservoir where the first arrived on 16 Feb and numbers grew to 125 on 18 March with 50 still there on the 23rd. The first double-figure count in east Lancashire was at Alston Wetland where numbers peaked at 219 on 22 Feb but with 103 there as late as 14 April; other high counts in the east included 74 on Chipping Moss on 20 Feb, 90 at Sawley on the 23rd and 90 at Grimsargh Wetland on 11 March. Counts at Brockholes rose from 100 on 20 Feb to 286 on the 27th.

No records were received this year from Arkholme which normally holds one of our most important pre-breeding gatherings.

Breeding was confirmed on just three sites in east Lancashire, Whitendale, New Laithe Farm and Burholme, and reported as probable at another nine, but this is likely to have been a considerable underestimate of the moorland population there. In contrast, 139 pairs were located on the 1456ha of in-bye land on the 32 farms in Bowland regularly-monitored by RSPB. Six pairs were on Brennand Fell on 23 May and breeding was attempted but failed in fields near Alston Wetlands.

A hundred pairs are estimated to breed within the West Pennine Moors SSSI and several still breed on improved pasture on its periphery, where they invariably fail as a result of June silage cutting; this year this was the case with birds at Abbey Village and Roddlesworth. Seven pairs were displaying on the moors and rough pasture around Belmont Reservoir on 15 April, while the breeding bird survey of Darwen and Turton Moors located 15 territories (one on in-bye, the rest on blanket-bog) with a further two territories immediately adjacent. From 9 June onwards observations suggested that 13 out of these 17 pairs had young as anxious alarming adults were heard on

previously -identified territories. Twelve territories were identified over 3km² of Anglezarke and Withnell Moors and eight territories (with 5 pairs later probably with young) were identified over 1½km² of Belmont Moor.

Reports from Rossendale indicated around three pairs nested in the Stonefold to Mitchells House area but it was thought that fewer than ten pairs were in the Musbury and Grane Valleys. Additional probable or definite reports of breeding pairs came from Beetle Hill (1), Haslingden Moor (1), Stonefold (1), Clough Bottom Reservoir (1), Clowbridge Reservoir (2), Nutshaw Hill (1), Jamestone Quarry (1), Musden Head Moor (2), Swinshaw Moor, Thirteen Stone Hill (3), Alden (1), Moor Bottom Road (2) and Mitchell House Reservoirs (2).

A pair was displaying at Lunt Meadows from 20 March but had departed by 17 April; breeding on the south-west mosses appears to be a thing of the past.

Post-breeding roost counts at Belmont Reservoir peaked at 48 on 21 June with up to 70 feeding on in-bye nearby mid/late June. The first post-breeding groups were noted heading west over Belmont from 24 June with the last single over on 20 Aug.



Curlew, Pilling Lane, 30 September (Paul Slade)

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Very common 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	1887	3809	1333	180	36	25	1	4	22	1032	1298	2591
Ribble WeBS	932	689	386	60	19	0	138	319	440	478	496	3493
Alt WeBS	5579	1371	1562	1345	82	5	380	665	4801	223	1756	1213

Despite the highest winter count since 2013 in February on the Alt, the five-year mean there continued to slide as they did on the Ribble, while there was a small upturn on Morecambe Bay where peak counts have fluctuated for many years.

An estimated 2800 at Cabin Hill in March was missed by the Alt WeBS count as was 2300 at Sunderland Point on 29 Jan and 1464 at Knott End on 14 Nov in Morecambe Bay.

There was barely a sign of summering first-calendar-year birds anywhere this year.

Stocks Reservoir had two on 25 April and again from 1 to 3 May and one on the 12th, while there was one at Alston Wetland on 16 July, two at Foulridge Lower Reservoir on the 17th and one there on the 20th.

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	70	1120	1470	4105	214	94	249	465	143	3201	3309	691
Leighton / EMP	/	225	1750	3865	450	110	305	720	2100	22902	2800	130
Ribble WeBS	2545	403	320	1183	509	802	830	1072	1373	728	602	968
(Alt) Seaforth	86	133	180	310	92	150	750	1200	147	41	20	15
MMWWT	0	32	192	300	0	700	850	130	58	25	10	80
Lunt Meadows	/	/	110	110	/	150	/	34	/	250	86	90

Two large counts at Marshside of 3200 on 5 Jan and 2210 in May were missed from the Ribble WeBS totals. However, these made no discernible difference to the picture of increasing numbers at all the main coastal sites, although the species remains far less numerous on the Mersey Estuary where the peak total in the Liverpool section was 84 at Oglet on 5 April.

Black-tailed Godwits are now being seen at more inland sites and in greater numbers these days. The June and July totals at MMWWT and the October count at Lunt Meadows were all site records by some margin, while elsewhere 40 were at Mere Sands Wood and 35 at Brockholes in July, and 34 at Bretherton Eyes in April. Further east eight were at Belmont Reservoir on 14 July and there records of up to two at three sites, Alston Wetland, Stocks Reservoir and between Altham and Martholme in April and May in east Lancashire, with July-August records at the first two of the above sites plus Lower Foulridge Reservoir.

Two pairs were present early on on Newton Marsh but there was only one nest, from which one young was hatched.

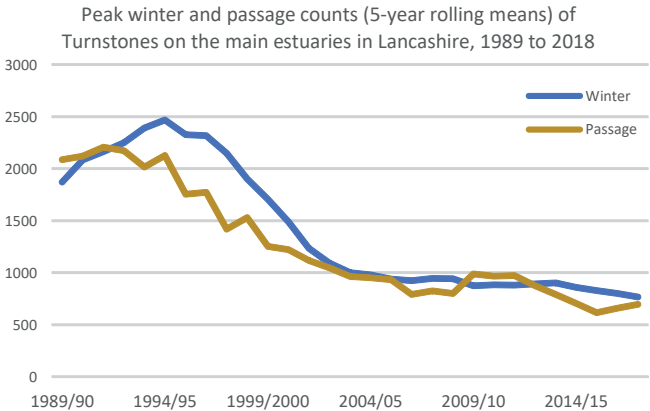
TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

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	358	479	329	165		6		72	296	375	262	405
Ribble WeBS	45	0	35	278	18	6	0	91	197	136	145	73
Alt WeBS	10	20	51	52	2	0	0	0	1	0	11	6



Both wintering and passage Turnstones in Lancashire have declined dramatically by around 75% since 1990 with the sharpest fall occurring at the end of the last century. This has been the case on all three main estuaries but in absolute terms Morecambe Bay, which has always been the key site, has taken the largest hit.

Notable site counts included 195 at Heysham on 28 April with 150 there on 8 Sept, 160 at Fleetwood Marine Lakes on 14 Jan with 200 there on 20 March and 150 on 11 Nov, and 278 at Church Scar, Lytham on 15 April with 196 there on 9 Sept.

Turnstones remain very scarce inland and all records this year came from east Lancashire in spring: one at Alston Wetland on 25 April, two at Stocks Reservoir on 12-13 May with singles there on 20-21 & 28 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	1533	3796	5133	1714	60			5	9	1334	5343	11430
Ribble WeBS	10743	6008	3455	9712	48	121	274	5463	24431	5245	4424	24178
Alt WeBS	7000	300	1830	3212	40	2	970	11112	20516	11155	2800	12450

Lancashire's wintering flocks appear to have taken another nose-dive. On Morecambe Bay the five-year mean WeBS peak count has plummeted to a little under 10000 from more than 60000 at the turn of the century, while those on the Ribble have fallen from 64000 to 14000 during the same period. The Alt roosts, however, appear to be holding their own.

As with Bar-tailed Godwits, with which they are usually associated, there were few summering first-summer birds this year, although 350 were on Hesketh Out Marsh on 15 June.

One at Brockholes on 25 Sept was the only inland record this year.

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
Ribble WeBS	82	12	0	19	0	2	1	2	4	21	0	4
Marshside/Crossens	4	45	17	70	60	3	10	4	20	15	10	12
MMWWT	82	117	148	43	3	30	33	43	60	60	73	70

Numbers throughout the year at both MMWWT and Marshside were similar to last year's. Once again birds were lekking at Marshside from 23 April, where there were nine independent and 15 satellite males with four females, but all disappeared in early May. Thirty summer-plumaged males were at MMWWT on 15 June.

Away from these two main sites there were as usual substantial counts in the Fylde of 13 at Bradshaw Lane Head on 7 Jan, 27 at Skitham on 20 March, 24 on Newton Marsh on 30 March, 25 at Saltcoates on 1 April and 15 at Wesham on 14 April.

Mostly low single figures were recorded elsewhere. Seven at Leighton Moss on 7 Sept was the highest count in north Lancashire, while a remarkable flock of 45 was at Bretherton Eyes in Chorley on 29 March. Lunt Meadows produced none in spring but recorded an autumn peak of eleven on 1 Sept, while Brockholes had an occasional one or two in both spring and autumn.

Further inland two were at Belmont on 29 Oct and in east Lancashire the first at Alston Wetland on 16 March was followed by single(s) on 6-8 May and ones and twos were at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on several dates between 24 Aug and 4 Sept.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Fairly common passage migrant.

Just one was seen during either winter period, on the Eric Morecambe complex on 20-22 Feb.

Two early migrants were at Marshside on 30 April, increasing to eleven on 8 May – the best ever spring passage there – but all but one had gone by the 13th with a final record on the 29th. Elsewhere in May one was at Seaforth on the 6th and two at Cockersand on the 24th and 27th.

Singles were at Marshside and the Eric Morecambe complex on the in-between date of 30 June but the return passage did not get underway until 1 Aug when one was at Ainsdale. A further seven were seen in August and another 36 or so in September, the last on the 27th before one was at Glasson on 31 Oct. The vast majority of these were juveniles and the largest counts were six on Banks Marsh on 12 Sept and five on Hesketh Out Marsh on 8 Sept.

TEMMINCK’S STINT* *Calidris temminckii*

Scarce passage migrant.

There were two records in spring one at MMWWT on 25-26 May (AS Disley) and another at Marshside on 11-12 May (S Darbyshire), and a very unusual autumn record, a juvenile at MMWWT on 31 Aug to 6 Sept (finder unknown).

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Very common passage migrant and winter visitor.

International importance: 1200. National importance: 160.

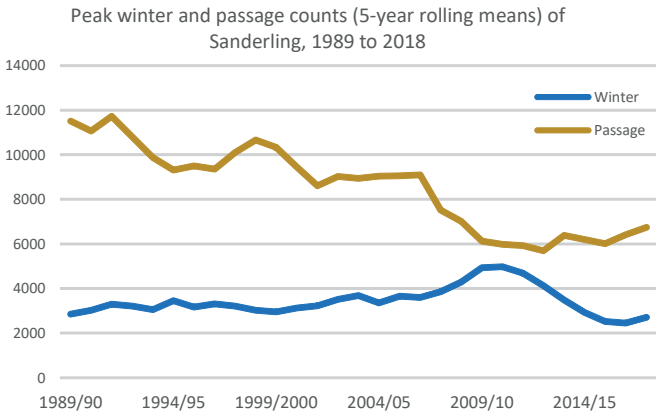
Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	85	74	150	/	250	0	0	165	175	78	20	114
Ribble WeBS	1138	1566	892	2567	1332	84	39	3777	3402	1235	1210	1100
Alt WeBS	1078	1013	1038	1351*	905	0	7	1659	1350	605	540	1253

*A count of 2400 on 28 April at Cabin Hill was missed in the Alt WeBS.

Although Sanderling remain more numerous in Lancashire on spring and autumn passage than during winter there has an almost 50% decline in passage numbers over the past 30 years or so, while winter peak counts are almost unchanged over the long run – but with an increase at the start of this decade. The passage decline has been most marked in Morecambe Bay where the five-year average has fallen by >80% from 4000 to 450 since 1990; the Ribble counts have declined by 30% over the same period, while those on the Alt have remained roughly similar throughout.

Three were seen in east Lancashire, singles at Stocks Reservoir on 18 April and 17 Aug, and Alston Reservoirs on 2 June.



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	2820	6581	4536	1291	491	9	98	995	393	2707	4145	4630
Ribble WeBS	10154	16586	5478	30938	7171	1665	8559	32225	4172	4047	8559	8517
Alt WeBS	330	890	1025	1708	156	7	550	4589	745	466	562	7424

Average winter and passage numbers on the Alt peaked in the early years of this century at >6000 but have since declined by a third. In winter the Ribble has followed a similar trend but the post-2010 passage decline is less marked; April's total was the highest in spring since 2012 and August's the highest in autumn since 2008. On Morecambe Bay both wintering and passage birds peaked in the late 1990s but have since declined by almost 70-80%.

The only breeding information received this year was of probable breeding on the moors above Belmont Reservoir and of one confirmed territory on Boulsworth Hill. No birds were recorded in the breeding season on the upland areas of Bowland. This paints a gloomy picture of a county breeding population that was estimated at 25 pairs in 2008-2011, but the difficulty in surveying and lack of surveys on the moorland plateaux at dawn and dusk in May and June means that the species' status remains essentially unknown.

Small numbers were seen during both passage periods on several inland waterbodies, mainly in autumn; the largest count was 21 at MMWWT on 11 Aug.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Scarce winter visitor.

An adult moulting out of summer plumage on Red Nab with Turnstones on 7 Sept was the only record from Heysham this year.

The south Fylde coast fared rather better with up to six in Blackpool during the first winter period but only one there later in the year. Up to five were also seen on Fleetwood Marine Lakes in the early months and two during the second winter period.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Fairly common passage migrant. Rare winter visitor.

The only wintering birds were on the south Ribble marshes where there up to four regularly at Marshside and Crossens from the start of the year until at least 20 March and probably one of the same on 26 March.

Neither passage period lived up to the promise of the early year. The only spring birds were at Hightown on 21 May and Marshside on the 28-30th, and another at Stocks Reservoir on the 26th was the only east Lancashire record of the year.

The autumn tally was around a dozen with September records from Hesketh Out Marsh, Ainsdale, Banks Marsh and MMWWT; all were singles except for three on Hesketh Out Marsh on the 29-30th where the last was present on 4-6 Oct.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER *Calidris pusilla*

Vagrant.

A juvenile at Skippool Creek on 6-9 & 15-18 Sept (F Bird) became the county's third record after a brief one-day bird at Brockholes on 25 July 2004 and one at Knott End on 12 Nov 2013.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER* *Calidris melanotos*

Vagrant.

Three records was about par for the course.

All were singles and all were in the south-west, beginning with an adult at MMWWT on 21 Aug (AS Disley) and followed by a juvenile at Lunt Meadows on 15 Sept (D Kelly, AJ Conway) and an unaged bird at Marshside on 25 Sept (T Meehan).



Semipalmated Sandpiper & Dunlin
Skeppool Creek, 7 September (Paul Ellis)



Juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper, Lunt Meadows
15 September (Steve Young)

DOWITCHER sp. *Limnodromus*

One on Hesketh Out Marsh on 16 Nov (S Darbyshire) was submitted to the BBRC as Long-billed but they found it not to be proven as Short-billed could not be ruled out and they no longer accept records of dowitcher sp.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Common winter visitor and fairly common breeder.

Reports of breeding birds are never numerous but this year they were particularly patchy. The first were roding at Belmont on 5 April, while a three-quarters grown juvenile was found there on 6 July, badly singed after becoming a victim of the Winter Hill fire; it later recovered and was released.

Roding was also recorded at Stocks Reservoir while at Moor Piece one was seen on 14 May. In north Lancashire up to six roding birds were reported from Warton Crag, Silverdale, Leighton Moss, Gait Barrows, Roeburndale, Docker Moor, Hindburndale, Littledale and Caton Moor. In Chorley birds were seen roding in Heatherlea Woods (Wheelton Plantation) and at White Coppice.

Coverage was more comprehensive during winter, however. Birds were reported from 23 sites in the Fylde with a maximum of three on any one site, and a dozen or more sites in Merseyside with a peak count of at least six at Billinge Hill on 5 March. Birds were seen on 30 sites in east Lancashire in the first winter period and at least six in the second; the largest count there was of eight found with a thermal imager at New Laithe Farm in December, while the seven reports received in north Lancashire were considered a considerable underestimate. Eight sites got a mention in Rossendale but only one, Roby Mill, in West Lancashire. The highest counts from Chorley, were of eight near the E-shaped Pond, Bretherton on 7 Jan with six there on 9 Dec, while on the West Pennine Moors, Pheasant-beaters reported flushing 25 during a shoot at Belmont on 31 Jan and there were multiple reports (totalling 45+) of birds flushed by beaters and flighting out to feed at dusk in the Belmont area between 27 Nov & 28 Dec, including eight on both 12 & 28 Dec.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

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

Despite – or perhaps because of – their elusive nature, Jack Snipes are very well recorded and it seems likely that the majority that get seen get reported.

They were reported from at least 75 sites from all parts of the county during winter. Most records were, as usual, of singles with occasional twos and very occasionally three together, but larger counts were ten at Ocean Edge, Heysham on 1 March, eight at Fairhaven on 3 Feb, and four at Stadt Moers Park, Huyton in February and March, Low Moor on 22 March, FAUNA Nature Reserve on 26 March, White Lund on 2 April and Edge Cote, Rossendale on 16 Dec.

The latest in spring was at Lower Burgh Meadow, Chorley on 8 April and the first of autumn at Ightenhill Bridge in east Lancashire on 30 Sept.

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Common but declining wintering and breeding bird.

Although coverage was not totally comprehensive we did get a good number of breeding reports this year from all likely parts of the county.

In east Lancashire birds were present during the breeding season at Alston Wetland in April to early July and four were drumming on Boulsworth Hill on 25 May, while likely or possibly breeding birds were also at Champion Moor (drumming), Clitheroe Tip, Coldwell Upper Reservoir, Collyholme Wood, Croasdale, Dunsop Fell, Grimsargh Reservoirs, Hall Hill (two drumming birds), Hare Clough, New Laithe Farm, Oswaldtwistle Moor Edge (drumming), Rishton Reservoir, Slaidburn (one bird drumming), Stocks Reservoir, Waddington Fell (chipping call), Whitewell (chipping call), Wood End Sewage Works and Wycoller.

Sixty-nine pairs were located this year on the 39 farms in Bowland monitored by RSPB but no other breeding records were received from north Lancashire.

The area around Belmont Reservoir held eight territories and an additional 26 were located elsewhere in the West Pennine Moors on in-bye or moorland. The breeding survey of Darwen and Turton Moors realised seven drummers with a further four



Snipe chick, Rawtenstall, 17 May (Craig Bell)

territories occupied (chippers). The drummers were all in a core area of approximately 1km² of in-bye with drumming first recorded here on the early date of 22 Feb and up to five were simultaneously in the air drumming (plus 5 on the ground chipping) post-dusk on 26 April. Successfully-hatched eggs were found at one site on 7 May and 2018 was noteworthy as successful breeding was recorded from several sites as adults brought their broods out onto reservoir and other waterbody margins to feed due to the drought conditions. Two broods were seen at Belmont Reservoir (on 11 June & 25 June) and three broods seen on in-bye near Belmont between 27 May and 2 July. Two were displaying on Anglezarke Moor on 15 May.

Rossendale reports were less comprehensive but breeding was probable at in the Grane area, Cheesden Bridge/Wham Hill, Thirteen Stone Hill (4+ displaying), Musbury and Whitworth Quarry (3 heard).

The only breeding report from the lowlands was a possible pair at Marshside where three juveniles were seen.

Good numbers of Snipe wintered on very many wetland sites throughout the county with the highest counts 120 at Lunt Meadows on 5 Feb with 200+ there on 16 Oct after an early first return on 9 June, 170 on Lytham Moss on 1 Jan, 98 at Grove Lane Marsh on 19 Feb, 82 at Heysham on 7 Feb, 75 at Edge Cote, Rossendale on 25 Nov, 67 at Bretherton Eyes on 27 Dec.

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Scarce passage migrant.

There was a small influx to several scattered sites during the third week of September, providing the usual close views and photographic opportunities.

The first was on the Eric Morecambe complex on 20 Sept where it remained the following day. Others followed at Holden Wood Reservoir on the 21st, when one was also seen over the sea at Southport, and Newton Marsh and Crosby Coastal Park the next day, the former remaining until the 27th, the Crosby bird until the 26th after making a brief hop over the fence to Seaforth on the 22nd. The final records was at Clowbridge Reservoir on 25-28 Sept.



Grey Phalarope Crosby Coastal Park,
22 September (Steve Young)

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

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

The recent small but steady increase in wintering numbers was maintained. Singles were at Conder Green and Clowbridge Reservoir from 2017 until 9 April and at least 25 Feb respectively. Other records of singles in the first winter period were at Hutton Marsh on 20 Jan and at Jumbles and Stocks Reservoir during January and February, while two were on Lea Marsh on 20 Jan.



At the other end of the year there were a number of records in east Lancashire in mid-November including eight at Upper Foulridge Reservoir on the 14th, but only one remained well into December, at Parsonage Reservoir. However, in the Fylde one was again at Conder Green until at least 3 Dec and another at Myerscough Quarry until the end of the year.

The first spring arrivals were perhaps at Myerscough Quarry on 1 April and Stocks Reservoir on the 7th but there were few records until the middle of the month. The passage continued into late May with most birds apparently heading directly towards the breeding grounds. Nine at Seaforth on 18 April was the only substantial count anywhere on the coastal plain, where several sites reported a below-average spring. Larger pre-breeding build-ups in the east included six in the Langden Valley on 20 April and at Stocks Reservoir on the 22nd.

Breeding was widespread throughout the eastern and central parts of the county. Proven or probable breeding was reported from 14 sites in east Lancashire and seven or more in Rossendale, but that was presumably a sizeable underestimate; seven pairs were in the Langden Valley. Two pairs bred at Brockholes but the remainder of the middle Ribble was not surveyed. Three or four pairs were at Belmont Reservoir, where five birds were found dead in July after an outbreak of avian botulism. An estimated 6 pairs bred at Delph Reservoir, one or two at Springs Reservoir and one pair fledged 1+ young at Wards Reservoir.

The return passage peaked as usual during July and August but continued into October and early November; the largest counts were 36 on the Lune between Skerton Weir and Kirkby Lonsdale in July, 14 at Conder Green on 4 July and Warton Slag Tips on the 16th, and 15 at Skippool Creek on the 30th.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

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

Wintering Green Sandpipers are now taken more or less for granted and 2018 did not disappoint. It was thought that four were in Chorley during January and February, two each at Croston Twin Lakes and Syd Brook in Eccleston, while in Preston one was at Haslam Park on 9 Jan and at least one at Brockholes until 14 Feb. Fylde birds were one at Sowerby Hall and up to four at Larbreck

to mid-February, and singles were at Salterforth in east Lancashire from 14 Jan until 1 April and Heysham on 21 Jan. Two were seen at Mere Sands Wood during February and possibly one of these at MMWWT on 29 Jan. One at Aldcliffe in early February was also presumably a wintering bird.

Distinguishing the first returning migrants from late winterers is never easy but it seems likely that birds at Aldcliffe, Blackpool, Freckleton Naze, Moss Side and Inskip during March fell into the latter category, while records in April at Croston, Bretherton and Brockholes were more ambiguous.

None was seen on spring passage and autumn began with two at MMWWT on 17 June, and singles at Altham on 21 June, Aldcliffe and Oakenclough on the 25th, Lunt Meadows on the 26th and Freckleton Naze on the 30th. Ones and twos from 2 July when two were at Brockholes with up the three there on 15 further dates that month. Low numbers were also recorded on several sites in the Fylde and north Lancashire, peaking at four at Barrow Scout on the 29th, in east Lancashire two were at Grimshaw Reservoir on the 9th and 23rd and singles at, Grove Lane Marsh on the 23rd at Alston Wetland on the 27th, while one was at MMWWT on the 4th

The pace quickened during August when 50 or so were seen throughout the county, including the first of the year in Rossendale on the Grane reservoirs and the largest count of seven at MMWWT on the 8th; ten were on the Lune between Skerton Weir and Kirkby Lonsdale in August. The movement slackened in September and again in October when some of the dozen or so records may have been birds that went on to overwinter.

November records came from Bretherton on the 12th, MMWWT on the 13th, Alston Wetland and Cuerden Valley Park on the 17th and Brockholes on the 20-25th, while December produced singles at Aldcliffe, Inskip, Todderstaffe Hall, Spade Mill Reservoirs and Brockholes.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

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

International importance: 2800. National importance: 1200.

Monthly Peak Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
MBS WeBS	1431	3922	1873	2037	13	42	1193	2157	3083	2323	2301	2732
Ribble WeBS	563	615	961	806	113	82	222	666	1051	1435	1123	237
Alt WeBS	630	557	614	341	0	11	272	652	595	410	400	411
Mersey WeBS*	97	108	108	1	0	0	1	3	150	100	196	47

* Liverpool sector

There was no sign of any revival on our three estuaries, with further slight declines registered on the Ribble (although 1880 at Lytham Jetty in August was missed on the WeBS survey date) and the Alt.

Few if any winter in the east of the county but there were singles at Alston Wetland on 27 Jan and 17 Feb and in Chorley the first at Bretherton Eyes and Croston Finney. The first was back at Belmont Reservoir on 13 March. More were seen going back to the breeding grounds in March and this movement increased during April and into May.

Although there were four pairs at Alston Wetland, where breeding was successful, there were only two reports of probable breeding elsewhere in east Lancashire away from Bowland, at Altham and New Laithe Farm and of possible breeding at Burholme Bridge and Swinden Reservoir. The population monitored by the RSPB survey of 32 farms in Bowland suffered a further decline to 14 pairs from 21 pairs in 2016 and 20 in 2017, and it was a poor year on the RSPB's Morecambe Bay reserves where just 13 pairs (down from 25 last year) nested (three at the main Leighton Moss reserve) with zero productivity – thought largely due to a combination of a late spring and dry conditions on the marshes. There was also complete breeding failure – also thought due to the drought – by the two or three pairs at Belmont Reservoir and one pair nested at Buckshaw Village in Chorley although the young were predated; three pairs nested at Brockholes.

The picture was a little better in the south-west: 69 pairs at Marshside fledged 18 young, five young were produced on the other side of the Ribble at Newton Marsh and three pairs bred at MMWWT.

Birds had begun to accumulate on the coast during June, the first at Seaforth arrived on the 3rd but there were no double-figure counts there until July. As birds vacated the breeding grounds inland records began to dwindle; last at Belmont Reservoir on 3 Aug, while singles were reported at

Bretherton Eyes on 31 Oct and 9 Dec and there were a handful of late autumn/early winter records in east Lancashire, the last one at Calderfoot on 27 Dec.



Redshank, Knott End, November (Paul Ellis)

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Uncommon but increasing passage migrant.

It was another good year for this species whose Lancashire records have shown a marked increase in recent years; the total of 35 birds set a new record, exceeding last year's 25.

The first was on 23-24 April at Lunt Meadows, where an additional two birds appeared during the month, on the 28th and 29th. Other April records were singles at Alston Wetland, Brockholes and Marshside on the 29th. Thirteen followed in May including three together at Lunt Meadows on the 5th with another there on the 21st-22nd, two at Saltcotes on the 6-7th, with three singles in east Lancashire, two at Marshside and one at Brockholes and Fleetwood. Another at Lunt Meadows on 8-9 June completed the spring passage.

The first autumn bird arrived at MMWWT on 21 July but the main movement occurred in August with singles at Foulridge, Calf Hey and Holden Wood Reservoirs, Leighton Moss, Conder Green, Myerscough Quarry and Newton Marsh, three at MMWWT and two at Brockholes. One at Newton Marsh on the 8 Sept rounded off the year.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Leighton Moss / EMP	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	2	2	2	
Hesketh Out Marsh	/	/	2	/		/	/	1	3	3	3	/

Remarkably the only record at Conder Green this year, where one or more normally overwinter, was one on 27 Oct.

Other Fylde records were at Lytham Hall on 10 Feb, Knott End on 8 March and 5 Sept, Fluke Hall on 18 March, Bank End on 16 Sept, Cockersand on 20 Sept, and Fleetwood Marsh on 1 Jan - 5 Feb and again on 8 July - 31 Dec.

Our other frequent wintering site, Leighton Moss/Eric Morecambe complex, also drew a blank in the early year while one at Heysham on 6 Sept was the only record away from this site, where the last was seen on 30 Nov (see table) in north Lancashire.

One at Parsonage Reservoir on 28 Sept was the only east Lancashire record but the south-west produced a few in addition to those on Hesketh Out Marsh, with two at Marshside on 5 April, single(s) there on 16-20 June, 11-13 & 19/ July, and singles at MMWWT on 17 June and 23 Sept and at Lunt Meadows on 27 Sept. One was heard amongst other waders on Cabin Hill shore on 6 Aug.

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
MBS WeBS	0	2	2	2	0	0	10	6	16	16	7	2
Leighton Moss / EMP	2	2	3	3	2	1	14	17	30	28	11	3
Conder/Glasson	1	2	0	1	0	0	8	16	14	2	3	1
Ribble WeBS	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	13	26	9	0	0

Wintering birds not included in the table were two at the Snab at both ends of the year, singles at Stanah, Pilling Moss, Fleetwood Marsh, Shard Bridge and Arkholme in January, singles at Cockerham Sands and Freckleton Sands in December, and three at Little Singleton in January and up to five at Wardley's Creek during November and December.

Some March records were presumably lingering winterers but one at Heysham on the 18th and a new bird that turned up at the Eric Morecambe complex on the 25th together with one at Freckleton Naze on the 28th perhaps marked the start of the spring passage.

April produced further arrivals, two at Marshside and singles at Bretherton Eyes and Alston Wetland, and in May at Seaforth (two), Belmont Reservoir, and Lunt Meadows, while the last of spring was at MMWWT on 6-8 June.

The first back were at two at Little Singleton on 24 June, Lunt Meadows on the 26th and Conder Green on the 28th. One on 12 July at Barrow Scout was followed by further records that month at Seaforth, Lunt Meadows, Heysham and Jenny Brown's Point. But the main movement came during August when more than 50 were seen with the highest counts at the Eric Morecambe complex and Conder Green (see table) and 16 or more at Wardley's Creek on the Wyre. Similar numbers were recorded during September, including 14 or more on the Wyre, while what were probably the last migrants appeared in October at the two main sites plus Cockersand. Inland, four took up residence at Rishton Reservoir from 4 - 17 September taking advantage of the unusually low water levels.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Fairly common passage migrant and wintering on coasts. Rare inland.

Monthly peak counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Heysham	1	0	223	178	15	23	0	15	9	1	52	0

During January sightings were regular along the coast with peak counts off Blackpool where there were 31 on the 17th; February only saw a bird off Blackpool (12th) and Ainsdale (19th). Spring passage started on 13 March with 48 past Heysham and 105 past Fleetwood. As shown in the table the peak count for Heysham of 223 came on 23 March with 135 off Fleetwood and 112 off Blackpool on the 24th. April saw two notable counts with 178 at Heysham on the 1st followed by 192 off Formby at the month's end on the 26th.

Small numbers were recorded throughout May although significantly 87 passed Formby on the 2nd followed by 58 on the 10th. The summer months were quiet with five sightings during June and one during July.

Inland records started with an exhausted second-year bird at Clitheroe on 22 March, then an impressive flock of 23 that visited Brockholes on 11 April were followed by two adults at Alston Reservoirs, Longridge on 14 Aug, a juvenile at Rishton Reservoir on 27 Aug and one at MMWWT on 28 Oct.

On the seven Morecambe South gas platforms (west off Blackpool) an estimated 220 pairs were nesting in 2016 with evidence suggesting even more pairs in 2018 despite efforts to discourage nesting on some rigs. A photographic survey to determine the true numbers breeding here is planned for 2019.

The autumn passage was slow with single-figure counts from coastal sites including a juvenile flying down the Lune Estuary at Glasson on 19 Aug and 27 off Blackpool on 27 Aug. September only saw single-figure counts before the passage ended with twelve off Formby on 10 Oct.

During the winter period onshore winds produced two notable counts of 251 at Formby on 13 Nov and 52 at Heysham on 30th.

SABINE'S GULL * *Xema sabini*

Uncommon passage migrant.

There was just one accepted record, a juvenile seen flying south past Ainsdale on 21 Sept (S Darbyshire).

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

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

International importance: 20000. National importance: 32000.

WeBS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alt	538	329	384	360	37	255	1254	1002	953	2246	497	538
Ribble	1588	1711	1875	86	1160	420	606	1549	606	883	514	1448
MBS	1036	1142	713	610	1420	2082	6211	2974	2000	1022	918	1065

The year commenced with notable winter gatherings at Lytham (2500), Cocker's Dyke, Pilling (1700), Knott End (1600) and Heysham (1500). Roosts at breeding colonies built from late February though the unseasonably cold weather at Belmont Reservoir during the month's end saw numbers crash before building again with 6000 by 9 March and peaking at 25000 on 3 April; elsewhere 11000 were at Stocks Reservoir on 24 March and 2500 at Marshside on the 31st.

There was no systematic survey of the Belmont Reservoir gull colony in 2018, however it was considered that occupying numbers were marginally higher than the 10484 pairs obtained during an aerial survey in 2017 (A full aerial survey is in planning for 2019). Breeding numbers from some other Lancashire sites included 838 pairs at Marshside and at Leighton Moss a noticeable increase from 230 pairs in 2017 to 820 pairs in 2018 (producing 669 young) located at the Eric Morecambe complex. 120 nests at MMWWT, 47 nests on slacks in Ainsdale Dunes, at least ten nests at Lunt Meadows and one at Barnacre Reservoir. Stocks Reservoir saw a further dramatic decline from 500 pairs to 190 pairs which all abandoned the colony in early May, whilst the Waddington Fell quarry colony did not return.

Notable post-breeding gatherings included 4061 at Morecambe, 2000 at Formby and 1900 at Lunt Meadows between July to September. Winter counts for the county remained low with peak numbers of 5000 at Lower Rivington Reservoir, 3000 at Thurnham, 2000 at Knott End, 1600 at Fishmoor Reservoir, Blackburn, 1600 at Delph Reservoir, 1500 at Pilling and Cocksand.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Fairly common gale-blown winter visitor on coasts and on spring passage

The first winter period started with one off Fleetwood on 3 Jan and 25 were off Blackpool on the 17th, followed by small numbers daily until 22 birds on the 24th; elsewhere single birds were at Heysham on the 19th and 24th. In February eleven were off Crosby on the 1st and one on the 13th.

Spring passage started in late March with sightings daily at coastal sites from the 21st with 23 off Fleetwood (24th), 29 at Blackpool (29th) and 37 Fleetwood (30th). April peak counts were 45 past Rossall Point on the 1st and 44 at Formby on the 14th. At Seaforth there were regularly up to four

between 7-13 April with 15 on the 8th before numbers dropped again to a maximum of four until the 25th; the coastal spring passage concluded in mid-May.

Early autumn records started with the presumed returning moulting adult at Heysham (17 July to 22 Sept) and six at Formby on the 18 July; Seaforth had single adults on the 11th, 23rd and 6 Aug whilst sporadic singles were seen at Blackpool, Crosby and Fleetwood. During September additional records at Heysham comprised an adult on the 11th and an adult and juvenile on the 14th. Winter sightings involved small numbers that included three at Heysham on 8 Dec and three at Blackpool on the 19th and 23rd.

Inland records started with a single bird at Dean Clough Reservoir on 24 March, then two on 6 April from Upper Foulridge Reservoir (two on the 30th), one at MMWWT on the 16th and one at Pine Lake on the 17th. In May a first-summer was at Brockholes on the 1st, an adult at Leighton Moss on the 17th then single first-summers at River Calder, Altham (28th) and Conder Pool (30th). During June a first-summer bird frequented Leighton Moss and finally a second-year bird was seen briefly at Rishton Reservoir on 15 Sept.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

Fairly common especially on passage. Most numerous on the coast but increasing inland. Recently established breeder. National importance: 40

Minimum number of individuals

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Heysham	2	2	3	1	0	2	62	59	34	5	2	2
Seaforth	0	0	0	1	0	4	25	5	5	3	2	1

Wintering birds were scattered throughout the coastal areas with no major gatherings; peak counts were three at Glasson and Skippool Creek. Spring passage started in late February with inland sightings from Alston Reservoirs, Ribchester, Brockholes and Fishmoor Reservoir, Blackburn. During March and April the county is invaded as birds move through wetland sites on their way to breeding grounds with peak day-counts at Marshside (six), Brockholes NR (four), and Hoghton Bottoms (four). Belmont Reservoir saw birds arriving in late February with numbers rapidly increasing to 62 on 3 April and to an estimated 100+ by the month's end.

At Belmont Reservoir no systematic count was undertaken in 2018, albeit incomplete survey work indicated that a minimum of 43 pairs were breeding and likely to be in excess of 50. A full survey is in planning for 2019. Sample counts in July of successful 'family groups' realised 36 juveniles with 24 distinct adults. Elsewhere, four pairs were present in the colony at Marshside of which at least two pairs bred.

Post-breeding gatherings at Heysham built from early June through to September with record numbers as a minimum 79 individuals were present between 31 July and 2 Aug. Peak individual age group counts comprised 46 adults/third-calendar-year birds on 31 July, twelve second-calendar-year birds and 17 juveniles on 2 Aug. Elsewhere, peak counts came from other coastal sites comprising Skippool Creek (13) and Glasson (eleven).

Single wintering birds were recorded from scattered coastal sites, MMWWT, Alston Reservoirs, Longridge, Fishmoor Reservoir and Brockholes, with a peak count of three at Knott End on 7 Dec. The regular wintering Czech Republic veteran bird at Heysham continued to return (since 2003).

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
MBS WeBS	25	113	64	14	20	18	115	80	20	13	12	37
Ribble WeBS	163	279	35	5	0	28	16	233	105	53	13	372
Alt WeBS	420	152	463	15	29	315	353	411	276	437	364	684
Stocks Res	6500	/	5000	4500	5	0	2	170	1100	/	7000	6800

The Stocks Reservoir winter roost remains a prominent feature as the table shows. Counts elsewhere remain under-recorded with the WeBS data providing the most regular information.

The year started with 950 at Thurnham and 560 at Lytham in January before numbers fell away during the summer months. Post-breeding birds started returning from July with 200 at Formby in late August. The second winter period saw peak counts of 1500 at Cockersand and 1000 Cocker's Dyke, Pilling during December.

RING-BILLED GULL* *Larus delawarensis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant from North America.

The only record was an adult that was sighted from the In Focus shop, MMWWT on 10 March (A Bunting) for only five minutes before flying off; it was presumed to have been the same individual as at same location on 19 March 2017.



Ring-billed Gull, Martin Mere, 10 March. (Andy Bunting)

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

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

International importance: 4800. National importance: 760.

WeBS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alt	87	70	62	83	27	107	67	127	92	198	111	141
MBS	54	51	29	45	27	63	27	65	98	62	75	36

A largely coastal species with counts dominated by the WeBS survey results in the table. Elsewhere, the most notable counts through the first winter period were 245 at Altham (1 Jan) where birds feed at Whinney Hill Tip, Accrington and roost at Fishmoor Reservoir, Blackburn. Post-breeding gatherings in late summer saw 75 at Crosby and 58 at Glasson. Wintering counts of interest from late November and December involved 120 at Fishmoor Reservoir, 70 at Hightown and 60 at Knott End.

At Heysham two pairs held territories on a harbour building and two territories on Middleton Business Park. Three pairs bred at Leighton Moss with two young fledged. In Bowland, counts for the national seabird census estimated three pairs at Langden Head and a notable 16-18 pairs on Tarnbrook Fell. No survey counts were carried out at the Ribble Estuary gull colony where low single-figure counts are normally expected.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Uncommon visitor, mostly in winter.

First winter period sightings from coastal sites were sparse with a first-winter at Heysham briefly on 20 Jan followed by regular sightings from 22 Jan to 1 Feb.



Great Black-backed Gull chicks,
Brennand Fell, 24 May (Steve Martin)

Further sightings of first-winter birds involved one flying south past Crosby on 31 Jan and one at Ainsdale on 16 Feb.

Inland records comprised a first-winter bird that regularly roosted at Fishmoor Reservoir between 6 Jan and 16 Feb as well as being sighted at Rishton Reservoir and Altham. An additional adult was present in the Fishmoor Reservoir roost on 22 Jan. Unusually, a first-winter lingered late into the spring period with five records around Altham from 4 April before relocating to Dean Clough Reservoir and Parsonage Reservoir between 7-9 May; additionally a first-winter was at Brockholes between 10-12 April.

An adult roosting at Fishmoor Reservoir between 17-24 Dec was the only record in the second winter period.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Uncommon visitor, mostly winter.

The rare subspecies, Kumlien's Gull *L. g. kimlieni* was encountered for the second consecutive year in the Fishmoor Reservoir roost when a second-winter was present on 15-16 Feb (WC Aspin).

The regular adult bird remained throughout the winter from 2017 at Marton Mere and Blackpool Waste Station until 18 March. At Heysham the regular wintering bird within the harbour appeared on the 29 Jan now being a third-winter and remained until 28 March. A first-winter was off Morecambe on 16 Feb before flying south and an unusually late first-winter was off Heysham on 23 May.

Inland records from the roost at Fishmoor Reservoir were limited to Jan with first-winters on the 1st-5th and 18th, and an adult on the 26th.

In the second winter period an adult was reported flying west at Southport Marine Lake on 23 Dec, a near-adult bird was at Whinney Hill Tip, Accrington on the 24th and a juvenile was at Fishmoor Reservoir on the 28th. There was no evidence of the previously regular returning birds at Marton Mere or Heysham.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

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

International importance: 13000. National importance: 7300.

WeBS counts in January produced 3186 birds on the Ribble and 1153 on the Alt, where there were small post-breeding gatherings of 2724 in August and 4367 in October; an impressive 25701 were on the Ribble in December. Elsewhere, 5000 at Fishmoor Reservoir was the only significant count received though no counts were received from the other main gull roosts in the county. During the spring period 1275 predominantly immature birds were present off Heysham on 16 May.

In Bowland, counts for the national seabird census estimated 100 occupied nests at Langden Head and 150 occupied nests on Tarnbrook Fell. The Ribble Estuary colony was not monitored this year. Around Heysham breeding numbers were up with 36 nests on the buildings around the harbour and 44 at the Middleton Business Park. Two pairs held territories on the island at Stocks Reservoir with one failed breeding attempt confirmed. Urban rooftop-nesters continue to be recorded throughout Liverpool, Southport (40 pairs at Crowland Street), Blackpool, Fleetwood, Knott End, Lancaster, Morecambe and Carnforth. At least one pair bred on one of the Morecambe South gas platforms albeit this was considered a gross underestimate for the whole field of seven platforms.

Post-breeding saw 3000 at Southport on 25 Aug. The second winter period reports included 10000 at Ainsdale/Birkdale on 9 Dec, 3500 at Formby, 1500 at Knott End and Rishton Reservoir.

CASPIAN GULL * *Larus cachinnans*

Rare winter visitor.

There were two accepted records during the year, both first-winters seen in the roost at Fishmoor Reservoir and occasionally at Whinney Hill Tip, Accrington. The first appeared on 17 Dec (WC Aspin) and the second on the 22nd (Mk Breaks) with both remaining into 2019.

A first-winter ringed as a Caspian Gull chick at Braunsbedra, Germany during June 2018 was present at Stocks Reservoir between 9-14 Sept, 24 Nov and 10 Dec but from plumage characteristics the bird was considered most likely to be a hybrid Caspian x Herring Gull.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahelis*

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

Seaforth had a good year with two adults on 3 March, an adult on 8 April, another adult present from late May to early June, an adult on 11 July, a minimum of two juvenile 3 July to 9 Aug then again on 11-12 Aug and finally a first-winter on 19 Sept.

Elsewhere a single adult was at Rishton Reservoir on 1 Jan. Unusually in late summer juvenile and first-winter birds appeared at Brockholes between 3-16 Aug involving three different individuals, followed by a single bird on 21 Sept and 1 Oct. Additionally single first-winter birds were also sighted at Stocks Reservoir on 14 Sept and Lunt Meadows on 16 Oct.

An adult frequented Fluke Hall, Skippool Creek and Cocker's Dyke, Pilling between 10-28 Sept and 16-31 Dec, while Cocker's Dyke saw a first-winter on 17 Dec and a third-winter on the 28th. A third-winter bird in the Lower Rivington gull roost on 29th Dec with two third-winters there on the 31st.



**Juvenile Yellow-legged Gull, Brockholes,
7 August (Bill Aspin)**

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.

WeBS counts produce the highest wintering numbers for the county, including 350 on the Ribble during January; numbers peaked in April with 400 on the Alt and 340 on Morecambe Bay, whilst September produced a peak post-breeding gathering of 358 on the Ribble.

The most noteworthy flocks during spring and summer away from the breeding colonies were 1350 at Stocks Reservoir on 24 Aug (1000 on 29 March), Rishton Reservoir (550), Brockholes (500) and Formby (500).

The regularly-returning adult Lesser Black-backed x Herring Gull hybrids were often seen throughout the year in the area around Pilling, Skippool Creek, MMWWT and Stocks Reservoir.

In Bowland Fells, counts for the national seabird census realised 5573 total nests (4781 nests with eggs) at Langden Head and 9054 nests (6568 with eggs) on Tarnbrook Fell; the Bowland Fells are believed to be the largest breeding colony in the UK for this species. No counts were made on the Ribble Estuary.

Breeding numbers around Heysham were up on last year with nests on non-operational land (20 nests), Middleton Business Park (55 nests), 41 nests on the buildings around the harbour and seven nests at Ocean Edge. Urban rooftop-nesters were recorded throughout Liverpool, Blackpool, Lancaster, Carnforth and Morecambe. In the Belmont Reservoir colony a single pair held territory this year.

SANDWICH TERN *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Very common spring and especially autumn migrant on coasts, rare inland.

Morecambe Bay

There were record numbers at Heysham in spring, apparently due to breeding birds abandoning the colony at Cemlyn Bay in Anglesey and moving to the Cumbrian site at Hodbarrow and passing through Morecambe Bay on the journey. There were 1223 seen between 2 April and 31 May with

peak day-counts of 44 on 11 April, 70 on 6 May, 151 on 12 May, 191 on 14 May and 120 on 24 May. Birds were recorded on three dates in June with the last on 14 June.

In contrast, Heysham's autumn was unremarkable with 90 bird-days recorded between 8 Aug and 23 Sept, peaking at 22 on 21 Aug.

Larger counts elsewhere in the bay included 66 from the Stone Jetty on 6 May, 300 at Knott End on 11 Aug with 128 there on 21 Aug and 160 on 1 Sept and finally two at Knott End on 17 Oct.

Liverpool Bay

Monthly peak counts

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
Alt WeBS	63	63	9	587	1463	110	5
Ribble WeBS	0	0	3	15	957	820	0

The first was on 14 March off Blackpool which also recorded the first substantial movement of the year, 372 on 14 April. A substantial spring passage continued at most coastal sites but was mostly spent by the end of May; other large movements included 255 off Formby Point on 26 April with 763 there on 10 May, and 880 off Blackpool on the 15th. Unusually, two were fishing mid-river off Liverpool Pier Head on 16 May.

It has become normal in the past few years for substantial numbers of post-breeding birds to congregate in Liverpool Bay and 2018 did not disappoint. Most large roosts reported were at Formby Point this year rather than Ainsdale, where numbers probably never topped 1000. Numbers began to build up from early July and by the end of the month at least 500 were roosting at Formby Point, where 2000 were estimated on 6 Aug – confirmed by the Alt and Ribble WeBS counts on the 13th (see table). Good numbers remained into September but declined by the middle of the month.

The last were off Formby Point on 10 Oct.

Inland

There were four records, all of singles: at Stocks Reservoir on 28 April, Brockholes on 23 July and 8 Aug, and Rishton Reservoir on 23 Sept.

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

Fairly common passage migrant on coasts, rare inland.

A strong spring passage began with one off Blackpool on 4 May with four there the next day twos on 8 & 18 May and singles on the 15th and 31st.

One was at Formby Point on 10 May with three there on the 12th the only other spring records on the Sefton Coast. The Heysham passage consisted of two on 12 May and one on the 16th but no others were seen in Morecambe Bay. For the second consecutive year one was at Lower Foulridge Reservoir on 31 May.

Late spring/early summer records of presumed non- or failed-breeding birds involved singles off Blackpool on 21 June and 3 July, at Seaforth on 25 June and a first-summer at Preston Dock on 8 July.

The first definite return passage birds were two off Formby Point on 18 July and Blackpool the following day with a juvenile at Formby Point on the 31st the only other seen that month. There were August singles at Blackpool on the 5th, Formby on the 15th, with two roosting with Sandwich Terns at Ainsdale on the 12th and four off Crosby on the 24th. All subsequent records were singles, at Formby Point on 9 & 11 Sept and 9-10 Oct.

ROSEATE TERN* *Sterna dougallii*

Scarce summer visitor.

The hybrid Common x Roseate Tern was again at Seaforth on 11 and 16 May. This bird has been seen annually in recent years but only for brief periods in spring; it does not breed at Seaforth but probably does so either at Shotton Steelworks in Flintshire or on the newly-established colony in the Birkenhead Docks.

A pure-bred bird was at Preston Dock on 8-9 July (S Ankers) and two at Seaforth on 23 July with probably one of these back there on the 25th (SJ White, AJ Conway).

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Very common spring and autumn migrant. Scarce breeder. Regular cross-Pennine migrant.

Morecambe Bay

Apart from the welcome re-establishment of a small breeding colony on the Conder Pool, where three pairs nested this year, little is changing in Morecambe Bay where this species remains decidedly scarce. The two pairs' first nesting attempts at Conder Green failed but one relaid and raised one juvenile, while the other fledged three young.

Heysham had just three singles in spring between 24 April and 12 May, and autumn ones or twos six dates between 17 Aug and 17 Oct. The only other coastal records were one to three at Cockersand on 13 & 25 May, 26 Aug and 19 Sept, Knott End on 20 Aug and 1 & 21 Sept, and six at Sunderland Point on 7 June, and the only others in north Lancashire were singles at Leighton Moss on 26-27 Aug and Pine Lake on 20 Sept.

Liverpool Bay

Monthly Peak Counts

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
Alt WeBS	32	327	323	464	1735	137	5
Ribble WeBS	0	16	14	2	21	3	0

The first were at Seaforth on 16 April and Blackpool on the 19th.

Seaforth data are included in the Alt WeBS counts. Numbers there grew to 240 by 7 May, 350+ during June and 500 at the end of July before peaking at 950 on 13 Aug. The number of breeding pairs at 171 was similar to the past three years; between them they laid 193 clutches, hatched 207 chicks – at 1.21 per pair, the best ever – and fledged 152 juveniles, a good but not outstanding performance. The last was seen on 23 Sept.

Good numbers were also seen at Formby Point in late summer, including 1085 there on 6 Aug; only 66 juveniles were with this roost, suggesting that they had come from a less successful breeding colony than Seaforth's. Five late birds were at Formby Point on 10 Oct.

It was good to see the colony on the south Ribble Marshes, which for very many years was by far the largest in the county when nesting on Banks Marsh, showing further signs of becoming re-established – this time on Hesketh Out Marsh where six pairs fledged seven juveniles.

There were regular sightings off the south Fylde coast between 19 April and 21 Sept, almost all single-figures counts from Blackpool with a peak count of 32 on 21-23 June, the highest further north were eight off Rossall Point on 12 May.

Inland

At least 89 and possibly 100 or so pairs bred at Preston Dock, where the largest count was 199 on 25 May. Breeding success was poor, mainly because of predation of chicks by a single Lesser Black-backed Gull.

One was at Brockholes on 17 April, only a day later than the first coastal record; breeding took place there for the first time, a single pair raising three young. Three pairs bred at Mere Sands Wood, fledging six young but there was no breeding attempt this year in the Yarrow Valley Park.

Low single figures were also seen at a number of other sites, mostly in spring, including one, also on 17 April, at Lower Foulridge Reservoir and others at Rishton Reservoir, Ogden Reservoir, MMWWT, Carr Mill Dam, Sankey Valley, Croston Twin Lakes, Bretherton Eyes and Belmont and Adlington Reservoirs.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

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

Morecambe Bay

It was an unusual spring at Heysham where adverse winds to the south during the normal passage period suggested the vast majority of passage birds used another route. Just 297 were seen during the traditional migratory period between 17 April and 15 May with a peak of 68 on 13 May. A flock of 15 on 21 May was described at the time as 'belated' when it turned out that it was a precursor of

a significant late passage during easterly winds with 865 heading north-east between 16 May and 30 May with peaks of 205 on 23 May, 134 on 24 May, 301 on 26 May and 72 on 28 May.

Birds were seen on several dates in spring from Morecambe Stone Jetty and one was on the Eric Morecambe complex on 27 May.

Autumn was, as usual, a non-event with singles at Heysham on seven dates between 31 July and 8 Oct, while the last of three records off the Stone Jetty came on 22 Sept; Seventeen flew south-west at Skippool Creek on 3 Aug and a juvenile was at Pilling Marsh on 10 Sept.

Liverpool Bay

The only significant counts on the Sefton Coast were 22 on 2 May and 22 on 15 Aug but spring was a little livelier further north, including 64 off Blackpool on 29 April with 50 there on 2 May and 80 on the 24th, and 50 off Rossall Point on 13 May. Autumn records were very few and far between.

Four pairs nested on Hesketh Out Marsh, fledging just a single juvenile.

Inland

Two pairs nested at Preston Dock, raising two juveniles.

Most other records were in east Lancashire, beginning with four feeding at Alston Reservoirs on 20 April, followed by singles at Foulridge Reservoirs on the 30th and Stocks Reservoir on 3 May. Autumn birds were seen at Stocks on 12 Aug, Rishton Reservoir on the 17th and Foulridge on the 19th, while the last was at Rishton on 5 Oct.

Singles at Brockholes on 19 Aug and 24-26 Sept with three juveniles there on 27 Sept were the only other records.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN* *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Vagrant.

One was at Hesketh Out Marsh on 20 May and a juvenile was at Marton Mere on 19-23 Sept (M Jones).



Juvenile White-winged Black Tern, Marton Mere, 23 September (Paul Ellis)

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Fairly common spring and autumn migrant. Usually more numerous and more coastal in autumn.

The first of a moderate spring passage were at Blackpool on 2 and 7 May and one at Preston Dock on the 9th, but no more were seen until one at Leighton Moss on the 18th; a first-summer was at Seaforth on the 22nd to the 29th, followed by up to three at Heysham, Rishton Reservoir, Brockholes, Leighton Moss, MMWWT and Rossall Point before the end of the month, with larger counts of nine at Stocks Reservoir on the 20th and five at Marshside on the 27th and off Blackpool the next day.

One at Seaforth on 28 June was the only record that month and the only one in July was at Preston Dock on 28th. Autumn passage resumed in the final week of August when two were off Crosby on the 24th and six off Blackpool two days later, with other singles at Brockholes and Marton Mere. The year was seen out with singles at Ainsdale on 2 Sept, off Blackpool on the 13th & 19 Sept with one at Marton Mere on the 19-20th, at Stocks Reservoir on the 13th, Leighton Moss on the 18th and Heysham the following day.

GREAT SKUA (BONXIE) *Stercorarius skua*

Fairly common passage migrant

Morecambe Bay

Off Heysham there was just the one spring record on 26 April which was probably the bird also seen at Jenny Brown's Point. Autumn off Heysham saw perhaps the same 'blogger' on 17 & 19 Aug, followed by singles on 14 & 21 Sept. Two were off Cockersand on 20 Sept and singles off Pilling Lane Ends on 8 Oct and Knott End on 25 Oct

Liverpool Bay

Spring sightings comprised singles off Formby on 26 April, Rossall on 12 and 17 May and off Blackpool on 18 and 23 June.

Autumn singles were off Blackpool on 24 Aug, 14 Sept, 6 Oct and 24 Oct; one flew up the Ribble as seen from Fairhaven on 16 Oct and one was at Marshside on 20 Oct, while further south the only report was from Cabin Hill on 20 Sept.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Uncommon passage migrant

Morecambe Bay

Off Heysham/Stone Jetty all records were northbound light morphs on spring passage: singles on 6, 8, and 26 April and two on 11 May. A pale morph skua was seen by several observers in flight at Leighton Moss on 22 Dec with experienced opinion suggesting a winter adult Pomarine.

Liverpool Bay

There were two or three off Rossall Point and Blackpool on 28 April, after which all reports were from Rossall. All were northbound light morphs: two on 3 May and 13 May and a singleton on 6 May. One was reported from Blackpool on 6 July and an adult was seen off Rossall on 27 Oct.

The only other report was a light morph off Formby on 2 May.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

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

Spring sightings, concentrated in the northern part of our area, were marginally below par but autumn records were way below par with a noticeable lack of any submissions involving blogging individuals or gangs.

Morecambe Bay

At Heysham/Stone Jetty just 25 were seen on northbound spring passage between 23 April and 24 May and a late individual on 18 June. Peak of seven on 10 May – all individual sightings – the only flock recorded was four on 26 April. Two were off Jenny Brown's Point on 26 April. Two were off Knott End on 14 June.

In the autumn, one was off Knott End on 22 Aug. At Heysham/Stone Jetty, three flew into the bay on 9 Sept.

Liverpool Bay

Off Blackpool/Rossall Point, 35-40 were recorded on spring passage on 18 dates between 30 March and 30 May with peaks of five on 10 May and five, possibly up to seven, on 13 May. Off Formby, three were recorded on 19 April and singles on 26 April, 2 May and 23 May.

Autumn passage records this year were of birds seen in transit with no reported evidence of 'blogging' targeting passage terns. Following a singleton off Blackpool on 18 June, the vast majority of autumn Fylde reports were also from Blackpool and comprised just 15 records on twelve dates, all ones and twos, between 4 Aug and 21 Sept.

Inland, two were seen over MMWWT on 21 Sept but the only other reports from further south were from Formby Point with one on 27 July: two on 3 Aug, one on 15 Aug and three on 9 Sept.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Common passage migrant; uncommon winter visitor.

Remarkably there were no reports in the first winter period apart from one at Warton Slag Tips on 5 Jan and a very lethargic bird on Formby Shore which attracted the attention of 15 Carrion Crows on 1 Feb. The next there came on 21 March and passage continued until 10 May with peak counts of 64 on 26 April and 49 on 10 May.

At Heysham the year began on 23 March where ones and twos were seen 14 dates to 7 May with a spike in numbers of up to 15 a day between 15-18 May, while there were regular sightings off Blackpool and other Fylde coast sites between 13 March and 15 May with 43 on 8 May the best count; late birds were seen off Heysham on 14 June and Blackpool on the 26th.

Significantly lower numbers were reported in autumn at a similar range of sites, with 15 the highest tally; passage stretched between 21 Aug and 27 Nov and none was seen in December.

A minimum of 20 birds were present on one of the Morecambe South gas platforms (W off Blackpool) during the breeding season, albeit no proof of nesting was obtained.

This number was considered an underestimate for the whole field of seven platforms. A photographic survey to determine the true status and numbers here is planned for 2019.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Common passage migrant; uncommon winter visitor.

Spring followed a broadly similar pattern to Guillemot with the only first winter period record one found dead at Knott End on 31 Jan until two flew past Blackpool on 25 Feb. Spring passage began in mid-March with 19 on the 13th past Blackpool, where there were regular records throughout April and May and a handful during June; large counts there included 38 on 31 March and 68 on 12 April.

Heysham reported 'not a bad year for here' with spring sightings of up to twelve between 23 March and 17 May. Numbers off Formby Point were just a little higher and extended between 21 March and 20 June with 53 on 26 April the high point.

After what was described as the stand-out record of the year, a juvenile at Heysham on 28 Aug, autumn was particularly quiet – twelve on 8 Oct was the only other record there. Up to twelve were seen irregularly off Formby Point between 9 Sept and 13 Nov and up to nine off Blackpool on 16 dates between 9 July and 30 Nov.

None was seen anywhere during December.

UNIDENTIFIED LARGE AUKS

The larger counts included 151 off Formby Point on 2 May with 67 there on the 10th, 64 off Blackpool on 30 April with 87 there on 8 May, and 15 off Heysham on 26 May.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cephus grylle*

Scarce passage migrant; rare winter visitor.

There were four records this year, one in spring and three in autumn.

One was loosely associated with several Guillemots on the sea off Heysham on 15 May and single(s) were off Blackpool on 14 and 21 Aug, and Formby Point on 20 Sept.

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica*

Rare passage migrant.

One was off Blackpool on 16 March with four there on 14 May and two on the 15th. Heysham had two on 16 May and one on the 26th, while two(s) were off Rossall Point on 14-16 & 26 May. There is likely to have been significant overlap between these records.

Finally, another was off Blackpool on 19 July.

FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*

Abundant breeding resident

Although the LDBWS January survey recorded only 943 Feral Pigeons, a significant decline on the 1473 in 2017, there were some substantial counts in that region in the early year, including 300 at Sandylands, Morecambe on 27 Jan and 100+ at the nearby Stone Jetty on 30 March. Elsewhere on the urban coastline there were 120+ around Southport Marine Lake on 12 Feb and 82 on London Road in Liverpool City Centre on 29 March; further inland 60 were at MMWWT on 8 Jan and there were 62 in Rawtenstall Centre, Rossendale on 11 Feb.

Forty-five reports to ELOC during the year came both from urban centres, with a peak of 200 in Nelson, and quite remote rural sites including Whitendale and Stocks Reservoir. No breeding data were received from any region but 22 widespread double-figure counts during spring and early summer strongly indicate thriving populations: 50 at MMWWT and 30 at Seaforth in April and 40 in Ashton Gardens, St Annes and 35 in Lancaster in May were typical.

As usual, numbers reported were higher in the second half of the year with eleven three-figure counts, the highest 354 along the canal between Litherland and Bootle on 31 Dec; 300 were at Morecambe West End on 31 Aug, 100+ in Central Blackpool on 28 Nov and 110+ on Garston Docks, also on 31 Dec. Counts of 40 in Waterfoot, Rossendale on 6 Oct and in Chorley Town on 17 Nov were the highest in inland regions.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Common breeding resident

Following low counts in 2017 with only a single three-figure report numbers this year showed an emphatic recovery, with five across the seasons and in both coastal and inland regions. Early year peaks included 60 at MMWWT on 13 Jan, 26 at Lunt Meadows on the 24th, 19 at Jackhouse in east Lancashire on 31 March, 35 on Croston Moss, Chorley on 3 April and 100+ at Singleton, Fylde on the 6th. The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 30 Stock Doves, most in inland parts of SD 45 and in SD 66.

Breeding reports were widespread. In coastal regions nesting by one or a few pairs was recorded at MMWWT, Seaforth, Roby Mill and Cabin Hill in the south-west; Stock Doves nested at eight sites in south Liverpool-Knowsley. Pairs bred at Leighton and Silverdale Mosses on the north coast and at Cottam in the Fylde, where 59 monitored pairs north of the Wyre fledged 153 young from 112 nests. Further inland breeding was recorded in the Lune Valley and Roeburndale in the north; ELOC received confirmed breeding reports from New Laithe Farm, Newton, Easington and Briercliffe and it was judged probable at four other sites. Pairs were present at traditional sites in Chorley at Anglezarke, Rivington and Withnell; a pair in Cuerden Valley Park reared two broods. There were two territories on Darwen and Turton Moors on the West Pennine Moors and breeding season presence was recorded in 13 widespread locations in Rossendale. Post-breeding gatherings included 100 on Croston Moss on 13 June, eleven at Conder Green on the 20th, 25 at Jackhouse and 20 at MMWWT, both on the 25th, and 35 again at Jackhouse on 14 July; there were 20+ at Belmont Reservoir on the 26th. Thirteen birds over Crosby Coastal Park on 29 Aug were the only migrants reported in either season.

Significant gatherings in coastal regions later in the year included 120 at Cogie Hill, Fylde on 23 Sept and 100+ at MMWWT on 28 Nov; there were 13 double-figure counts including 40 at Thurnham, Fylde on 20 Nov, 52 near Sefton Park on 20 Dec and 26 on Warton Bank on the 31st. A hundred at Croston Finney, Chorley on 30 Dec was the highest inland count; there were 80 at nearby Bretherton Eyes on 4 Nov and 25 at Barnoldswick in east Lancashire on Christmas Day.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Abundant breeding resident

Two large gatherings were reported in the first winter period, c.1000 at Croston Finney, Chorley on 22 Jan and 2500 at Lunt Meadows on 2 March. Three-figure counts were fairly widespread including 378 at Burglar's Alley, Fleetwood on 6 Jan, 134 at Ribchester on the 14th, 122 on Downholland Moss on 5 Feb and 230 at Eagland Hill on the 12th. The Lancaster January survey recorded 555 Woodpigeons. During March and well into April the number of large flocks increased significantly, many no doubt involving migratory movements like the 500 moving north at Seaforth on 30 March and 250 there on

15 April. Among c.15 other three-figure counts in the period were 400 on Croston Moss on 11 March, 252 over Croxteth Park on the 24th and 260 at Moss Side, Fylde on 9 April.

The Fylde and Rossendale databases showed presence of territorial pairs throughout both regions during the typically-prolonged breeding season; no doubt the species was equally prolific elsewhere in the county. In Liverpool 54 nests in Sefton Park and 49 in Everton Park had overall breeding success of 48% and 58% respectively, quite low productivity; elsewhere on the coast 22-26 pairs nested on EDF property at Heysham, there were 20 pairs at MMWWT and nine on Freshfield Dune Heath. Further inland there were 27 birds in two adjacent BBS squares at Brindle in April and at least ten pairs nested in nearby Cuerden Valley Park; there were 13 territories at Carr Mill Dam, St Helens, whilst on the West Pennine Moors ten pairs nested on the Darwen & Turton Moors and nine in the northern section of the River Goit.

As usual there were numerous reports of post-breeding flocks and movements. In the uplands up to 250 were feeding on bilberries at Belmont on 30 June and there were c.110 at Whalley on 9 Aug; on the coast intermittent movements at Crosby Coastal Park began in early August and peaked at 350 on 23 Aug and 240 on the 28th & 31st; further three-figure counts there in early September preceded a general lull in movements that lasted until the middle of October.

The subsequent autumn passage, though not on the scale of the massive surges recorded earlier in the decade, produced some quite impressive counts. Movements fell into three clear phases, the first in mid-October being more evident in inland regions. There were 459 over Belmont in the first daylight hour, 220 at Eccleston, Chorley and 140+ over Formby Point, all on 10 Oct; on the 15th 1530 passed over Belmont in an hour, 250 flew south over Brockholes Wetland on the 17th, 950 moved south-east at Speke on the 18th and 326 were southbound over Mellor in east Lancashire on the following day.

A heavier and more widespread surge in the last week of October saw a massive movement of 2500+ over Brockholes on the 27th and at least 15 three-figure counts from Heysham to Crosby and far inland, including 677 at Belmont on 25 Oct, 348 over Jackhouse and 265 at Heysham on the 27th and 300 over Crosby next day. A final brief but very intense and widespread passage during 13-18 Nov produced a dozen three-figure reports, including movements totalling c.600 birds in Rossendale on the 13th and 310 over Crosby on the 15th; the climax of this passage on 18 Nov saw seven three-figure flocks, including 510 at Conder Green, 400+ over Marshside and 300+ roosting in Delph Plantations on the West Pennine Moors.

As is often the case with this species the year ended relatively quietly with Woodpigeons ubiquitous as ever but relatively few large flocks or movements reported: 200 at Bretherton Eyes on 8 Dec, 330+ at Oglet on the 25th and 200 at Rufford next day were the largest of six three-figure counts received.

TURTLE DOVE* *Streptopelia turtur*

Rare passage migrant, probably extinct breeder

A first-winter bird found at Pilling Lane, Fylde on 10 Feb remained until 30 April (Paul Ellis).



Turtle Dove, Pilling Lane 30 April (Paul Ellis)

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common breeding resident

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 209 Collared Doves, close to the five-year average of 228. Twenty-seven at Newton on 10 Jan was the highest of three double-figure counts in east Lancashire, 38 at Eagland Hill on the 21st the Fylde peak and 37 at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 22nd the largest gathering in the south-west. Four Collared Doves flying south-east at Cabin Hill, Formby on 28 April was the only report of spring passage received.

Although reports of singing, display and other territorial behaviours were widespread in the Fylde and Rossendale very few confirmed breeding records were received from any region, and nesting did not occur either at Heysham or on Freshfield Dune Heath; there were four pairs in Cuerden Valley Park and two apiece at MMWWT and in a study area at Aintree. In ELOC region breeding was confirmed at New Laithe Farm, Newton and at Brookside and was considered probable or possible at six other sites.

Autumn movements were more conspicuous than normal in 2018. Fifteen migrants were recorded at Crosby Coastal Park during August and 74 at Seaforth from 1 Sept to 21 Oct, peaking at 26 birds on 20 Oct; elsewhere on the coast two passed over Heysham on 25 Sept and three flew south at Cabin Hill on 6 Nov. Of 20 double-figure counts from August to the year's end ten were on the north coast, the highest 44 at Warton on 11 Oct; 98 at Out Rawcliffe on 26 Sept and 129 at Sand Villa, Cockerham on 8 Oct and 22 at Speke on the 27th were the only significant gatherings in the Fylde and south-west, respectively. Further inland there were twelve at Hoghton and Croston Finney, Chorley on dates in November and December, 27 in a Burnley garden on 6 Nov, 18+ in a garden at Belmont on 22 & 30 Oct and 19 in Strongstry, Rossendale on 24 Dec.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Uncommon breeding bird; fairly common passage migrant

An early bird at Fishwick LNR, Preston on 9 April was our first Cuckoo of 2018 – followed a week later by the first in the south-west at Kew, Southport on the 16th. Arrivals in the north began with a bird at Tarnbrook on 19 April; they reached east Lancashire, Chorley and the West Pennine Moors on the following day, at Langden Valley, White Coppice and Belmont respectively. Rossendale, at Grane on the 21st and the Fylde, at Hackensall Hall next day were our last regions to record the species.

Subsequent arrivals and activity showed a dramatic contrast; this was the leanest year for Cuckoos in coastal regions for at least a decade. The Fylde recorded birds at four locations in May and two in June; birds at Leighton Moss-Eric Morecambe Complex were the only records on the north coast and reports from the south-west were virtually confined to MMWWT.

The picture in upland regions was entirely different, up to normal standards or better. The ELOC report described 2018 as their best year for a long time, with 149 records of Cuckoos from 49 different locations in Bowland and the Ribble Valley and 15 reports from moorland fringes in the east of the region. Cuckoos were present at nine inland locations in the north, at Little Dale, Harrisend and Birk Bank as well as in the Lune Valley, and at eleven sites in the West Pennine Moors up to the end of May. In Chorley there were reports from seven locations, the last on 6 June on Anglezarke Moor; there were six May and four June records in Rossendale at a total of seven sites.

As is the norm, however, although breeding was judged possible at eight sites in Bowland it was not confirmed; the situation was similar in all other upland regions, apart from a record of a juvenile being fed by Meadow Pipits at Oakenclough in late June. As in 2017 breeding may have occurred in the reedbeds at MMWWT where one or two Cuckoos were seen regularly from 29 April into June.

The post-breeding story is quickly told: there were birds in Sefton Park on 16 July and at Lunt Meadows on 1 Aug and two records in the Fylde, juveniles at Ridge Farm on 27 July and Cocker's Dyke on 9 Aug; a juvenile remained at Marshside from 5 to 15 Aug. Our last Cuckoo of 2018 was at Ogden Clough, Pendle on 10 Sept.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Uncommon breeding resident

The Fylde website received over 300 Barn Owl reports in 2018 from all parts of the region, many of two birds, with three or four together at Eagland Hill on dates in January and February and six there

on 13 March. There was evidence of breeding at Marton Mere and Carr House Green Common; north of the Wyre eight monitored nests had a very poor outcome, fledging only a single youngster.

Birds were reported from 18 locations in the south-west; breeding was judged probable at Roby Mill but an attempt at Lunt Meadows was unsuccessful. A survey by a local observer of a large area from the M58 north to Walmer Bridge and east to Leyland estimated 37 territories. Sightings in north Lancashire outside the breeding season came mainly from the coastal strip; birds were present at three coastal and five inland locations in the breeding season, but without confirmation of nesting.

Although 138 reports to ELOC far exceeded last year's total of 72, mainly from Bowland and the Ribble Valley, the breeding outcome seems to have been much less successful with smaller brood sizes and some evidence of chick starvation; 16 pairs in Bowland fledged 53 young and seven pairs in the east of the region reared a total of nine. In Rossendale a pair at Spring Mill Reservoir was successful, with three offspring.

There were widespread sight records across the year in Chorley and successful breeding was reported at Hoghton and Coppull; closer to Preston at Farington a pair fledged three young. On the West Pennine Moors two pairs at Belmont fledged five and there were seven further territories in the region with breeding confirmed at three sites; six birds were hunting at Belmont in mid-afternoon on 22 Dec.

SNOWY OWL *Bubo scandiacus*

Vagrant

A female was on moorland at Spitley's Edge in the West Pennine Moors on 25 March (R & S Dawber) and was video-recorded on the observer's phone.

The record has been accepted by the BBRC and becomes the first record for the county.



Snowy Owl, Spitley's Edge, 25 March
(R & S Dawber)

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Common breeding resident

ELOC received 112 records in all months and from all parts of the region; breeding was confirmed in Bowland and the Ribble Valley and at four locations in the east, one of which had fledged two young by the beginning of May. Few reports were received from north Lancashire, from only nine locations, most in the Silverdale-Leighton Moss area; in a study area in the Lune Valley only three young emerged from eight nests. In Rossendale there were calling records throughout the year at ten sites with breeding confirmed at Strongstry, Musbury and Ewood Bridge.

Tawny Owls were recorded across the Chorley region including calling by four birds in Jepson's Clough, Rivington in January and by three pairs at Heskin in December; juveniles were reported from Anglezarke Reservoir and Euxton. Six pairs bred at Belmont where a bird was hunting a large Brambling roost in November; elsewhere in the West Pennine Moors one territory was located in the northern section of the River Goit.

Closer to the coast there were 74 records throughout the Fylde with birds calling in both early and late year; breeding was confirmed at Stanley Park, Blackpool, Warton, Mowbreck Hall and Stake Pool, and in Preston's Haslam Park. Nine pairs monitored in the Pilling-Preesall area laid 25 eggs and fledged 23 young. Breeding was confirmed at eight sites in the south-west, including three locations in south Liverpool-Knowsley; an extensive survey of the south-west mosslands estimated 51 territories.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Fairly common breeding resident

Over 90 reports were received by the Fylde database from all over the region and in all months. Successful breeding was recorded at Freckleton and Medlar with three and four fledged, respectively; twelve monitored nest-box pairs north of the Wyre reared 26 young from the 40 eggs laid. In the south-west pairs bred at Banks, Lunt Village and Ormskirk, whilst a breeding survey of the mosslands reported Little Owls at 33 sites, and with a high level of success.

Further inland the picture seems less rosy. There were reports from six locations in Chorley without any breeding data; a pair bred at Belmont Reservoir but only one other territory was located

on the West Pennine Moors. One hundred and five records were received by ELOC throughout the year although over half were from seven well-watched sites, six in the east of the region and one in the Ribble Valley; breeding was confirmed at three of the eastern sites but not from Bowland or the Ribble Valley. In Rossendale 34 records were received, in all months, and there was confirmed nesting at Clowbridge and Spring Mill Reservoirs. Little Owls were recorded at nine locations in north Lancashire, from the coast at the Keer Estuary and Warton Slag Tips to Lythe Fell in the remote north-east, but there were no records at Heysham this year and none of breeding at any site.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Scarce breeding resident

This was the best year for some time for the most enigmatic of our resident Owls, with widespread breeding records across five regions and a good crop of autumn migrants; on the downside, however, 2018 was the first year for at least two decades that the traditional winter roost at Marton Mere remained untenanted.

In east Lancashire ELOC received nine reports of Long-eared Owls, three from a favoured site on moorland edge in the east of the region; juveniles were recorded at a site in Bowland and one was near Darwen in August. In the north-east a pair on Lythe Fell near the border with North Yorkshire fledged up to six young and four pairs with calling young were reported at sites in north Bowland in summer. A pair at Clough Bottom Reservoir, Rossendale produced at least two offspring, a pair in the central West Pennine Moors reared two young and a juvenile was around Belmont in late July-early August. Finally an extensive breeding survey of the south-west mosslands recorded six territories, four with calling young. Records at Lunt Meadows in February and May strongly suggested breeding in adjacent woodland.

A Long-eared Owl near Bretherton, Chorley on 9 Aug was the first of four autumn migrants reported; the other three were in November, at Cabin Hill on the 5th, Ainsdale NNR on the 18th and Hoghton Bottoms, Chorley next day. An *Asio* seen briefly at Heysham on 18 Oct was thought most likely to be this species; one was seen at Belmont on dates from late October into 2019.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Scarce breeding bird, uncommon winter visitor.

Apart from a bird at Sunderland Point on 3 March coastal records in late winter were restricted to the south-west and the Fylde. Numbers at Lunt Meadows peaked at eight on 15 Jan and 6 March, one bird remaining at the site until 2 May; peak counts elsewhere in Sefton were of four at Marshside-Crossens on 4 Jan and three at Altcar Rifle Ranges on 16 Feb. There were seven records of single birds at five locations in the Fylde during January-March. In the uplands two were on Champion Moor on 25-26 Feb and one on 7 March.

Spring passage was exceptionally light this year. There were no inland records and only five on the coast: in the Fylde singles were at Fleetwood on 24-25 March and at Carr House Green Common on 12-14 April and in the south-west at Speke on 3-5 April and Hesketh Out Marsh on 16 April and 13 May.



Long-eared Owl, Lunt Meadows 12 February
(Phil Boardman)

For the second season in a row breeding activity and productivity were good in 2018. Six pairs bred in Bowland, two of them fledging seven young apiece, and ELOC received eleven reports from the eastern moors with pairs displaying; breeding was considered possible in at least one location. There were three territorial pairs in the west and central West Pennine Moors; one fledged three young on Darwen-Turton and another at least one offspring on Belmont Moor.

Two very early migrants in quick succession, at Aldcliffe on 6 July and Cleveleys North Promenade on the 10th, began yet another brisk autumn passage on the coast. There were eight more records of singles in the Fylde, from 12 Aug to 27 Nov, from seven sites; in the north Heysham recorded two, on 28 Sept and 7 Nov. The first Short-eared Owl in the south-west was at Altcar Rifle Ranges on 31 Aug; subsequent movements there brought at least 17 birds to eight sites by the end of November including twos at Marshside, Hesketh Out Marsh, Lunt and Birkdale. In the uplands an autumn migrant was at Meadow Head, Rossendale on 17 Sept and up to three birds were still in the Belmont area in mid-November, one remaining into December.

At year's end there were singles in the Fylde at Marton Mere on 17 Dec and on Warton Marsh from 2 Dec into 2019; apart from one at Leighton Moss on 24 Dec all the other coastal winter quarters were in the south-west, with peak counts of four at Lunt and three at Hesketh Out Marsh; two were on Downholland Moss on 8 Dec and one at Marshside on the 26th. Apart from the Belmont individual the only upland record in December was of two birds on Champion Moor on the 10th.

NIGHTJAR* *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Rare passage migrant, possibly now rare breeder after previous extinction

There were four records in May, June and July at the same location in east Lancashire where birds have been present in recent summers. Two males were churring on 3 June; the other three records were all of singles, also churring.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant

The first Swift of 2018, over Seaforth on 4 April, was only three days later than our earliest ever, at Skelmersdale in 2004, and was followed after a twelve-day interval by a bird at Mere Brow on the 16th. Arrivals came thick and fast thereafter, in the north on the 17th, Fylde on the 20th and east Lancashire next day. Birds at Ewood Bridge on 23 April and Coppull on the 26th were the first to arrive in Rossendale and Chorley, respectively. Subsequent passage was reasonably conspicuous with seven three-figure movements, all but one on the coast, the exception c.100 at Foulridge Reservoirs on 25 May. Several regions noted the main arrival in numbers between 5 & 13 May although the peak spring count of 450+ was at Marshside on the 16th. Movements seem to have concluded early this year; the last significant counts were of 112 at Rossall and 59 at Heysham, both on 26 May.

Among the very few breeding reports received was one of six nests in the landmark Crag Foot Chimney near Leighton Moss; 43 pairs in all were recorded in the Silverdale area. Nesting was recorded at five sites in east Lancashire, two in Rossendale and one apiece in the West Pennine Moors, Fylde and south-west.

Some substantial feeding flocks, or early departure movements, were reported from mid-June including c.100 each at Brockholes Wetland on 15 June, at Clowbridge Reservoir on the 21st and over Freehold, Lancaster on the 27th; over 20 Swifts were feeding over the big Winter Hill moorland fire on 30 June. One hundred and eighty over Formby Point on 18 July was that month's largest gathering but smaller parties were clearly on the move throughout the county including 60 at Clowbridge on 5 July, 35 at Chapel Hill, Rossendale on the 7th, 45+ at Normoss, Fylde on the 14th and 40 at High Bullough, Chorley on the 17th.

There were modest southward movements in early August, 120 at Marshside on 1 Aug and 100 at Leighton Moss on the 3rd the only three-figure counts; regional peaks included 14 at Jackhouse in east Lancashire on 2 Aug, 15 at Stacksteads, Rossendale next day and 20 at St Annes on the 5th. Passage seems to have dwindled to low single figures everywhere by mid-month and the last reports in Chorley and the West Pennine Moors were on 14 & 30 Aug, respectively.

Stragglers were, as usual, widespread in early September, one unfortunate over Brockholes Wetland being taken by a Hobby on the 3rd. The last Swift in the Fylde was on 1 Sept, in east

Lancashire and Rossendale on the 11th and in the south-west on the 15th; one over Warton on the north coast on 22 Sept closed out the year.

HOOPOE* *Upupa epops*

Vagrant

After a two-year lull there was an excellent spring in 2018 with three birds in a six-day period in April and a fourth in mid-May.

One at Hightown and Formby Point on 19 April (Kate Martin) was quickly followed by two garden visitors in the Fylde, at Ansdell on 21 April (Beverley Wood) and Thornton on the 25th (Tracy Kirkland). Finally a bird was in a garden at Catforth, Fylde on 12 May (per Sophie Bagshaw).

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Uncommon breeding resident

As usual Kingfishers were widespread throughout both coastal and inland regions in both winter periods; birds were at eight locations in the Fylde, eleven in the south-west and five on the north coast in January-February and at eleven, six and seven respectively in November-December. Further inland, birds were present at numerous waterside locations in Rossendale, east Lancashire, Chorley and the West Pennine Moors throughout the year.

A total of 155 reports to ELOC included confirmed breeding at Altham, Lower Hodder, Brownsills, Jumbles Reservoir and Sabden Brook. In Rossendale breeding was confirmed at Ewood Bridge, Bacup, Townsendfold, Waterfoot and Strongstry. In the north seven pairs were located by the Lune Waterways Survey and twelve birds were located along the river by the October Inland WeBS; Kingfishers nested in Yarrow Valley Park in Chorley region.

Nearer the coast in east Fylde breeding was confirmed at St Michaels-on-Wyre, Galgate and Preesall Flashes; two pairs bred in and around Brockholes Wetland. There was more evidence than usual of extensive nesting in the south-west, where a survey of the mosses estimated 15 breeding pairs; fledged young were recorded at MMWWT, Mere Sands Wood, Longton Brickcroft, Aintree and at Carr Mill Dam and Stanley Bank in St Helens.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Common and widespread breeding resident

Territorial drumming was reported across the county from late January or early February and this popular species apparently continues to thrive in all regions. The Lancaster January survey located 36 birds across nine 10km squares; there were three pairs along c.9 km of the River Lune between Leck Beck and Hornby, one fewer than two years ago.

In Chorley birds were drumming at twelve sites in the Rivington-Anglezarke woodlands in early year; territorial presence was reported throughout the region, including four confirmed pairs in Cuerden Valley Park. Nearby in the West Pennine Moors there were two territories in the north section of the River Goit. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were drumming throughout Rossendale from 30 Jan with five nests in the Stubbins-Ewood Bridge area and breeding also confirmed at Bacup and Strongstry; ELOC received 217 records, a 17% increase, from all over the region and in all months, and breeding was proven or judged likely at seven locations.

There were c. 380 reports to the Fylde website with drumming widespread from 23 Jan; breeding was confirmed at Blackpool's Stanley Park, Head Dyke Lane, Savick Park, Todderstaffe Hall and Thornton. In the south-west reports of territorial behaviour or confirmed nesting were received from 22 widespread sites.

Autumn migrants were more in evidence than usual in 2018, the majority between mid-October and the first week in November. On the Sefton Coast there was a total of nine birds at or over Seaforth, Cabin Hill and Marshside; four were recorded at Knott End, Cockerham and Fairhaven Dunes in the Fylde and one at Heysham. In the uplands single migrants passed over Belmont on 6 & 29 Oct.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER* *Dendrocopos minor*

Rare breeder on the verge of extinction

One was photographed in the Burnley area during March, and is presumed to have bred; our last confirmed breeding record was at Fazakerley in north Liverpool in 2008.



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Burnley area, 9 March (Craig Bell)

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Uncommon breeding resident

The relative abundance of Green Woodpeckers in the Warton-Silverdale-Gaitbarrows corner of north Lancashire is well illustrated by reports in all seasons from no fewer than eleven discrete but adjacent localities. Elsewhere in the region, although only two birds were recorded by the January survey, there were reports from Heysham, Ashton Hall, Docker Moor, Whittington and Roeburndale. ELOC received 76 reports, twelve more than in 2017, across all months, with confirmed breeding at Sunnybank, Egg Syke Brook and the Thursden Valley. There were 74 reports to the Rossendale database, also throughout the year, with widespread reports of yaffling in early spring; breeding was proven at Heap Clough, Spring Mill Reservoir and in the Grane area.

Further south territories were occupied in both the east and west of the West Pennine Moors and there were occasional sightings at Belmont but without evidence of breeding. In Chorley there were reports of single birds from four locations, including at Anglezarke Reservoir in January, April and December. Single Green Woodpeckers were present at Brockholes Wetland on four dates in April, August and September. None was recorded in the Fylde this year, and there was only one record in the south-west, of a bird in Ainsdale NNR on 26 Sept.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common breeding resident.,

Although Kestrels are probably rather under-reported it is clear they remain a fairly common sight throughout the county.

The 627 reports from all areas of east Lancashire were more than a quarter up on 2017. Similarly, birds were seen throughout the Chorley recording area, in most areas of Merseyside outside of the city and very widely in north Lancashire and Rossendale.

Breeding, however, was as poorly recorded as usual, although the species was reported as having had very successful year in some parts of Bowland, where one valley held three pairs within one square kilometre, all successfully fledging young. Elsewhere in the east breeding was probable on at least four sites. On Merseyside single pairs nested at Aintree, Lunt Meadows and Cabin Hill with another at Roby Mill, at least half a dozen or so in Chorley and rather more, perhaps more

than ten, in Rossendale, including three pairs in the Grane area and four between Mitchell House Reservoir and Stonefold; no breeding information was received from the Fylde.

Most records were of one or twos but included six at both Waddington Fell and Dunsop Bridge in April and May, with several larger counts post-breeding, including 16 at Newton Fells on 22 June, 15 at Freckleton Naze on 9 Aug, ganging up on a corvid, and 20 or so in the Grane area during September.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Scarce breeding bird, fairly common winter visitor.

Merlins were seen on 20 or more sites during the first winter period and a similar number later in the year. Almost all of these were in the lowlands, on the south-west mosses, the Ribble marshes and northern Fylde. Marshside logged four individuals in the first winter period and three in the second. Given the species' wandering habits during winter it is impossible to estimate the county population accurately but perhaps it is at least 20 and possibly significantly more.

Most wintering birds had probably departed by the end of March and one at Cockersand on 8 April was perhaps a late migrant.

One displaying in the Dunsop Valley on 24 March was the earliest report of breeding activity in the Forest of Bowland, where Merlins went on to enjoy rather mixed fortunes. Nine pairs nested on the United Utilities estate but only five pairs successfully fledged young, compared with all nine pairs in 2017. However, nine breeding pairs has been the highest total on the estate since 1998.

One at Bank End on 5 Sept was the first to return and birds had been seen on another four Fylde sites before the end of the month, but most autumn birds delayed until October when small numbers appeared throughout many parts of the county, many presumably settling into winter.

Typically, away from the breeding grounds all records were of singles apart from two at Warton Marsh and nearby Lytham Quays that were seen fairly regularly in the last days of October and the first week of November and again into mid-December, with a notable three at Lytham Quays on 23 Nov.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Scarce breeding bird and uncommon passage migrant.

The first were at Cockersand on 22 April and Brockholes the following day, followed by one at Lunt Meadows on the 29th. What was presumably the same bird was seen regularly at Brockholes in the first ten days of May when others were at Leighton Moss and Crook o' Lune. However, typically few were seen before the second half of the month by which time Hobbies had reappeared in small numbers in all regions of the county.

Breeding reports were predictably sparse with the only confirmed nest site in Halewood but four territories were identified on the south-west mosses and regular sightings in late spring and early summer strongly suggested there were also breeding pairs in the Ribble Valley fairly close to Brockholes, and in Silverdale and/or the Lune Valley. However, there was also a good number of records away from these areas, in north and east Lancashire, Chorley and the south-west, so it is quite possible that other pairs of this elusive species went undetected.

Sightings dwindled fairly rapidly in the second half of August with just a handful in early September, the latest at any of the regular sites one at Brockholes on the 18th.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Scarce breeder, uncommon winter visitor.

Peregrines continued to be seen in all areas of the county, as ever almost always singly.

Breeding information received was substantial but far from comprehensive. Three pairs attempted to breed in Bowland, two of them successfully fledging seven young between them. At least two pairs probably nested in Rossendale, at least one of them successfully.

Other successful breeding was reported from Merseyside, where at least eight fledged, in Liverpool (on the Tobacco Warehouse, Anglican Cathedral and in the Seaforth Docks) and Kirkby plus a probable pair in St Helens, but no information was received about any in Southport or elsewhere in Liverpool. A pair nested in a newly-erected nest box in the Fleetwood Docks, there were single pairs in Darwen and Preston and probably on Heysham Power Station, and two in Chorley.

Although not a spectacular return this year, it provided confirmation that our urban Peregrines are faring rather better than those on traditional breeding sites.

RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

Scarce feral breeder

Reports from two urban areas are the highlight (if that is the appropriate term) of this year's section: south Liverpool and Chorley Town. Counts in Sefton Park grew dramatically, from 14+ in February to an impressive roost-count of 58 birds on 16 Aug; smaller but still noteworthy reports in high single figures were received from Greenbank and Calderstones Parks, Mersey Road Allotments, Aigburth and Oglet.

In Chorley noisy parties of up to twelve Ring-necked Parakeets were over the Collingwood and Gillibrand areas of the town in July and September and there were 16 at Hartwood on 18 Oct. Elsewhere in the region records included 13 at Lower Burgh Meadow in September and nine over Whittle-le-Woods in August.

Meanwhile the long-standing base on the Fylde coast is at least maintaining itself, with counts of six at Lawson Road Recreation Ground in August and Stanley Park (where breeding was confirmed) in December; five were at Marton Mere in October. There were 15 reports to ELOC, over six months, a pair is apparently resident in Preston's Haslam Park, and there were singles at Marshside in mid-April and Lancaster on dates in July and October. Perhaps the most intriguing record of the year, however, came from Heysham where a bird flew in off the sea on 21 Aug and continued on to the east!

RED-BACKED SHRIKE* *Lanius collurio*

Vagrant

A male present at Cockersand on 27 May (Kate Hughes) was the only record this year of this rare visitor to our region, Lancashire's 23rd in modern times. The most recent records were in 2015 and 2013 (two).

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce winter visitor.

The only report from the first half of the year was of one at Musden Head Moor, Rossendale on 22 April.

Later in the year, singles were noted at Edenfield on 27 Oct, Ainsdale on 3 Nov and Cocklet Hill, Gisburn Forest on the 23rd. Another bird took up residence in the area at the bottom of the causeway at Leighton Moss from 4 Nov and remained there (though elusive at times) through into 2019.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident. Occasional irruptions, some winter dispersal.

The population of Jays remains consistent in the opinion of many local observers. The January survey in the Lancaster area counted 34 (against an average of 38) and the number of records reported through the ELOC database (194) was consistent with previous years.

The maximum counts in the first half of the year never exceeded six birds with counts of five or more coming from Dinkley, Brockholes NR, Elswick, Strongstry, Eccleston, Ormskirk and Hough Green. There were several reports of birds at garden feeding stations with a particular preference for peanuts and fat-balls.

Family groups were reported from July onwards with records from Clitheroe, Oswaldtwistle, Gawthorpe Hall (Padiham), Rivington and Brindle. The species is scarcer towards the coast due to lack of suitable habitat but can be encountered virtually anywhere. There were two territories at Heysham and one at Freshfield Dune Heath. After two successful years, they failed to breed at Hesketh GC. A pair probably bred near Thornton (Fylde).

Birds were much more in evidence in the late summer and autumn as they cache acorns with local populations supplemented by passage birds. The peak counts were of ten at Knowsley Safari



Park on 24 Oct, eight at Lancaster on the 15th and seven at Brockholes. Seven were noted on passage at Crosby on 13 Sept, six at Cabin Hill on the 17th, with Heysham recording four south on the 28th and two on 7 Oct; Marshside had three migrants high south on 20 Oct.

Small numbers were noted in several areas of Liverpool in the second half of the year as well as the mosslands to the east of Kirkby.

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Abundant resident.

The Magpie is a much maligned bird being conspicuous in its activities and successful to boot! That success resulted in an increase in reports from the ELOC area and sixth place in the Chorley Winter Garden Survey though the Lancaster January Survey reported a drop in numbers to 233 against an average of nearly 400 in the previous five years. However, this success has meant that gamekeepers have targeted them for control with an incredible 1011 shot or trapped on the West Pennine Moors in 2018.

In the early part of the year, 192 were roosting in trees around the Liverpool University Precinct near Liverpool city centre during January, 80 were roosting at Cuerden Valley on 16 Feb and 64 were at a roost at Lowerhouse Lodges, Burnley on the 26th. There were many other reports in double figures during the first winter period such as a count of 35 at both Howick Cross and Pex Hill, Knowsley on 20 Jan, 36 at Blea Tarn on the 25th and 25-30 at Bacup, Brockholes, Everton Park in north Liverpool, Little Thornton and Warbreck Hill.

Being such a prominent nesting species there were many reports of breeding birds, including eleven pairs at Heysham and six pairs across Darwen & Turton Moors; Freshfield Dune Heath had three pairs, Lunt Meadows and MMWWT two pairs each. Six nests were found at Carr Mill Dam and at least 20 nests in the Aintree study area. Unusually, one pair had a nest in the base of a very large, active Grey Heron's nest at Delph Plantations though it was not known which nest came first.

There was a passage of 32 noted over Fairhaven Dunes on 7 Oct.

In the second winter period, the large roost at Egerton was estimated to contain 450-510 birds by 20 Dec. Roosts at Rimrose Valley had 107 birds on 2 Nov and 102 on 24 Dec. Over 40 were roosting at Devonshire Rock Gardens, Blackpool on 12 Nov increasing to over 70 by 11 Dec.

CHOUGH* *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Very rare visitor

The bird that took up residence at Heysham Head in December 2017 (Lancashire's 10th record) remained in the area until 26 April. Being such an unusual record, the bird's habits were frequently reported and it was noted that after a period of relatively sedentary behaviour it became more mobile from around 9 March. On 11 March it was noted to thermal up with gulls and enter the air-space of Furness in Cumbria before returning to Heysham. On 20-23 March, it was absent from Heysham but audible migration monitoring from Knott End recorded its call on the 20th (Chris Batty). Thereafter it returned to Heysham but was absent for long periods until it was finally recorded on 26 April.

What was potentially the same bird (given its rarity and history) or possibly another (as it was associated with a large corvid movement) was seen flying south on 18 Oct (Malcolm Downham). This record will be treated as Lancashire's 11th county record.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Common breeding resident, some autumn movement.

Jackdaws were recorded from all 10km squares in the region and three figure counts were received from half of those at some point in the year. The Lancaster January survey echoed this situation with



Jay, Savick Park, Preston, 8 June (Geoff Gradwell)

2907 counted in the nine 10 km squares. In the early part of the year, the largest regular counts came from Stocks Reservoir with 440 in January and up to 1200 in early spring. Reports from Rossendale regularly mentioned up to 600 birds in multiple flocks from Clowbridge Reservoir, Waterfoot, Stacksteads and New Laithe during this period. At least 500 were at Ightenhill Bridge on 21 Feb and 300 at Church on the 26th.

In the lowlands peak counts included 283 at Downholland Cross on 8 Jan, 900 at Winmarleigh Moss on 17 Feb, 200 at Leighton Moss also on the 17th, 300 at Preesall on the 27th and 530 at Barrow Scout on 5 April. By far the largest numbers were at Cabin Hill where 1800 birds were coming into roost on 3 March.

With these numbers, the species is clearly a common breeding bird but relatively few reports were received. At MMWWT the five nesting pairs took over the Barn Owl boxes. At least ten pairs were present in the Lunt village colony and in Rishton Jackdaws are increasing and regularly observed on their quite wide-ranging feeding forays. Increases in numbers were noted in the villages of the West Pennine Moors including eight pairs in Abbey Village mill, although in contrast, numbers in the quarries in the area have declined markedly and in some cases largely deserted. This rise in village-nesting has also been noted in the Carnforth area with further rises at Warton and Millhead.

A large post-breeding flock of a minimum of 450 birds was at Whittington on 9 July and numbers on the Keer Estuary were regularly over 200, reaching a peak of 372 in October when probably supplemented by passage birds.

Determining the difference between passage and local birds is sometimes rather difficult as exemplified by the count of 1000 at roost at Formby Point on 10 Oct, a day when good numbers were passing south. Quite a notable autumn passage was recorded with 847 over Heysham (peaking in October with 196 on the 10th, 175 on the 18th and 153 on the 28th). Observers at Cabin Hill noted 247 south on 10 Oct and 540 on the 18th whilst at Seaforth there were peak counts of 194 on the 7th, 526 on the 10th, 1305 on the 19th and 220 on the 21st. Other large counts were 750 emerging from a roost site at New Laithe, Rossendale on 26 Sept, 700 over Fairhaven on 18 Oct, 400 at Preesall on 2 Oct and 940 at Teal Bay on the 5th. The strong passage on 18 Oct was also noted inland at Brockholes with at least 1000 birds flying west.

In the second winter period, peak roost counts included 500 at Cuerden Valley Park in November, 640 at Formby Point on 5 Nov, 180 at Rimrose Valley on the 1st and 250 at Rivington on 23 Dec. A flock of 1500 was present at Bradshaw Lane, Pilling on 21 Nov and 800 were at Eagland Hill on 31 Dec. Flocks of around 200 were noted at several locations in east Lancashire and Rossendale through to the end of the year.

The Jackdaw's agility was noted on peanut feeders in Rivington and Ainsdale as well as taking advantage of standing Maize heads near Rainford.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Abundant resident.

The Lancaster January survey recorded a below-average 1249 in 2018 with the highest count being 188 between Farleton and Caton. Three-figure counts were noted at Mythop (150 on 18 Jan) and Pilling Lane Ends (220 on 12 Feb). In the east of the county, counts above 25 were reported from nine locations. A couple of spring passage birds were noted at Cabin Hill NNR on 29 March and 15 April.

The total number of nests recorded in rookeries around Chorley was up on the previous two years at 344 though the timing of the survey may have influenced the result with Easter being a week later; increases were most noticeable at Croston and Brindle. The two rookeries around Turton and Edgworth totalled 120 nests – a doubling in size in six years.

Most rookeries were surveyed from late March and throughout April. A selection is shown in the table below. The data from the Fylde where the species is most common seemed to be fairly exhaustive compared to other regions but there were also good counts emanating from Rossendale. The species remains relatively scarce but under-reported in the south-west – two rookeries at Scarisbrick and another at Shirdley Hill were active but not counted. The rookery at Knowsley was the only one noted in the area but with 200 Rooks seen around Lydiate in May, there must be others.

A large post-breeding flock of at least 150 was present at Whittington on 9 July and a few migrants were noted at coastal locations in October – Seaforth had one on the 19th and Heysham had two on

the 15th and eleven on the 28th. A roost at Cuerden Valley Park held over 100 on 19 Oct and over 50 were present at Roby Mill on 24 Nov. Up to 102 were on the Keer Estuary in mid-October and 100 were counted at Eagland Hill on 31 Dec.

Chorley & West Pennine Moors		Fylde	
A49 Euxton	40	Knott End Library	31
Howard Arms, Whittle Springs	14	Clifton	21
Railway Road, Adlington	38	Lytham Hall	130
Prospect House, Wheelton	72	Green Drive, Lytham	26
Lower Wheelton	4	Warton Hall	74
Red Cat, Wheelton	25	St Annes	37
St Chad's Wheelton	3	Lytham Station	5
Croston Bowling Green	71	Wrea Green (2 sites)	36
Croston Town Road	0	Poulton-le-Fylde (7 sites)	98
Croston Westhead Road	8	Singleton (2 sites)	158
Town House Farm, Brindle	40	Little Singleton	16
Buckshaw Village	29	Salwick	14
Turton & Edgworth	120	Sowerby Hall	12
ELOC		St Michael's on Wyre	78
Slaidburn	16	Catforth	14
Stocks Reservoir	20	Garstang	25
Grove Lane Plantation, Padiham	7	Churchtown	173
Brungerley Bridge	13	Catterall Hall	39
Whalley	5	Stake Pool	35
Langcliffe Cross	31	Ellel Grange	61
Nelson	11	Forton	24
Rossendale		Cockerham (2 sites)	17
Crawshawbooth	36	Brock (2 sites)	58
Acre	17	Little Plumpton	38
Farmers Glory	17	Kirham Station	33
Healey	11	Bradkirk Hall, Wesham	60
Peersclough Road	13	Preesall	2
Waterfoot	25	Mythop Grange	93
Broadclough	37	Queensway, St Annes	255
Rook Hill	34	Melling Wood, St Annes	15
Rawtenstall town centre	1	Bartle Hall	55
Merseyside		Top Plantation, Pilling	112
Knowsley Industrial Park	12	LDBWS	
		Bolton-le-Sands	13

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Abundant breeding bird. Some southward movement in October.

This ubiquitous bird was recorded in all areas of the county but the largest concentrations reported were once again at roost sites in the West Pennine Moors though with numbers still at lower levels than a few years ago.

Roost	Jan	Feb	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delph Plantations	250	200	100	300	250
Entwistle					150
Roddlesworth	150	100			200
Upper Rivington	100		150		

There were twenty or so reports of flocks of over 30 birds in the first winter period, including 37 on Ainsdale Beach on 5 Jan, 58 at Ribchester on the 14th, 181 at a pre-roost gathering in Sefton Park, Liverpool on 14 Feb, 74 at Waterfoot on the 20th, 47 at Kellamergh on the 21st, 50 at Altham

on 2 March, 55 at Wilpshire on the 9th, 38 at Glasson Marsh on the 18th and 51 at Herons' Reach, Blackpool on 4 April. The Lancaster January Survey reported an above-average 828.

Breeding was widespread, of course, and numbers generally up. Twenty-seven pairs located along the Lune between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot was 50% up on 2015. Seven territories were recorded on Darwen and Turton Moors, four pairs around Staghills Wood, Rossendale, three pairs at MMWWT and two at Freshfield Dune Heath. Six nests were monitored in the Over Wyre area - 21 eggs were laid from which just five eggs hatched and five young fledged. A post-breeding flock of 69 was at Ribchester at the end of May.

Some passage was noted in both spring and autumn. Heysham recorded five separate flocks of up to 18 birds between 11 March and 1 April and 180 south between 31 Aug and 2 Nov with a peak of 58 on 17 Oct. Seaforth also recorded birds passing in October with 26 on the 7th and 15 on the 8th. Eighty-five were at Glasson on 14 Oct, 40 in Burnley town centre on the 15th and over 55 at Sefton Park, Liverpool on the 3rd.

In the second winter period, peak counts were of 250 at Cuerden Valley Park on 19 Oct, 100 at Stocks Reservoir on 10 Dec and 67 at Waterfoot on the 29th.

Gamekeepers in the West Pennine Moors reported shooting or trapping 296 Carrion Crows in the year including a white bird in April.

HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix*

Scarce winter visitor or early spring passage migrant; has bred with Carrion Crow.

A much-visited bird took up residence on the border with Greater Manchester between Haydock and Ashton-in-Makerfield between 18 Jan and 1 March.

One was observed initially at Rossall School then Rossall Point from where it was tracked over to Heysham and onto Morecambe on 29 April.

There were three reports in the autumn; Fleetwood on 28 Oct, Crosby on the 30th and Jameson Road Landfill, Fleetwood again on 18 Nov.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Uncommon but increasing resident.

Ravens can be encountered anywhere in the county at any time but naturally the most regular and numerous sightings came from upland areas. Birdtrack sightings numbered over 600 from 42 10km squares spread fairly evenly through the year but most coming in April and October. The Lancaster January survey recorded a below-average 17 Ravens and overall the peak counts from across the county were lower than last year.

A pair continued to breed in the Seaforth docks but there were no other confirmed breeding records from lowland areas though a pair was displaying over the quarry at Stadt Moers Park, Huyton in January. Three pairs in the West Pennine Moors raised three, four and six young respectively and two of the five sites in Rossendale hatched six young. In east Lancashire there were nest sites at Bloe Greet and Nelson and in the north of the county, pairs continued to use quarries in the area.

Most sightings were of one or two birds but some notable feeding and roosting congregations were noted: up to 15 were seen on several dates in spring above Crawshawbooth and between the end of May and early July, up to 16 were going to roost in Gisburn Forest, eleven were reported over Crook O' Lune on 22 Sept and 19 were feeding on a sheep carcass near Belmont on 2 Nov.

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

Winter visitor in highly variable numbers.

After a blank second winter period in 2017, there were a few scattered one-day-only records in early 2018. Singles were at Anchorsholme on 21 Jan and Lytham on 2 Feb whilst four were seen in Sefton Park, Liverpool on 18 Feb.

Later in the year, there were far more records – not a huge irruptive year but a fair scattering of sightings. The first birds of the winter were singles near Chorley Hospital and Fleetwood on 29 Oct. Four were at Leighton Moss on 18 Nov and Heysham had one the following day. Seven Waxwings stayed a couple of days in Nelson on 17-18 Dec and there were reports from Accrington, Haslingden and Huncoat around the same time. Four stayed for Christmas Day only at Barrow near Clitheroe

where the trees that are normally replete with berries were somewhat diminished by local thrushes. This was followed by up to three in Chorley town centre from 26 Dec to the end of the year and into 2019. A single bird was also noted at Whittle-le-Woods on 30 Dec.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common breeding bird. Some irruptive movements in autumn.

This common resident was again reported widely from all tetrads in small numbers – 85% of records were of three or fewer birds. The species was the eighth commonest in the Chorley winter garden bird survey and the Lancaster survey recorded just 135. There were a couple of sites that produced more significant counts. Regular ringing at Challan Hall, Silverdale gave a more empirical view of the numbers in one particular area with up to 30 visiting daily in the first winter period and 20 in the second.

The only other places to regularly record double figures were Stocks Reservoir and Moor Piece; occasional ringing activities at feeders near Browsholme Hall would typically catch up to 35 birds in a couple of hours. Ten birds were counted at Knowsley Safari Park in February.

The breeding bird survey of the north section of the Goit, Brinscall found just one territory and a survey of Darwen and Turton Moors had four. Singing birds were recorded at ten sites across the Fylde and ten sites across Rossendale. Breeding pairs were similarly thinly scattered across east Lancashire.

There was a noticeable passage during the autumn, primarily in October with 43 out of a total of 54 ringed in the month at Billinge Hill and 32 from 45 at Heysham. Vis mig activities at Fairhaven recorded 139 between 7 – 29 Oct with a peak of 32 on the 18th. Vis mig over Belmont recorded 39 per hour on the morning of 7 Oct and 37 per hour on the 10th. Cabin Hill recorded 10 passing on the 11th.

MARSH TIT* *Poecile palustris*

Fairly common breeder in the north of the county. Virtually absent south of the Ribble and in the Fylde.

There really is only one place to go to reliably see Marsh Tit in the county and that is Leighton Moss and the surrounding limestone woodland in SD47, where 97% of the Birdtrack records emanate. Travelling up the Lune, there were further records from Claughton and Whittington as well as a couple from Lancaster.

Away from this area, there was one not too far away at Street Bridge on 30 Dec where there had been one previously in 2017, (Stephen Dunstan) and one was reported as multi-observed at Fairhaven Dunes on 18 Oct, though no record was submitted. There were also two unsubstantiated reports from the ELOC area where none have been recorded since 2015.



Marsh Tit, Leighton Moss,
December (Craig Bell)

WILLOW TIT* *Poecile montana*

Scarce breeder in the birch copses of the south-west. Very rare elsewhere.

During January there were a couple of records in the Preston area with one at Vernon's Mill Lodge, Middleforth on the 7th and one at Boilton Wood, Brockholes on the 30th. Slightly further south there was a single bird at Cuerden Valley Park on 20 March where there were four reports of one in autumn, two feeding on sunflower hearts at Kem Mill Allotments on 14 Dec and one on the 24th.

In the Chorley area, two were at Hic Bibi on 27 Feb and birds visited two gardens in Great Knowley at the start of April. There were no summer records here but birds were present at Hic Bibi, Tan House Valley and Euxton in September. A male was singing on 13 March near Belmont, a former regular breeding site, whilst two were reported in the Higher Croft area of Blackburn in April, again, close to former sites.

One or two were regularly observed at Beacon Country Park, Skelmersdale with possibly two territories there. Three pairs bred around Roby Mill with two birds intermittently visiting nearby garden feeders. There were potentially two pairs at Billinge Hill with three ringed adults present in April. Birds were encountered at all times of the year and three young birds were ringed during the autumn. A pair was present near Haydock Park in April, two pairs bred at Eccleston Mere and a pair with newly fledged young were found at Rainford Linear Park in June. A juvenile at Mere Sands Wood on 2 Sept, where one bird had been seen throughout the year, suggested local breeding. A male was also singing at MMWWT.

Other reports, mostly in the autumn, were received from Simonswood Moss, Northwood (Kirkby), Rainford, Aintree, Carr Mill Dam, Sankey Valley and Thatto Heath (St Helens).

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant breeding bird. Marked autumn passage.

As usual it is somewhat difficult to summarise the plethora of records for this abundant species which appeared to have a reasonable breeding season in the fine warm weather of May and June despite the cold snap in late winter. Most high daily counts were from garden feeders and ringing activities such as up to 35 at Challan Hall and 19 at Strongstry in the first winter period, or from surveying an area such as 26 at Brockholes on 26 Jan, 28 at Ribchester on 4 Feb and 17 at Cowpe Village on the 5th. The species retained its place as second most common garden winter visitor in the Chorley area.

Data from five nest box studies in the Lancaster area recorded a population of 62 pairs compared to an average of 54 during 2007-2017. Seventy two pairs in the Warton/Silverdale area averaged 3.9 young per nesting attempt whilst 46 pairs in Roeburndale averaged 3.8 young but 56% of nests were predated by weasels – a common occurrence for several nest-box species in upland woods during 2018. Ringing data suggested productivity was average with 196 ringed at Heysham and Middleton NR while at Leighton Moss, a total of 327 were ringed.

Good numbers were seen at Cuerden Valley Park, no doubt coinciding with the provision of more nest boxes. Breeding surveys of the Goit and Darwen & Turton Moors resulted in twelve and three territories respectively. At Gawthorpe Hall, Padiham, 100 new boxes were erected in the surrounding woodland resulting in an overall occupancy rate of 51% of which at least 18 were of Blue Tits. The average young ringed per box stood at 8.1.

In the Over Wyre area, 113 nests were monitored, in which 988 eggs were laid, 691 hatched and 628 (average 5.6) young fledged. MMWWT recorded ten pairs, two pairs nested at Freshfield Dune Heath and one or two at Lunt Meadows. Thirteen to fifteen territories were located around Aintree.

Autumn passage was unremarkable with the only significant distinct flocks reported being 2 Aug, 20 at Middleton on 2 Sept and twelve at Rishton Reservoir on 5 Oct.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant breeding bird, less common on autumn passage than Blue Tit.

Great Tits fared similarly to Blue Tits with a reasonable breeding season on the whole. In the Lancaster area, five nest box studies revealed a population of 57 pairs (average is 59) but 87 pairs in the Warton/Silverdale area averaged just 2.9 young fledged per nesting attempt with 32% failing. A similar study of 27 pairs in Roeburndale (with a failure rate of 63%) averaged 3.2 young. The post-

breeding ringing totals at Heysham and Leighton Moss (76 and 41 respectively) provided an average showing.

At Cuerden Valley Park two pairs in boxes produced 15 young and at least 23 nest boxes were occupied by Great Tits at Gawthorpe Hall with an average of 6.4 young ringed per box.

MMWWT recorded eight pairs, four were at Freshfield Dune Heath and one at Lunt Meadows. Ten pairs around the Aintree study area was consistent with previous years. A survey of the northern section of the Goit, Brinscall resulted in seven pairs and three pairs were found on Darwen & Turton Moors. In the Over Wyre area, 64 nests were monitored in which 490 eggs were laid and 350 hatched. 297 young fledged (averaging 4.5 per pair).

It was suggested that more than usual passed through Heysham during autumn passage. The largest numbers encountered during the year were 35 in January at Challan Hall and 25 at Brockholes NR in March.

BEARDED TIT *Panurus biarmicus*

Resident at Leighton Moss. Rare elsewhere.

The long-term colour ringing programme of this elusive species continued at Leighton Moss. An estimated 25 pairs bred, one less than 2017. The ringing study identified 22 adult males and 14 adult females and the survival rate from 2017 was good. Twenty-nine young were ringed but others were missed because of access difficulties. Peak daily counts at Leighton Moss were of 18 on 10 Oct and ten on both 9 April and 27 June. A few birds were seen in the new reedbeds at Barrow Scout during the year.

October brought an unprecedented flurry of records from south-west Lancashire. Two were found at Marshside on the 12th (Nick Patel) and remained there until the 18th. These were followed by a flock of up to twelve birds at MMWWT on 28-31 Oct (Marc Gannon, *et al*) with small numbers reported through November and up to 3 December. Similarly, a flock of twelve appeared at Lunt Meadows from 29 Oct (AJ Conway) with, again, variable numbers of birds (such as at least seven on 16 Nov) being seen or heard through into 2019 when twelve were recorded again.

WOODLARK* *Lullula arborea*

Vagrant

One was sound-recorded over Knott End on 20 Oct (Chris Batty). Single Woodlarks have now been recorded in the county in three successive years.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Abundant breeding bird and passage migrant

Some very large gatherings of Skylarks were recorded in the Fylde during the first winter period with peaks of 350 at Peel on 20 Jan and 472 at Eagland Hill on 6 Feb; counts in the south-west were more modest, the highest 150+ at Marshside on 5 Jan and 100 at Holmeswood on the 10th. Forty-three were recorded by the Lancaster & District January survey, all in coastal SD45. Two hundred at Bretherton Eyes, Chorley during February was the highest count in inland regions; the first birds to return to upland areas were at Dean Clough in east Lancashire on 5 Jan and Holden Wood Reservoir in Rossendale on 16 Feb, and the first song was recorded in the latter region and on the West Pennine Moors on the 18th.

Small numbers were recorded on spring passage in coastal regions; there were 80 at Warton Slag Tips and 40 at Heysham on 18 March and 66 moved over Knott End between 18 Feb and 13 June with a peak of 14 on 7 March.

Territorial pairs were reported throughout the coastal west from Morecambe Bay to south Liverpool-Knowsley; there were 147 pairs on Leighton Moss saltmarsh, 33 at MMWWT, 89 at Hesketh Out Marsh and 45 at Marshside-Crossens. At least 15 pairs bred on Birkdale Green Beach but Skylarks did not nest at Lunt Meadows for the first time and for the third year in succession none were recorded on the Upper Lune between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot. Elsewhere in the uplands the picture was more positive: an estimated 80-100 pairs bred on the Darwen & Turton Moors in the West Pennine Moors and territories were recorded throughout Rossendale where c.100 birds on Reaps Moss on 1 July consisted of 50% juveniles.

Small-scale autumn movements inland began with 30 at Belmont on 1 Sept and a little later on the coast with 20 at Cockersand on 16 Sept and 50+ at Glasson on the 24th; there were 20 at Bretherton Eyes on the 30th.

The first substantial surge of a heavier-than-average passage was recorded at both coastal and inland sites during 6-11 October: 30 at New Laithe Farm, Newton on 7 Oct was the highest count in east Lancashire all year, there were 640+ at Pilling Lane Ends, Fylde next day, 160 at Cockerham and 164 at Seaforth on the 10th and 120 at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 11th. A second pulse of migration from 17 Oct brought 860 Skylarks to Marshside on the 19th, 182 to Pilling Lane Ends on the 21st, 150+ to Warton Marsh next day and 100 to Croston Moss on the 26th. A total of 485 migrants was recorded over Knott End to 26 Nov, with a peak of 69 on 18 Oct.

Significant movements continued intermittently until late November. There were 150 at Bretherton Eyes through the month and coastal peaks included 110 at Marshside on 7 Nov and 400+ on the 12th; 125 were on Hesketh Out Marsh and 80 on Pilling Marsh on the 11th and there were 260 at Bradshaw Lane Head on the 26th. The last Skylark of 2018 in east Lancashire was at Jackhouse on 24 Nov; 70 at Croston Finney on 8 Dec was the highest inland count of that month, and 62 on Pilling Marsh on the 24th and a massive 950 at Marshside on the 30th were the late year peaks in the Fylde and south-west, respectively.

SHORE LARK* *Eremophila alpestris*

Rare winter visitor

A bird was present briefly on Fairsnape Fell, Bowland on 17 Oct (Mike Jepson). Almost all our Shore Lark records have been on the coast, often on the tideline; this is the first in the uplands since two birds at Whitworth, Rossendale in January 1995.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Common breeding bird and passage migrant

The first to arrive were single birds at Marshside and Marton Mere on 11 March, followed next day at Carnforth and Brockholes Wetland. Chorley's first Sand Martin was at Cuerden Valley Park on 22 March with the first in east Lancashire at Whalley on the 24th, and c200 were roosting at Leighton Moss by the 28th. Subsequent passage was below average; c. 350 at Alston Reservoirs and 150 at Dean Clough Reservoir were the peak counts in ELOC region, 300 at Leighton Moss on 5 April was the highest count there, no three-figure counts were recorded in the Fylde, and 100+ at Lunt Meadows on 24 April was the largest movement in the south-west. Passage continued on-and-off into the second week of May; 42 moved over Rossall Point and there were 250 at Brockholes on 6 May and the last significant count of the season was of 220 at Leighton Moss on the 8th.

Breeding data were patchy this year. One thousand eight hundred and ninety-one nests were located along the River Lune from Skerton Weir to Kirkby Lonsdale, just over the county boundary, 817 in the 4.6 km between Arkholme and Leck Beck. Two hundred and twenty-four active nest-holes were counted at Lightfoot Green in the Fylde on 12 July; in Chorley there were 70+ birds at Ellerbeck on 29 June with possible breeding at two other sites, and about 60 nests were counted at Farington, south of Preston. Juveniles were recorded at Alston Reservoirs and at Winckley Hall Farm in east Lancashire and there were probable nest-sites at three other locations; the traditional colony sites along the River Calder between Altham and Martholme had been infilled and destroyed as an anti-erosion measure during the previous winter. There were three small colonies in Rossendale, at Townsendsfold, Jamestone Quarry and Ewood Bridge. Birds at Brockholes apparently made use of nest-boxes for the first time and counts of up to 250 Sand Martins there and over the adjacent Ribble on dates in June and early July are at least suggestive of substantial colonies nearby. There was no information from the south-west's only outpost on Hesketh Out Marsh.

Forty Sand Martins at Leighton Moss on 30 June were the first southbound migrants; numbers there had increased to 150 by 8 July. Passage was light for the fourth year in a row, with peak counts of 250 at Whittington on the Lune on 25 July and Leighton Moss on 9 Aug and 200 at Brockholes on the 22nd; movements had dwindled to single and a few double figures by early September with maxima of 50 at Leighton Moss on 5 Sept and at Crook-o-Lune on the 13th. There were seven single-figure records in the Fylde in September to the last at Pilling Lane Ends on the 10th; seven at Crosby Coastal Park on 14 Sept were the last Sand Martins in the south-west, followed by the last at Belmont

on the 16th. A bird at Ightenhill Bridge on 25 Sept ended the passage in east Lancashire, and the county's last migrant was at Leighton Moss next day.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Abundant breeding bird and passage migrant

In the exceptionally cold early spring of 2018 only two March Swallows were recorded, singles at Euxton, Chorley on the 26th and at Marshside on the 31st. There were ones or twos at Leighton Moss in the north, Catforth in the Fylde and Alston Reservoirs in east Lancashire on 3 April, at Greenfold in Rossendale on 5 April and in the West Pennine Moors on the 7th. There appears to have been two modest but widespread surges of arrivals in April, during 8-13th and 25-27th; two hundred at Lunt Meadows on 13 April was the higher of the two three-figure counts on the coast whilst c.180 at Holden Wood Reservoir, Rossendale on the 27th was the highest of four in inland regions.

Passage in May was only a little heavier and, as usual, significant counts were confined to coastal regions. Intermittent pulses were observed throughout the month, with 475 at Heysham on 4 May, 350 at Marshside on the 16th and 276 at Fleetwood Marsh on the 26th the highest of ten three-figure counts. No significant movements were reported in June.

Breeding was confirmed at six locations in ELOC region whilst observers in Rossendale noted low numbers at many regular sites, mostly in stables, although plenty of juveniles were in evidence during the summer; there were 28 Swallows in two adjacent BBS squares at Brindle, Chorley in May. Two territories were located on the Darwen & Turton Moors in the West Pennine Moors and there were twelve pairs at Lower Broomfield Farm, Arkholme in the Lune Valley. In the Fylde 42 nests were monitored in the Pilling-Preesall area north of the Wyre and 149 young fledged from the 181 eggs laid; eleven pairs nested in stables adjacent to Freshfield Dune Heath, the lowest number recorded there, and there were two pairs at Heysham. One pair raised two broods in one of the hides at Seaforth.

Post-breeding roosts and movements began earlier than usual this year, with five three-figure counts in July including c.200 roosting at Middleton IE, Heysham on 12 July and 120 on wires at Euxton on the 16th. Subsequent autumn passage was steady rather than spectacular with only three four-figure counts, 1230 over Crosby Coastal Park on 31 Aug, 2000 in a roost at Bradkirk Hall, Fylde on the following day and 1000+ over Seaforth on 4 Sept. Three hundred Swallows at Euxton on the 13th and 400 at Stocks Reservoir on the 24th were the largest of eight three-figure gatherings in inland regions during August; nearer the coast 250 were at Leighton Moss on 9 Aug and 100 at Cocker's Dyke on the 31st.

As is the norm substantial movements continued through the first three weeks of September with eleven three-figure counts in coastal regions and another ten further inland; maxima included 490 at Crosby on 4 Sept and 500 at Lower Foulridge Reservoir and 300 at Great Knowley, Chorley next day. On 16 Sept there were 400 at Crossens, c.100 in the Grane Valley, Rossendale, and c.88 birds per hour moved over Belmont; the last significant movements of the autumn brought 250 Swallows to Alston Reservoirs on 22 Sept and a hundred apiece to Kirkham, Fylde and Brockholes Wetland on the 24th.

There are usually plenty of late migrants about in early October and 2018 was no exception, most notably 30 at Brockholes on 2 Oct and 14 at Cockerham on the 10th. The last two Swallows in Rossendale were at Lench on 7 Oct whilst three southbound at Marshside on the 10th ended the year in the south-west; the last migrants in east Lancashire and Chorley, respectively were at Jackhouse on 12 Oct and Coppull on the 18th. There were two November stragglers in 2018, singles at Silverdale on 9 Nov and Church Scar, Lytham on the 17th.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Common breeding bird and passage migrant

After our only March arrival, at Brockholes Wetland on the 28th, spring migration was slow to achieve any kind of momentum. 4 April saw the first House Martins in the Fylde and Chorley, at Marton Mere and Cuerden Valley Park, respectively, followed by birds at Lancaster and Dockacres next day and at Ewood Bridge, Rossendale on the 8th; 20 at Mere Sands Wood on 10 April were the first in the south-west, but east Lancashire did not receive its first House Martin until the 24th, at Whalley.

The only significant movements in April were of c.60 at Ewood Bridge on the 22nd and 100 at Lunt Meadows on the 24th; subsequent passage was prolonged, with scattered reports into the last week of June. There were three three-figure counts in May, 150 at Lunt on the 2nd, 100+ at Marshside on the 16th and 128 at Fleetwood Marsh on the 26th, and three double-figure movements on 2-3 June, the largest 50+ at Parrox Hall, Preesall; 35+ at Bone Hill on 20 June and 50+ at MMWWT on the 25th were the last significant reports received.

As usual reports of breeding were widespread but without numbers in most cases. In east Lancashire confirmed or probable nesting was reported from Slaidburn, Whitendale, Dunsop Bridge, Low Moor and Grimsargh Reservoir; there were small colonies in Chorley Town and Adlington whilst in Rossendale breeding was confirmed at Reedsholme, Rawtenstall, Waterfoot, Edenfield and Constablelee. Belmont Village experienced a population crash, however, from 25 pairs in 2017 to a mere eleven this year. Nearer to the coast nesting was confirmed at 13 widespread locations in the Fylde and at Aintree, Birkdale, Aigburth and Croxteth Park in the south-west.

For the second successive year post-breeding and passage movements began early and were at an above-average level in both coastal and inland regions. One hundred and ten over Hoghton Bottoms on 30 July was the first of nine widespread three-figure reports up to the end of August, with peaks of 150+ at Ogden Reservoir, Rossendale on 12 Aug, 200 at Hoghton Bottoms on the 27th and 203 over Crosby Coastal Park on the 31st.

Substantial movements continued right through September; eight three-figure counts in inland regions peaked at 200 at Stocks Reservoir and 500+ over Hoghton Bottoms on 13 Sept and 150 at Alston Reservoirs on the 29th. Three hundred House Martins at Lunt on 3 Sept and at Dolphinholme on the 8th and 600 over Crosby on the 4th were the highest of nine three-figure counts in coastal regions.

The last migrants in east Lancashire were at Dean Clough Reservoir on 29 September; movements elsewhere trickled on into the second week of October. Chorley and Rossendale saw their last House Martins on 4 & 9 Oct, respectively; the year ended with four birds at Seaforth and five at Cockerham on the 10th.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Very common breeding resident.

The most comprehensive information came from Heysham, where there were about six pairs on or near the EDF property, and recapture data suggested that birds are becoming longer lived – probably in part due to increasing use of supplementary feeding. The only clear evidence of irruptive behaviour here comprised 20 north on 29 Oct, yet several previously unringed birds were caught from late September to mid-October.

There were seven territories at Carr Mill Dam and six in the Aintree study area. A breeding survey for United Utilities of the north section of the River Goit realised four territories. At Seaforth, where there had only been one in the first half of the year, eleven on 20 Aug and six on 10 Oct pointed to some dispersal. The findings at Heysham were endorsed in the CDNHS report, which noted the species seems to be thriving in part due to visiting garden bird feeders.

As ever with this species the caveat about flock counts applies, with some people aggregating different groups seen across an area and others not doing so. In Rossendale there were c.120 after the breeding season on a hillside near Clowbridge Reservoir in September, and c.60 in the Twine Valley in October. Sixty were at Brockholes Quarry on 3 Dec. Elsewhere, counts included 40 at Mere Sands Wood in October, 28 at Wayoh in January, 24 at MMWWT in August, 24 at Euxton and 22 at Fairhaven in December.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Scarce but increasing breeding resident.

Cetti's Warblers continued to consolidate in the area, but it remains difficult to quantify this year on year given their skulking habits.

On the Fylde there was only one record away from the Marton Mere, Staining Nook and Fleetwood areas, a singing bird at Preesall Flashes on 4 Nov. The peak estimate of population at Marton Mere was twelve in April but no detailed information was received from the Fleetwood Marsh site.

In the LDBWS area the breeding population at the RSPB sites comprised four at Leighton Moss, two on Carnforth Inner Marsh and two more at Silverdale Moss. Although birds did not appear to be present at Heysham sites in January there were three or four singing subsequently and at least two nests fledged young. Two males remained there to winter whilst an unusual record concerned one singing in scrub near Half Moon Bay on 11 Nov.

Despite a complete absence of records at Marshside, overall there appeared to be an increase in the south-west. One sang at Hoggs Hill Lane sewage works, Formby from 8 April to 12 May, with two on 15 April. One was at Blowick, Southport on 29 April. Two pairs bred at Lunt Meadows and several wintered at the site. Two sang at Aintree, where the only previous records were in 2014. One was at Mere Sands Wood from April to June. A presumed migrant was at Garston Coastal Reserve on 6 March. There were records at MMWWT from early Aug, suggesting likely breeding, with up to three in November and December.

At Brockholes there were one or two in the first winter period to early March, birds returned from mid-August. The species remains rare further east than this and there were no reports at all this year.

DUSKY WARBLER* *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Vagrant.

One was in willows and sea-buckthorn at Ainsdale LNR on 16-18 Nov (A. Spottiswood *et al*). It ranged widely but most would-be observers eventually connected.

The record has been accepted by the County Records Panel. It was the county's fourth record, following birds at Heysham in November 1994, Fairhaven in October 2003 and Marton Mere in January 2015.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Abundant breeding bird and passage migrant.

The first reports were in the last week of March, at Howick Cross on the 24th and Leighton Moss and Ormskirk on the 28th. Arrival was protracted, with first dates at well-watched sites into April including Brookside, Ewood Bridge, Lunt Meadows and Oswaldtwistle on the 4th, Billinge Hill and Marshside on the 5th and Heysham and Stocks Res on the 6th and later at other sites, for example MMWWT and Seaforth on the 11th.

A fall was reported on 8 April along the south-west coast, including 18 at Marshside but no other large totals were noted anywhere on the coast in spring.

Little breeding information was received from the Fylde and counts of 15 at Winmarleigh Moss on 21 April and eleven at Marton Mere on the 19th may have included some migrants. Similarly, the peak counts in the LDBWS area was 15 in the Langden Valley on 22 April, and in Rossendale up to 15 at Clowbridge Reservoir.

There were 45 recorded at Bottoms Beck, Stocks Reservoir during a WBBS survey on 10 May. A survey of Darwen and Turton Moors produced 25 territories and the same number were reported from Birkdale Dunes. Twelve territories at Belmont Reservoir was a further increase, reflecting increasing levels of scrub. There were only five territories at Freshfield Dune Heath compared with 14 in 2017. Seven territories in the Aintree study area was in line with the recent average, and there were four territories on Lunt Meadows and at Carr Mill Dam. Further east the Belmont Reservoirs population increased to twelve pairs. Numbers were lower than in 2017 in east Lancashire, although nesting was still confirmed or probable at 23 sites.

Forty-two were at Leighton Moss on 4 Aug, presumably including local young. Autumn passage was unremarkable at Heysham, and very poor at Billinge Hill. Birds were still being seen in small numbers at widespread sites in the first half of September. Thereafter there were singles at Belmont, Haslam Park and Leighton Moss on the 16th, Heysham on the 21st, Liverpool's Stanley Park on the 21st and Longton Brickcroft on the 23rd. Finally, one ringed at Billinge Hill on 8 Oct was the second latest at this site.

A mixed Willow/Chiff singer was at Billinge Hill from 7 May to 5 June; it had typical Willow Warbler song with a rapid rendition of Chiffchaff song at the end. The bird was thought most likely to be a Willow Warbler but views were not especially close.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common breeder and passage migrant, uncommon in winter.

In January and February there were up to two at MMWWT and Walton-le-Dale WwTW with singles at Ainsdale, Blackpool, Brockholes, Heysham, Marton Mere and Southport (Blowick).

One in song at MMWWT on 11 March and other birds at Alston and Marshside the same day may have been the first migrants, with others at Roby Mill on the 12th and Ewood Bridge WwTW on the 13th. An above-average spring at Marshside culminated on 18 May and peaked at 14 on 5 April. Passage was considered to be slow and protracted at Heysham, and very poor at Billinge Hill. Counts of singing birds in April included ten at Cottam on the 8th and eight at the Ribble Link on the 12th and Marton Mere on 14th. Some observers suggested that mortality among early migrants may have been a factor in numbers being lower than the later arriving Willow Warbler.

There were fourteen territories in the Aintree study area and twelve at Freshfield Dune Heath, both in line with recent averages. Ten territories were recorded in Birkdale Dunes. Six pairs bred on Hesketh GC, unchanged from 2017 and there were three territories at Lunt Meadows.

There were 25 reported at Leighton Moss on 13 Aug. At sites with high levels of monitoring the picture that emerged was of a mediocre autumn – the Billinge Hill observer reported it as even poorer than spring, whilst at Heysham very few birds were seen until something of an arrival in late September and October.

In November and December birds were more widespread than in the first winter period. There were up to two at Brockholes, Cabin Hill, Croston WwTW and Marshside, and singles at Blackpool Rock Gardens, the Eric Morecambe complex, Ewood Bridge, Formby Moss, Freshfield Dune Heath, Greenfield Road LNR, Heysham, Homer Green WwTW, Leighton Moss, Lunt Meadows, Lytham Hall, Marton Mere, MMWWT, Mere Sands Wood, Ormskirk, Pilling Lane Ends, Pine Lake, Preesall Hill and Warton Bank.

SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF* *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

This subspecies typically has a low rate of submitted descriptions to claims, and this continued this year with no details of field sightings received of at least three reported to the information services.

A bird trapped on Billinge Hill on 17 Nov showed characteristics of *tristis* whilst also showing slightly odd features (P Alker). Dropped feathers were sent to the University of Aberdeen for DNA analysis and the conclusion from this was that the bird had maternal DNA of *tristis*.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Scarce and declining breeder and passage migrant.

An early migrant was at Marshside on 15 April but it was then another week before the next at Ainsdale on the 22nd. There were several other coastal or near-coastal migrants including Mere Sands Wood on unspecified April and May dates and during early May at Silverdale on the 2nd, Bispham and Heysham on the 4th and Blackpool Stanley Park on 5th.

The evidence received suggested a further contraction of the small breeding population. The first inland report was from Tower Lodge on 21 April. Birds were singing at Strongstry on 28 April and 5-8 May. There were birds at Moor Piece from 6 to 28 May and at Stocks Reservoir on 20 May. One sang at Wheelton Plantation from 22 May to 3 June, and breeding was thought possible in Roddlesworth Woods where one sang in May and at least two were present in early June. One was singing at Withnell on 11 June.

Records of outward migrants are always few and far between, this year there were two confirmed individuals at Leighton Moss on 21 Aug and 15 Sept.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Scarce but increasing autumn passage migrant.

It was an average autumn in the absence of ideal conditions, nevertheless the numbers seen would have appeared fanciful not that long ago.

The first records were at Seaforth and Sunderland Point on 10 Oct, the former bird lingering to the 14th. On the 11th there were birds at Fleetwood and Hightown, whilst the following day there

were singles at Bispham and Blundellsands and at least one at Rufford. The only new individual on the 13th was at Fleetwood.

The 14th produced the largest arrival of the year, as well as a second at Seaforth, birds were noted at Fluke Hall, Heysham, Jenny Brown's Point, Southport and Sunderland Point. On 15 Oct there were two at Blundellsands and a single at Lytham St Anne's NR. One was in a Banks garden on the 16th.

The 17th was the only blank day during the occurrence period. One was ringed at Heysham on the 18th and there was one at Leighton Moss on the 19th, while the 20th produced birds at Hightown and Hesketh Golf Course, and wrapping up the autumn was one at Warton Crag.

There were no inland records this year.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common breeding bird and passage migrant.

Arrivals began on 8 April at Barrow Scout and Marshside. One at Middleton on the 11th was quite early for the site. Inland, first reports came from Cuerden Valley Park on the 19th and in east Lancashire on the 22nd at Whalley. A major arrival on 4 May saw 13 caught in Constant Effort Survey nets on Heysham NR.

A total of 42 pairs was noted at MMWWT but there was no systematic survey at Leighton Moss this year. There were at least 24 singing males in the Marshside area and overall numbers there were considered to have increased slightly. Fifteen pairs bred at Lunt Meadows. There were eleven territories at Middleton industrial estate. In the Aintree study area there were three pairs on the Alt and one elsewhere, whilst there were five in the Birkdale dunes. Seven were singing at Carr House Green Common on 29 April with 13 there on 27 June. There were probably nesting pairs at Chorley sites. East Lancashire had records from eleven sites but with nesting only confirmed at Grove Lane Marsh. In Rossendale the only records was from Greenfold on 21 July.

Departure was not very protracted. There were none after 29 Aug on the Fylde and the 30th at Lunt Meadows, and the only September reports appear to have been from Leighton Moss on the 7th and finally MMWWT on the 8th.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Fairly common breeder, uncommon passage migrant.

The first migrants were at Marton Mere on 9 April and MMWWT on the 10th. Arrivals at other stronghold/well-monitored sites came later, including the 13th at Leighton Moss, the 20th at Brockholes, the 23rd at Lunt Meadows, the 28th at Marshside and the 29th at Seaforth. One at Dean Clough on 25 April was the earliest ever in east Lancashire, the previous first date was 3 May in 2014.

There was no systematic survey at Leighton Moss but 50 were reported on 4 Aug. Ten pairs bred at Lunt Meadows, up from seven in 2017, nine pairs at Marshside, which was unchanged, while Middleton NR had seven singing males, with two on Heysham NR. Six pairs bred at MMWWT and there were three in the Aintree study area. In east Lancashire there were three pairs at Barnoldswick. One pair bred at Seaforth and was double-brooded.

Casual counts at other sites included 13 singing at Marton Mere on 4 June and eight at Brockholes on 24 May. At least two sites in Chorley probably held breeding birds.

There were a number of September reports, including six at Seaforth on the 1st and one on the 16th. MMWWT had a single on the 3rd and Lunt Meadows one on the 11th. At Leighton Moss there were still three on the 22nd while the last bird of the year was seen there on the 24th.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Fairly common breeding bird and passage migrant.

An early migrant was at Hightown on 9 April, thereafter arrival dates included the 14th at Leighton Moss and Belmont and Fleetwood on the 15th. One singing at Cuerden Valley Park on the 20-28th was the first there since 2005. Seven singing on the Blundellsands - Hightown Dunes on 18 April was a notable count.

There were again suggestions of decline. In the central West Pennine Moors the 16 territories identified compared with 24 in 2017; eight of these were around Belmont Reservoir, while the

breeding bird survey of Darwen and Turton Moors yielded five territories. Three were reeling on a local patch at Roby Mill, down from a recent average of seven. Elsewhere inland, there were four or five singing around Grane and Musbury in Rossendale, with birds at four other sites, whilst in east Lancashire birds were noted from eleven sites and nesting considered likely at Clowbridge and Jackhouse.

There were three or four pairs at Middleton and one at the Heysham tank farm. At Leighton Moss the only birds heard were considered to be migrants. Birds were reported at the favoured Fylde sites but there was no evidence of more than two pairs at any one location. A slight fall was reported at Birkdale Dunes but there were still six reeling there. There single pairs at Cabin Hill, Lunt Meadows, Marshside and MMWWT.

There were perhaps more late season records than usual. One was still reeling at Belmont on 21 Aug. The same month one was unusually caught in a mist net in thick woodland at Crown Point, Rossendale on 24th and finally one was at Heysham on 30th.



Grasshopper Warbler,
Carr House Green Common,
6 May (Paul Slade)

SAVI'S WARBLER* *Locustella luscinioides*

Vagrant.

A male sang at Brockholes from 22 to 25 April (WC Aspin *et al*). Despite the four-day stay it was very difficult to see well. The record has been accepted by the BBRC.

All seven county records have perhaps unsurprisingly been of spring males, with four of the previous ones at Leighton Moss and the others at Marshside and Marton Mere.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Very common breeding bird and passage migrant, fairly common winter visitor.

There were overwintering birds in January and February at widely scattered sites. These included up to three in a Birkdale garden, two at Southport Hillside and singles at five other sites in this area. There were three singles on the Fylde and in both north and east Lancashire, and at least two in Chorley.

In the absence of wintering records there one at Heysham on 29 March was presumably an early migrant. Arrival was pronounced across the county including inland from around 4-5 April. Spring counts included up to 14 at Brockholes and nine at nearby Fishwick Bottoms in Preston, nine at Marton Mere and seven on the Keer Estuary.

Despite record spring migrant numbers at Heysham, only five territories could be found on EDF land and productivity was apparently poor. In contrast there were ten territories in the Aintree Study Area, at the top end of the seven year range. Around 20 territorial males were noted in the Birkdale Dunes area. The 'usual' six pairs nested on Hesketh Golf Course, three at Freshfield Dune Heath, down from eight in 2017, and four at Lunt Meadows.

Although breeding was only confirmed at two east Lancashire sites it was suspected at 25 others, while in Chorley 13 singing males were recorded in two adjacent BBS squares at Brindle in May, eight were singing in Cuerden Valley Park and six were singing during a survey of Lower Burgh Meadows. In Rossendale eleven were noted between Ewood Bridge and Strongstry in late May. On the Fylde there were six singing males at Carr House Green Common in June.

There was some pronounced passage at the end of August; at Billinge Hill 20 were ringed on the 30th, whilst at Heysham 16 were noted on the 31st. Thereafter, numbers at Heysham were low in September, with reasonable numbers in October and two November singles. One at Cabin Hill on 23 Nov was the first winter record there.

There were two December reports in Chorley, with other records at this time from Cottam, Fairhaven, Mere Sands Wood, MMWWT, Leighton Moss, Burnley, Feniscowles, Middleforth Green Park, Litherland, Roby and Ormskirk.



Blackcap, Roby, 11 December (Steve Young)

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Fairly common breeding bird and passage migrant.

An early bird was at White Coppice on 15 April, thereafter first arrivals were at Blackpool's Stanley Park on the 19th, Brockholes on the 20th and further inland at Cuerden Valley Park on the 26th and Lowerhouse Lodges on the 27th.

The main arrival came in early May, particularly on the 4th when there were a couple of migrants in Stanley Park and at least six were noted at Heysham with this considered a conservative total.

Larger counts from potential breeding areas in the first half of May included six at Brockholes on the 1st, five at Bottoms Beck on the 10th, six at Low Moor, five at Clitheroe Tip and four at Crook o' Lune on the 12th and four at Stocks Reservoir on the 12-13th. Breeding was thought probable or possible at ten east Lancashire sites. Young were seen at Cuerden Valley Park in June, there was a territory at Withnell LNR while one at Myerscough College on 6 June was notable as the species is a rare breeder on the Fylde. There was at least one territorial pair in Rossendale.

Autumn passage was generally low key, with no influxes at regular ringing sites including Heysham (13 birds caught) and Billinge Hill (three). The last record in east Lancashire was on 25 Aug

at New Laithe Farm. Three were recorded at Heysham in September, with other records that month from Leighton Moss on the 1st-2nd and Kem Mill on the 3rd. Comfortably the last of the year was one at Staining Nook on 6 Oct.



Garden Warbler, Kincaig Lake, 4 May (Paul Slade)

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Uncommon breeding bird and passage migrant.

There was a broad arrival on the coast on 15 April, with birds noted at Aldcliffe, Fleetwood and on the Keer Estuary. Inland birds came later, the first in Chorley was at Ulmes Walton on the 18th whilst in east Lancashire the first date was the 23rd at Clitheroe, Siddows. Spring counts included up to ten singing at Middleton on 10 April, five at Aldcliffe on the 27th and four at Carleton, Stodday and Warton Marsh (Fylde) on the 21st.

Breeding information was typically rather limited. There were at least five pairs on the EDF land at Heysham. At the RSPB north Lancashire properties there were two pairs on Carnforth inner marsh and two pairs on the outer marsh. Four were singing at Bretherton Moss on 7 June. In east Lancashire there were reports from four sites, down from eleven in 2017 but the same as 2016.

Breeding success appears to have been good on the basis of early autumn ringing at Heysham, with an August record of 39 birds before things went very quiet in the first few days of September. The last inland record was on 30 Aug at Parsonage Reservoir. The last reports anywhere were from Marton Mere on 12 Sept and Aldcliffe on the 22nd.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Very common breeder and passage migrant.

The first migrants were in the Langden Valley on 8 April and Hightown on the 9th, then a gap until birds at Tarbock on the 15th, Arley next, Brockholes and Roby Mill on the 18th and more widely from the 19th. Ad hoc counts in May included fourteen at Brockholes on the 14th, twelve on the canal at Melling on the 24th and ten at Roby Mill on the 17th and Garston Shore on the 19th.

Most of the significant breeding information came from the south-west of the recording area. At least 25 territories were recorded in Birkdale Dunes, 19 pairs at Lunt Meadows, down from 29 in 2017. Eight territories in the Aintree study area was much nearer the recent average there but at Cabin Hill numbers were also reported to be lower. Six pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath was unchanged on 2017, though down on past numbers. The Marshside nesting population included 26 on the outer edge and Hesketh Golf Course (up three on 2017), five on the inner edge of Marshside 2 and three on Crossens inner. There were nine pairs along one kilometre between Hesketh Out Marsh and Hundred End. MMWWT held five pairs.

In Chorley there were twelve singing males on a section of Mawdesley Moss in May. Six were singing on the Fylde at both Carr House Green Common and Marton Mere. Breeding was confirmed at six east Lancashire sites and suspected at three others. Up to six territories were noted around Ewood Bridge in Rossendale, and a total of c20 pairs in Chorley. Three pairs in the Belmont area reflected consolidation here.

There were no migrants on the Fylde after 30 Aug or at Heysham after the first week of September. Other September reports came from Gorse Hill NR on the 1st, Calf Clough on the 5th and at Seaforth on the 4th and 8th. Along with the latter bird the latest of the year was at Aldcliffe on 8 Sept.

SUBALPINE WARBLER / MOLTONI'S WARBLER* *Sylvia cantillans/subalpina*

Vagrant.

A female was seen well for a short time at Middleton NR on 1 June (D. Haywood). The nature of the observation did not allow for sound recordings or a DNA sample to be taken, and the record has been accepted as a Subalpine/Moltoni's Warbler. Currently Moltoni's is recognised as a separate species whilst Eastern and Western Subalpine are subspecies of Subalpine Warbler.

There have been four previous records of Subalpine Warbler sp. in the county, all relating to spring males, none of which have been identified to species or subspecies level.

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

Uncommon passage migrant, scarce in winter.

A bird that was present at Walton-le-Dale WWTW in 2017 remained into 2018 with reports up to 10 Jan. Another long-stayer was a rather elusive male at Freeman's Wood, Aldcliffe from 2 Jan - 14 March. January also brought singles to Leighton Moss on the 7th and a Fulwood garden on the 9th. Single birds were subsequently reported at Jenny Brown's Point on 4 March and Scarisbrick Hall Estate on the 13th.

A singing male was found in the alder woodland at Heysham NR on 15 April. This was followed by another singing male at Mount Park, Fleetwood on 9 – 10 May.

Autumn records comprised just singles at Heysham NR on 28-29 Oct and Bare on 8 Nov.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Common breeding bird, especially in the east. Common double passage migrant and winter visitor in variable numbers.

Though widely reported in the first winter period, birds were only encountered in small numbers.

The severe weather in early spring will have certainly affected numbers and passage totals were down on previous years. Places like the MMWWT and Walton-le-Dale WWTW that attracted Firecrest, Chiffchaffs and other insectivorous birds were the only ones to have more than a couple of individuals. Spring migrants noted at Fleetwood totalled just 26 between 13 March and 15 April with a peak of seven on 20 March. Similarly, Heysham had a quiet spring with just 23 records. Six birds, including five singing males, at Ewood Bridge WWTW on 24 March were probably passage birds.

Singing birds were reported on the Fylde from February but more widely in April from 14 sites. Some birds were in song from late January in south Liverpool with records from eleven park and garden sites. In Rossendale, singing birds were recorded at eleven sites with at least four in the plantations along the Grane Road. Five territories were recorded on Darwen & Turton Moors and one along the Goit at Brinscall. Breeding was confirmed at Jackhouse, Oswaldtwistle and singing birds were noted at eight other sites around east Lancashire. Ten birds noted at Moor Piece on 27 Aug was the only double-figure count of the year in the east.

Autumn passage was a bit of a mixed picture with visible migration numbers very much down but ringing totals in the north of the county double the average. Only six birds were noted through Fairhaven in October whilst Heysham recorded mostly low single figures daily with a notable peak of 20 on 14 Oct.

Numbers in the second winter period were, once again, rather low but still evenly spread across the county.



Goldcrest, Roby, 24 February (Steve Young)

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

This widespread and abundant species didn't seem to be too badly affected by the early spring cold-snap. This is exemplified by breeding surveys such as the ones at Darwen & Turton Moors that had 40-45 territories and the north section of the Goit at Brinscall which had 16. Two BBS squares at Brindle had 30 singing males whilst there were 40 at MMWWT and 26 at Lunt Meadows NR. Heysham recorded 25 breeding pairs. Singing birds could be heard in every month at Carr House Green Common with a peak of 22 singing males in May.

In east Lancashire peak counts included 25 around Low Moor, Clitheroe on 20 April and 24 at Jackhouse on 8 July.

Ringing totals at Heysham and Leighton Moss suggested lower than average productivity in 2018 and the autumn passage was light and a week later than normal.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Common and increasing breeding resident.

Now a common sight in any stretch of mature deciduous woodland, it's hard to believe that only forty years ago this species was a scarce breeder in the county. Its expansion seems to go unabated, filling in many gaps where sub-prime habitat is the only type available. It is far more commonly reported at feeding stations in semi-rural and suburban gardens such as Challan Hall in Silverdale and Strongstry in Rossendale which each had at least seven birds present at some point in the year. Colour-ringing at the former in what is prime habitat revealed 23 different individuals visiting throughout the year.

The species is commonly encountered in the parks of south Liverpool such as Princes Park, Clarkes Gardens, Sefton Park, Greenbank Park, Woolton Woods and the Liverpool Hope University campus at Childwall. Nuthatches are more thinly scattered in the Knowsley, St Helens and Sefton boroughs though Knowsley Safari Park has a good population and a few pairs are resident in Hesketh Park and the Botanic Gardens, Southport. Up to six birds were present at Mere Sands Wood.

Nine singing males were located at Cuerden Valley Park where five nest sites were found including a nest box that produced six young. Birds were recorded in all the parkland areas of Preston and environs with regular sightings throughout the year in Lytham, Blackpool, St Michael's on Wyre and Poulton-le-Fylde.

In east Lancashire the ELOC database held 317 reports from 77 sites with breeding confirmed from Gawthorpe Hall and Rishton (where nest boxes were used for the first time with five fledged at each), Padiham, Hurst Green, Mitton, Moor Piece, Sabden Brook, Shireburne Park and Winkley Hall with breeding probable at another eleven locations.

A bird at Stonefold on 15 July above Rising Bridge was unusual as there are no trees in the vicinity. One at Cabin Hill on 29 was also unusual for the site and one at Stadt Moers Park, Huyton on 18 April was the only record there.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Common breeding resident.

With the Birdtrack application being more widely used nowadays as well as local group websites such as ELOC and Fylde, records for under-recorded species like Treecreeper are now being logged more regularly. However, as can be expected with this species, nowhere had any large numbers reported with 94% of records involving just one or two birds. Five birds were recorded at Leighton Moss on a couple of occasions and fours were recorded at Salterforth, Barnoldswick, Collyholme Wood, Dinkley and Mere Sands Wood.

The species is thinly scattered around the parks of south Liverpool and in mossland plantations in Knowsley.

Three pairs bred at Cuerden Valley Park, though none in nest boxes that have been erected there. A pair nested at MMWWT and breeding was confirmed from several locations in east Lancashire. The species is scarce on the Fylde with just 80 records and most frequently from Stanley Park.

Some dispersal/passage was noted at Heysham and Knott End during October and two at Cabin Hill on 17 November was the first record of more than one bird there.

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	35000	100000	300	15	4		250	550		1000	500	50000
B'pool North Pier	25000	5000				400					8000	20000
Brockholes NR	300	800	9	19	4	6		2		350	7000	30000

During the year there were over 150 reports of flocks in excess of 1000, the vast majority of which occurred in the winter months. As can be seen from the table above, Leighton Moss and Blackpool North Pier held sizeable flocks in January but the largest flock was at a roost near Chipping which was estimated to number 90000 birds on 14 Jan and 50000 in early February. Other significant gatherings in the east of the county included counts of 5000 in Burnley, Slaidburn and Bashall Eaves.

The numbers at Leighton burgeoned from 50000 on 9 Feb to 100000 by the 17th. An estimated 10000 were close to junction 34 of the M6 at Lancaster on 18 Jan and numbers at Cockersand built up to 8000 in mid-February. Peak counts dropped off very quickly in March, perhaps due to the cold weather, but there were still multiple flocks to be found.

Fledglings started to be reported from 19 May, a little later than usual, with dispersal happening soon after exemplified by 50 “mostly juveniles” at Devonshire Rock Gardens, Blackpool on the 30th and up to 300 at Stonefold, Rising Bridge on the 31st. A flock at Glasson on 6 June was made up of 50% juveniles and by 9 June, numbers at Marton Mere had reached at least 3000 birds.

There was a significant autumn passage. Over 10000 passed over Crosby on eleven days between 24 Oct and 15 Nov with a peak of 3745 on 6 Nov. Cabin Hill recorded passage of 2400 birds on eight days with a peak of 700 on 16 Nov and 4225 were recorded over Fairhaven Dunes with a peak of 1926 on 21 Oct. Heysham also had a few good days in late autumn with a peak of 700 on 29 Oct. On the morning of 2 Nov, a huge flock of at least 10000 birds flew high NE over Waddington Fell whilst on the 4th, 10000 roosted at Marton Mere.

By far the largest roosts in the second winter period occurred in the north of the county with over 200000 at Silverdale Moss on 14 Dec followed by regular counts of up to 50000 birds at Leighton Moss. Brockholes also scored with a roost of 30000 on 30 Dec.

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING* *Pastor roseus*

Vagrant

A juvenile was found in St Helens on 19 Oct. It stayed until the 31st when it was dispatched by a Sparrowhawk. This was the tenth record for Lancashire and the first since 2014.



Juvenile Rose-coloured Starling, St. Helens, 28 October (Steve Young)

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Scarce breeding bird, fairly common passage migrant

In vivid contrast to the previous two years only one Ring Ouzel was recorded in March, at Bloo Greet on the 23rd, no doubt due to that month's exceptionally cold weather.

Subsequent movements in both inland and coastal regions began in the first week of April and were heavier than normal in the uplands, where counts and sites were so numerous and widespread that only the highlights can be reported. It was an outstanding spring in the Belmont area where at

least 48 Ring Ouzels were recorded during 9-21 April with a peak of 32 on the 20th including parties of 14 and 13 birds; peak counts in east Lancashire included 23 on and around Pendle Hill on 14 April and 13 at Darwen Moor edge on the 26th. In Chorley there were six Ring Ouzels on Winter Hill and four at George's Lane, Rivington on 14 April; records at five sites in Rossendale during 6-25 April included three birds at Cowpe on the 16th.

Meanwhile on the coast the first of five April singles in the Fylde was in Blackpool's Stanley Park on the 3rd; a bird at Hightown next day began a run of 22 records at nine sites in the south-west including twos at Freshfield Dune Heath on 12 April and Hightown on the 16th. There were two singles on the north coast, at Sunderland Point on 15 April and Heysham on the 17th. No reports were received in May from either inland or coastal regions.

Birds were recorded at 17 locations in Bowland during the breeding season; nesting was confirmed at seven sites and considered probable at the other ten, a similar number of territories to 2017 and 2016.

Autumn was very quiet, with one record in July and three in August in east Lancashire; the last record on the United Utilities Estate in Bowland was on 22 Aug and a bird was at Belmont on the 28th. There were no September records but five in the uplands in October, including four at Calf Hey Reservoir, Rossendale on the 12th. Singles at Belmont on 14 & 15 Oct were followed by the last Ring Ouzel of 2018 at Swinden Reservoir in east Lancashire on the 24th; a bird at Marshside on 14 Oct was the only coastal migrant of the autumn.



Ring Ouzel, Bowland, 5 June (Craig Bell)

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Abundant breeding bird and winter visitor

The Lancaster & District January survey counted 729 Blackbirds, a reduction on the five-year mean of 995. Twenty-three double-figure counts were recorded in the Fylde in early year, the highest 29 at Singleton on 10 Jan; there were double figures at ten locations in east Lancashire with peaks of 33 at Ribchester on 18 Feb and 32 at Whalley on 24 March. Thirty-four at a feeding station in Strongstry in very cold weather on 28 Feb was the peak count in Rossendale; there were 30+ in a roost at Upper Rivington Reservoir, Chorley on 19 Feb, whilst 24 at Aldcliffe on 14 Jan and 25 at MMWWT on 8 Feb were the largest late winter gatherings in the north and the south-west respectively. Eleven Blackbirds over Knott End on 21 March and a total of ten at Heysham on 19 Feb and 13 March were the only reports of spring passage.

An indication of the species' abundance in the breeding season is provided by records of breeding or territorial behaviour at a number of widespread sites. Forty-eight pairs bred in Croftlands Estate in Warton in north Lancashire, an increase of two; elsewhere in the lowlands there were 24 pairs on Freshfield Dune Heath and 14 at MMWWT. Further inland there were 29 singing males in Stagbills Wood, Rossendale and 27 in Cuerden Valley Park, Chorley in April whilst in nearby Brindle 22 Blackbirds were counted in two adjacent BBS squares. Forty-eight territorial males were counted along c.4 km of the Lune Valley between Arkholme and Wenning Foot, a similar total to recent years.

Seventeen Blackbirds at Mere Sands Wood on 27 Sept and two double-figure counts in ELOC region during the month, at Jackhouse and Low Moor, were the first signs of autumn movements

which got into gear in both coastal and inland regions in the first week of October. The autumn peak of 18 in east Lancashire was at Low Moor on 6 Oct when 15 migrants were also recorded at Belmont. A total of 123 was recorded over Knott End between 10 Oct and 27 Nov and movements were also noted at sites in Rossendale from the 10th. A very marked peak in migration was evident in coastal regions at the end of October and early November: 496 Blackbirds were recorded at Heysham between 28 Oct and 5 Nov with the peak count of 270 on the former date; Knott End's peak of 41 was on 29 Oct and there were 16 at Crosby Coastal Park and 20+ at Cabin Hill on the 31st. The brief surge ended with counts of 60 at Heysham on 1 Nov, 30 at The Heads on the 5th and 62 at Marton Mere and 22 at Crosby next day.

Intermittent movements continued at least until the middle of November with noteworthy peaks of 35 at Low Moor on 12 Nov, 30 at Preesall Flashes on the 13th, 25 at Leighton Moss and 35 in a roost at Belmont on the 15th and 41 at the Keer Estuary next day. Ten double-figure counts were reported in the Fylde in December and seven in other regions, the highest 33 birds at Brockholes Wetland on 3 Dec and 47 at Low Moor on the 16th.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant

Four three-figure flocks were recorded in inland regions during January, the largest 200 at Clowbridge Reservoir on 1 Jan and 150 at Blea Tarn in the north on the 28th. Birds were more numerous in the lowlands: 250 at Crimbles on 6 Jan was the highest of seven three-figure counts in the Fylde and 400 at Holmes on the 18th the largest of four such gatherings in the south-west. One hundred and eighteen at Extwistle Hall in east Lancashire on the 4th, 260 at Burscough on the 6th and 300 at Copp, near Great Eccleston were the largest of ten widespread three-figure flocks in February.

Unusually, there were few substantial gatherings in March, the largest 200+ at Wesham, Fylde on the 1st and Heath Charnock, Chorley on the 2nd and 120 at Stocks Reservoir on the 29th. Intermittent smaller-scale movements continued into the third week of April, the only substantial flock c.250 at Greenfold, Rossendale on 10 April; four birds over Knott End on 14 April and five at Lunt on the 16th ended the spring in the Fylde and the south-west, birds at Tinckler's Lane, Eccleston and Coppull on the 15th were the last in Chorley and three at Skelshaw on the 19th ended movements in east Lancashire, where single Fieldfares at Stocks Reservoir on 13 July and at Easington on 12 Aug were most unusual records: summering individuals or birds dispersing from the small Scottish breeding population?

Autumn movements, which began on schedule in the first week of October, were much heavier than last year's but also regionally skewed to a remarkable degree. Fieldfares were apparently absent from most of the coastal strip whilst some very heavy movements were recorded throughout the uplands and as close to the coast as Brockholes Wetland and Roby Mill. The first Fieldfares of autumn reached east Lancashire on 5 Oct, the West Pennine Moors, Chorley and Brockholes on the 7th and Rossendale next day. At least 26 widespread three-figure counts were reported in October with marked peaks during the 17-19th and 27-29th; maxima in the first period included 340 at Brockholes on 17 Oct, 1100 over Roby Mill in an hour next day and 300+ at Crawshawbooth, Rossendale, on the 19th. At the end of the month there were 345 at Belmont, 500 at Brockholes and 200 at Rivington on 27 Oct and 400 at New Laithe Farm, Newton on the 29th.

Movements inland continued in high gear during the first half of November. There was a clear peak from 9-14 Nov, with 1921 over Belmont in the first hour of the 9th and c.500 on the same day at Musbury, Rossendale; 300 Fieldfares were at Brockholes and 272 at Belmont on the 11th and c.1000 moved over West Bradford Fell in east Lancashire on the 14th. Meanwhile, on the coast only a handful of Fieldfares had been recorded until late October; there were four scattered three-figure counts during the autumn and an isolated peak of 1718 over Crosby Coastal Park on 15 Nov. Twenty-four were recorded over Knott End between 7 Oct and 11 Nov and Heysham's autumn total was 20 birds between 15 Oct and 17 Nov.

As is usually the case most of our autumn arrivals had moved on by early December; 25 reports to ELOC included four three-figure counts, the highest 250 at Higherford on 1 Dec. There were seven double-figure reports in December from coastal regions, four from Chorley and three from Rossendale.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Common breeding resident

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 38 Song Thrushes, 15 of them in coastal SD 45. Three double-figure counts were received in the early year, all in February, ten birds at Cabin Hill and Ribchester and up to twelve at Jackhouse; singing males were reported from the Fylde, Rossendale and east Lancashire in the first half of January and from Chorley later in the month. There were more reports of spring passage than usual, all concentrated into the first days of March; four moved over Knott End, eight over Cocksand and nine over Cabin Hill on 3 March and Heysham recorded three migrants during 1st-3rd.

Territorial birds were recorded throughout the Fylde and the south-west including five at Hackensall Hall and at least six in the Memorial Arboretum, Carleton; there were eleven at Tarbock Hall Farm and seven at Oglet in south Liverpool. Three pairs apiece nested at Lunt Meadows, MMWWT and Freshfield Dune Heath although the three territories in a study area at Aintree was the lowest total there for eight years. There were 19 territories in March at Cuerden Valley Park and six on the northern section of the River Goit in the West Pennine Moors; nine Song Thrushes were located in two adjacent BBS squares at Brindle in April. Nineteen singing males were recorded along c.4km of the River Lune between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot, breeding was confirmed at four sites in east Lancashire and judged possible or probable at another twelve, and a good breeding season was reported in Rossendale with numerous juveniles in evidence.

A typically light but widespread autumn passage got underway in September, peaked in October and had petered out by mid-November. One hundred and eighty-six Song Thrushes were recorded over Knott End with peaks of 44 on 15 Oct, 35 on the 18th and twelve on the 29th; Heysham recorded 31 migrants with peaks of eight on 10 & 17 Oct. At Billinge Hill in the south-west three birds were ringed in September and 27 during 7-18 Oct, many of the later birds being noticeably greyish individuals; eight birds over Knott End on 16 Nov was the last significant movement reported. A party of ten at Brindle on 14 Dec was the only double-figure count received at year end.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant

Only two counts in three figures were reported in January, 100 at Heskin, Chorley on the 3rd and 105 at Ribchester on the 21st; c.80 at Little Poulton on 13 Jan was the highest of 24 double-figure counts in the Fylde, whilst 60 at Rufford on 3 Jan and 55 at Docker and 24 at Lench on the 7th were the largest gatherings in the south-west, north and Rossendale respectively. Numbers in February remained on the low side, the highest counts c.100 at Sheephouse Lane, Rivington on the 2nd and 200 at Feniscowles on the 28th; 70 roosted at Belmont on 10 Feb and there were 50 apiece at Strongstry, Rossendale on the 12th and at Copp, Fylde next day.

Flock sizes increased slightly during March as birds moved back towards northern Europe, with four widespread three-figure counts, the highest 200+ at Wesham on the 1st and 110 at Cabin Hill on



Redwing, Pilling, 4 March (Paul Slade)

the 3rd; the month's peak of 32 Redwings moved over Knott End on 13 March and a bird was in song in Kirkdale Cemetery, Liverpool on the 9th. Twenty-five birds at Cow Ark in east Lancashire on 1 April was the largest of some 25 widespread records of late movers, to the county's last straggler at Heysham on the 18th.

A single bird over Fairhaven Dunes on 29 Sept began a brisk autumn passage with two counts of 1000+ and at least 31 in three figures across all regions of the county. The next to arrive was at Roby Mill on 3 Oct and all regions had recorded their first Redwings by the 8th. Apart from 470 at Brockholes and 200+ at Billinge Hill, St Helens on 8 Oct arrivals

were slow-paced until 18 Oct, when 'several thousand' moved over Billinge Hill and 690 over nearby Roby Mill, whilst 152 were recorded at Knott End; Heysham recorded its peak count of 51 next day.

There were two later surges of migration, during 27-30 Oct and 2-6 Nov; 1200 Redwings were at Brockholes Wetland and 410 at Alston Reservoirs on 27 Oct, there were c.200 at Grane, Rossendale and 110 at Ormskirk next day and another 500 over Brockholes on the 29th. Highlights of the second surge included 400 at Low Moor in east Lancashire on 2 Nov, an autumn peak of 184 over Knott End and 100+ at Lower Healey, Chorley on 3 Nov and 135 over Crosby Coastal Park on the 6th.

A few substantial counts were recorded during the rest of November and into December. Three hundred and eighty-three moved over Belmont in the first hour of 9 Nov and there were 208 at Crosby and 102 over nearby Cabin Hill on the 15th; c.200 were at Billinge Hill on 17 Nov and 150 at Belmont next day. Three three-figure counts were reported to ELOC in December, the highest 200 at Wood End Sewage Works on the 12th; 50 birds at Brockholes on 6 Dec and 40 at Heskin on the 16th were the largest of seven double-figure gatherings in other regions.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Common breeding resident

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 64 Mistle Thrushes, compared with the five-year mean of 76; twelve birds at Marshside-Hesketh Golf Course on 6 Jan was the only early-year gathering reported.

The fairly scanty breeding data received still manage to illustrate the varied habitat choices of this robust species. In the uplands there were eight singing males at Bottoms Beck in east Lancashire on 10 May; breeding was confirmed in four locations in the region, including New Laithe Farm and Whitendale, and judged possible or probable in 21 others. Further south there were widespread territories in Rossendale with confirmed nesting at six sites; four territories were located on the Darwen & Turton Moors in the West Pennine Moors. In the lowlands there were territories throughout the Fylde and confirmed nesting at five sites, and at least one pair bred on EDF land at Heysham; eight reports of confirmed nesting in the south-west were received, from Longton and MMWWT to Birkdale, Liverpool's Sefton Park and Carr Mill Dam, St Helens.

Post-breeding gatherings were well in evidence by mid-June, the first at Torrisholme on the 6th; ten-plus on Croston Moss, Chorley on the 13th had increased to 40 by 18 July and there were ten at Calf Hey Reservoir, Rossendale on 10 July and 15 at Salterforth in ELOC region on the 20th.

Seventeen widespread double-figure reports were received during August-September, the highest in the uplands 40 at Easington on 12 Aug, 25 at Bowley Hill on the 23rd and 19 at Belmont on 13 Sept; on the coast Fylde records included 14 at Cuddy Hill on 9 Aug and Lytham Crematorium on 22 Sept and there were 15 in Sefton Park, Liverpool on 20 Sept.

Small-scale migratory movements were evident in coastal regions during October and the first half of November. Fifteen were recorded over Knott End from 10 Oct to 15 Nov with a peak of seven on 29 Oct, ten moved south-east over Fairhaven Dunes on 17 Oct and there were three migrants at Heysham during 6-16th. Two Mistle Thrushes were at Heysham on 1 Nov and a season's peak of 14 on the 18th; ten moved over Crosby Coastal Park on 6 Nov and one flew south at Cabin Hill on the 16th.

Parties of 14 on Formby Moss on 14 Nov and 15 at Brockholes on the 26th were the last significant counts received; males were in song at Lower Healey, Chorley from 14 Dec, in Birkdale from the 20th and at Stocks Reservoir from the 27th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Uncommon breeding bird, fairly common passage migrant

The first spring arrival was at Wood End Sewage Works in east Lancashire on 16 April but the next record in the uplands was over two weeks later, at New Laithe Farm, Newton on 5 May. Spotted Flycatchers were recorded at 21 sites in ELOC region in 2018, a significant decline from the 54 last year and 34 in 2016. One at Hoghton Bottoms on 7 May was the first in Chorley region followed by birds in the north at Tower Lodge on the 14th and in Rossendale at Groundwork on the 17th. Meanwhile coastal passage was much lighter than in 2017, from the first Spotted Flycatcher at Marshside on 29

April to the last at Myerscough Quarry, Fylde on 2 June. A total of twelve migrants was recorded in the Fylde, six in the south-west and four on the north coast.

Breeding was confirmed at Hoghton Bottoms, Anglezarke and Lead Mines Clough in Chorley, at Hareholme in Rossendale and in the Whitendale Valley and at Paythorne Bridge in east Lancashire, where it was also considered possible in two other locations. Extensive breeding was reported in north Lancashire, mainly along the Lune Valley and its tributaries, Hindburndale and Roeburndale; 14 birds were at Tower Lodge on 17 July. Breeding by two pairs was recorded in the Fylde this year, near Fluke Hall and at Salwick, and a total of five juveniles was recorded in late June.

Autumn movements were light. In east Lancashire there were records at three sites in July, nine in August and three in September; elsewhere in the uplands records were concentrated in the second half of August, at two sites each in Rossendale and Chorley; one was at Brockholes Wetland on 20 Aug and Belmont's last migrant was on the 17th. One at Dean Clough Reservoir on 10 Sept was the last inland migrant. A sparse coastal passage began early, with a bird at Leighton Moss on 3 July, and ended late, with three October singles, at Staining Nook, Fylde on the 6th, Marshside on the 13th and Sunderland Point next day; there were totals of six records in the Fylde, five in the south-west and four on the north coast.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant breeding resident

Eighteen widespread double-figure counts were reported in the first winter period, ten in inland locations with peaks of 22 at Docker on 7 Jan and 25 at Brockholes Wetland on 19 Feb, and eight on the coastal plain, the highest 20 apiece at Leighton Moss on 9 Jan and at Mere Sands Wood on 4 Feb. The Lancaster & District January survey located 474 Robins across all 10km squares; the five-year mean is 460. A bird at Heysham on 1 May that had been ringed in Scotland in 2017 was the only definitive instance of spring passage.

Breeding data from regularly-monitored sites again provided an illustration of the abundance of this species and both Fylde and Rossendale databases show territorial presence throughout those regions. In the uplands, nesting was confirmed at 15 locations in east Lancashire, there were 37 birds in two adjacent BBS squares in Brindle, Chorley in April, twelve territories in the northern section of the River Goit and 15 on the Darwen & Turton Moors in the West Pennines. In the lowlands at least 27 pairs nested on EDF land at Heysham; the post-breeding ringing total of 70 suggested average productivity, as did the 33 juveniles ringed at Leighton Moss. In the Pilling-Preesall area of north Fylde five monitored nests fledged 14 young from the 27 eggs laid. In the south-west 21 pairs bred on Freshfield Dune Heath, 17 at Carr Mill Dam, St Helens, twelve at MMWWT and nine in a study area at Aintree.

There were no reports of autumn movements until early September, with 22 at Jumbles Country Park on the 9th; widespread passage was recorded in both inland and coastal regions during 6-10 Oct, including eight double-figure counts, the highest on the coast 20 at Seaforth on 6 Oct and 19 at Carr House Green Common on the 7th. There were 32 Robins at Jackhouse and 24 at Whalley Nab in east Lancashire on the 10th. No significant movements were reported from Heysham and 20 at Leighton Moss on 10 Nov and 16 at Brockholes on the 14th were the last movements reported; 18 at Leighton Moss on 31 Dec was the highest count at year end.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Uncommon breeding bird, scarce passage migrant

The lightest spring passage on the coast for many years amounted to three singles, all in the Fylde, at Stanley Park on 2 May, Bispham on the 8th and Kincaig Lake on the 11th. The first inland arrival was at Whittington on 17 April quickly followed by a bird at Moor Piece next day and Chorley's first, at Lead Mines Clough on the 22nd; Pied Flycatchers were recorded at a total of 20 sites in ELOC region, a considerable improvement on the eleven in 2017. Some substantial counts were reported in May including in the north 21 in Hindburndale on 11 May and 18 in Roeburndale on the 21st; in east Lancashire 14 were at Moor Piece on 14 May and ten in Crag Wood on the 28th.

The subsequent breeding season appears to have been reasonably productive, although attempts at Anglezarke and Rivington in Chorley were unsuccessful. At least one pair bred at Belmont, and nest-boxes were monitored at 18 locations in the Lune Valley with a record total of 108 pairs; 68 were

successful and 451 juveniles were ringed. In east Lancashire breeding was confirmed at Crag Wood, Moor Piece, Croasdale, Birkett Wood and New Laithe Farm and considered probable or possible on at least four other sites; twelve pairs bred in the woods at Stocks Reservoir, all successfully, and 55 young were fledged.

Only three autumn migrants were reported from inland regions, one at Jackhouse on 27 July and two at George's Lane, Rivington on 9 Sept, and there were two on the coast, singles at Warton Crag on 26 July and Heysham on 2 Aug.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Rare breeding bird, uncommon passage migrant and scarce winter visitor

A bird at Norbreck, Fylde on 23 Jan & 22 Feb was the only early-year record.

Seven of this year's twelve or thirteen Black Redstarts were recorded on spring passage, five of them in a seven-day period during 10-16 April. The first, both first-winter males/females, were at Garston Coastal Park and Cockersand on 10 April, followed by a bird on Ainsdale Dunes on the 13th; a singing first-winter male at Knott End on the 16th remained until the next day and a bird at Heysham stayed from the 16th to the 19th. There were two birds in May, both in east Lancashire, at Cant Clough on 5 May and Pendle Hill on the 9th; no reports of breeding activity were received.

The first of autumn was a juvenile at Pilling Lane on 15-16 July, followed by two or three juveniles on Winter Hill, on 31 Aug - 1 Sept and on 9 & 23 Sept; the last Black Redstart of 2018 was at Heysham on 16 Nov.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Fairly common breeding bird and passage migrant

A bird at Stocks Reservoir on 9 April was the first spring arrival; birds were reported at seven other sites in ELOC region during the month with the first singing male at Foulscapes on the 14th, the same date as Chorley's first arrival at Anglezarke. The first of four migrants in the south-west was at Cabin Hill, Formby on 10 April followed by a bird at Heysham and the first of three April Redstarts in the Fylde at Fleetwood on the 15th. There were seven more records on the north coast in May, three in the Fylde and one in the south-west; in the uplands Redstarts were recorded at 23 sites in ELOC region in May including ten birds at Bottoms Beck on 10 May, and 13 locations in June, including 23 at New Laithe Farm, Newton on the 23rd.

Breeding was recorded in the north at Littledale, Leck Fell, Abbeystead, Langden Valley, Roeburndale and Hindburndale; there was one breeding territory at Belmont and territorial pairs at Anglezarke, Lead Mines Clough and White Coppice in Chorley region. In east Lancashire nesting was confirmed at Kenibus, Jackhouse, Marl Hill, Croasdale, Moor Piece and New Laithe Farm and considered probable or possible at ten other sites; six pairs bred in the woods around Stocks Reservoir, four successfully.

Birds were on the move from mid-July at inland locations and nearer to the coast at Brockholes Wetland, where a total of ten was recorded from 16 July to 5 Sept. Redstarts were recorded at five ELOC sites in July, four in August and three in September to the last individual at Pendleside Farm on 12 Sept. A bird on Anglezarke Moor on 28 July was the last of the year in Chorley and two were recorded in Rossendale, at Jamestone Quarry on 20 July and Bottomley Bank on 17 Sept. There were four migrants in coastal regions from 30 Aug and two at Brockholes Wetland; our last Redstart of the year was at Billinge Hill, St Helens on 23 Sept.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Scarce breeder, fairly common passage migrant

An early bird at Ainsdale on 15 April was the first Whinchat of 2018 and a widespread surge at both coastal and inland sites during the 20-21st was right on schedule. Birds were present at five sites in east Lancashire from the first at Oswaldtwistle Moor Edge on 21 April, there were seven April birds in the Fylde from 20 April, six on the north coast from the 21st and nine more in the south-west.

The passage that followed, although appreciable, was well below last year's volume, both on the coast and in the uplands. Whinchats were recorded at nine locations in east Lancashire in May; the first in Chorley was at Bretherton Eyes on the 2nd and in Rossendale at Clowbridge Reservoir on the 7th. There were 28 May records in the Fylde with peaks of three at Lawson Wetland on the 7th

and Rossall on the 28th, ten on the north coast with two at Heysham on 4 May, and 16 in the south-west; no more than ten Whinchats were recorded at Marshside during the spring, half of last year's total.

This year's breeding story is quickly told: pairs or territorial males were present at Cant Clough and Croasdale in east Lancashire and at Clowbridge and Ogden Reservoirs in Rossendale; an observer in Bowland described the recent breeding decline there as 'shocking'.

A bird at Greenfold in Rossendale on 22 July began a light passage in the uplands; Whinchats were at four sites each in east Lancashire and Rossendale in late August and four birds passed at Belmont during the month, where the last of the year was recorded on 2 Sept. Birds at Champion Moor on 4 Sept and Parsonage Reservoir next day ended the year in east Lancashire. Single Whinchats were at two sites in Rossendale with the county's last migrant at Clough Bottom Reservoir on 28 Sept.

There were six coastal records of singles during August, four in the south-west and one apiece in the Fylde and the north, and nine in September including two at both Fairhaven Dunes and Lower Ballam on the 4th, the last Fylde records, and two each in the north and south-west; singles at Seaforth and the Eric Morecambe Complex on 22 Sept were the last coastal Whinchats of 2018.



Whinchat, Marton Mere, 21 April (Paul Ellis)

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

Uncommon breeding resident

The recovery of the Stonechat's breeding, wintering and passage populations has now reached such a level that it is no longer possible to provide as much detail as in recent years.

Wintering birds were very widespread in the early year, at five locations on the north coast and 13 in the south-west; ones or twos were present at eleven sites in the Fylde in January and nine in February. In the uplands there were Stonechats at seven sites in east Lancashire and three in Rossendale in January and at five and three locations, respectively in February. Multiple individuals wintered at many sites, including six birds at Formby Point on 26 Jan and seven on Lytham Moss on 4 Feb.

Heavy spring movements were underway from the beginning of March and had effectively ended by early April although a few stragglers were recorded well into May. There were 54 coastal records in the north and birds were reported from 19 sites in the Fylde and eleven in the south-west during March, with peaks of eight at Crosby Coastal Park on 8 March and seven at Cocker's Dyke next day. Stonechats were at eight ELOC and six Rossendale sites in March and six and eight, respectively, in April.

The breeding population in the uplands is clearly thriving although early returners to Bowland were reported to have been hit by the exceptionally cold March weather. Confirmed nesting was recorded at seven locations in east Lancashire with two or three pairs at several, at three locations in Chorley, six in Rossendale and at Harrisend and Birk Bank in the north; there were twelve territories at Belmont and the central West Pennine Moors and four on Darwen & Turton Moors. The population on the Sefton Coast increased from six to seven pairs although nesting was not repeated at Lunt Meadows; a pair bred successfully again on Lytham St Annes NR but last year's breeding on the north coast did not recur.

Family parties and even larger gatherings were widespread in the uplands from late July, including at least ten at Calf Hey Reservoir, Rossendale on 12 Aug, five at White Coppice, over 20 in the Belmont area in mid-September and ten at Grane, Rossendale on 10 Oct. Stonechats were at nine

locations in east Lancashire in August, six in September and eight in October, and at five, six and nine sites respectively in Rossendale.

Intermittent coastal movements were reported from mid-August and were very widespread until late November, peaking as usual from mid-October to mid-November; four were recorded at Crosby in August and eleven in September; five on Ainsdale Dunes on 18 Nov was the peak count on the Sefton Coast. The first migrant in the Fylde at Cockersand on 25 Sept was followed by birds at four locations in October and six in November, with peaks of six birds on Lytham Moss on 5 & 11 Nov; there were 17 autumn records on the north coast.

Wintering Stonechats were at five locations each in the south-west and Fylde in December and at five in Rossendale, four in east Lancashire and two in Chorley; at least six were at altitude above Belmont at the end of the month.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Scarce breeding bird, common passage migrant

A distinctly underwhelming spring passage on the coast began with a bird at Crosby Coastal Park on 12 March, quickly followed by singles at Rossall on the 14th and Heysham on the 16th. Movements in unseasonably cold weather remained very light until mid-April with the first double-figure counts 15 at Heron's Reach Golf Course and twelve at Fleetwood on 15 April, 18 at Cabin Hill, Formby on the 18th and 27 at Heysham next day. Low-level movements continued until the end of May with a total of ten widespread double-figure counts, the highest 16 at Seaforth on 3 May and 19 at Heysham on the 4th.

Meanwhile in the uplands there was an early arrival in Rossendale at Jamestone Quarry on 13 March; east Lancashire's first Wheatear was at Chipping on the 20th and the first to arrive in the West Pennine Moors was at Belmont on the 24th. Birds were recorded at eight sites in ELOC region in March, 19 in April and 21 in May with peaks of ten at Dean Clough Reservoir on 21 April and 14 at Cant Clough on 3 May; Wheatears were at five Chorley sites in April and 50 birds passed through Belmont during April and 40 in May. In Rossendale there were 28 records in April and 18 during May-June, with peaks of 25 at Jamestone Quarry on 25 April and ten there on 6 May.

Breeding data were, as usual, scanty, which probably accurately reflects the species' status in the county: nesting was confirmed in east Lancashire at Calf Clough Reservoir and in the Langden Valley and was considered possible at Low Fell; pairs bred successfully in Rossendale at Lee and Jamestone Quarries and Whitworth. A territorial pair on Darwen & Turton Moors was unsuccessful.

Singles at Bank End, Fylde, on 21 July, Hightown on the 25th and Heysham next day began the usual autumn trickle of (mainly) juvenile Wheatears down the coast which continued on-and-off until late October. There were 20 records in the Fylde in August, 32 in September and 18 in October and a total of 23 birds at Heysham from 21 Aug to 19 Oct; peak coastal counts included 13 on Fairhaven Dunes on 4 Sept, ten at Aldcliffe on the 20th and eight at Crosby next day. In the uplands birds were at ten locations in east Lancashire in August and seven in September; eleven Wheatears passed through Belmont in both August and September to the last bird there on 23 Sept. There were six records in Rossendale and seven in Chorley during August-October; one at Black Moss Reservoir on 8 Oct ended the passage in east Lancashire and singles at Cowpe Lowe on 21 Oct and Croston Moss on the 26th closed out the year in Rossendale and Chorley, while a single bird at Ridge Farm, Fylde on 2-6 Nov was the county's last Wheatear of 2018.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

Uncommon breeding resident

From all accounts received this popular species continues to thrive in both core and marginal parts of its range; although information from the north of the county was incomplete sight records from both coastal and inland parts of the region suggest a continuing healthy population.

Dippers were recorded across all parts of east Lancashire with birds singing from 1 Jan and breeding was confirmed at seven locations and judged likely at eight other sites. There were 90 reports during the year in Rossendale with confirmed nesting at eleven sites, including Rawtenstall Centre and Fortunes Park, Bacup; seven singles were recorded along c.4 km of the River Irwell on 13 Nov.

Records in Chorley spanned all months with successful nesting at seven locations including Astley Park, Leyland; in the West Pennine Moors there were territorial pairs on Darwen & Turton Moors and on the northern section of the Goit.

On the eastern edge of the Fylde Dippers were reported from all the traditional locations, at Galgate, the River Brock and the Wyre at Myerscough College; a pair nested successfully on Savick Brook in Preston's Haslam Park.

Finally, for the second year in a row there was a one-day record of a single bird on the River Tawd near Skelmersdale, on 15 Jan.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Abundant breeding resident.

The largest flock reported was 110 at Starr Gate, Blackpool on 5 Aug which presumably included a large proportion of juveniles; elsewhere in Blackpool 75 were seen along the North Blackpool Pond Trail in January. In the Pilling-Preesall area 24 nests were monitored: 111 eggs were laid from which 67 young hatched and 63 fledged. There were 62 in a bird crop at Sand Villa on 7 Aug.

In the south-west up to 150 were noted in the Aintree study area in groups of 20-50 birds. There were 65 at Windmill Farm, next to MMWWT in November and 50 at Crosby Coastal Park in October, whilst the maximum at Mere Sands Wood was 32 in January. There were three nests on Marshside reserve.

Rossendale peak counts were 50 at Stonefold and 40 at Cowpe, and numbers were reported to be good to excellent, while in east Lancashire the highest count was 60 at Whalley in October, and numbers generally appeared to be fairly stable but were reported as very seriously diminished in a well-watched part of Burnley. In Belmont village there were up to 80 at one site, whilst the breeding population was estimated at 50 pairs and the total late summer population at 200+.

In Chorley the species remained the 14th most frequently recorded in the winter garden bird survey. The north Lancashire peak was 100 at Hest Bank on 24 April, with other large counts of 66 at Docker in January and 40 at Conder Green in July.

There was no evidence of any dispersal this year.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Common breeding resident.

In the Over Wyre area 516 nests by 273 pairs were monitored: 2552 eggs were laid from which 1480 hatched and 1393 young fledged. There were thus 2.7 young fledged per nest on average. In this context it is not surprising that the county's largest counts also from this area. They included Eagland Hill feeding station counts of up to 130 at New Lane in February and 120 at Thompson's Fold in February and March.

There were ten pairs at MMWWT, where it was reported that the huge drop in numbers may have been due to nest parasites. The peak count there was 32 in August whilst elsewhere in the south-west there were 64 at Hesketh Out Marsh in December. Other local peaks were 20 at Stodday, twelve at Brownsills in east Lancashire, seven at Brockholes and 50 at both Lytham Moss and Newton-with-Scales (both in south Fylde). A pair nested at Withnell NR but were unsuccessful, and there were three records of up to two birds in Belmont.

Spring visible migration on the Fylde was above average, thanks in large part to coverage at Knott End where 117 were noted in March and April, including seven on 9 March and twelve on 11 April.



Dipper, Crawshawbooth, 4 May (Craig Bell)

There was also some pronounced autumn passage. At Heysham eleven bird-days in October included five on the 1st and four on the 6th. Typically though, the greatest numbers were recorded on visible migration watches at Fairhaven with a noteworthy peak of 64 on Oct 10th with counts of ten birds on the 11th, 17th and 28th and a season total of 116 birds.

HOUSE X TREE SPARROW

A male was seen at the Guild Wheel feeding station, Brockholes on 31 March and 3 May.



House x Tree Sparrow, Brockholes,
31 March (Bill Aspin)

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Abundant breeding resident.

In the Heysham area ringing totals pointed to fairly decent productivity of local breeding birds. Some visible migration was noted here, particularly five south on 1 Oct. No other records were received which could be conclusively said to demonstrate dispersal or passage.

There were eight pairs at MMWWT, six at Cuerden Valley Park and Freshfield Dune Heath (unchanged) and five at Lunt Meadows. An unusual breeding location concerned a pair in the gorse bushes on the small island in Delph reservoir.

Counts of this generally sedentary species aren't usually that informative, for what it's worth they included seventeen at Jackhouse in March and April and ten at Ribchester in February and Leighton Moss in January, March and December. The species was the fifth most frequent in the Chorley area winter garden bird survey.

BLACK-HEADED WAGTAIL

Motacilla flava feldegg

Vagrant

A first-summer male at Leighton Moss during 14-17 April was the county's first confirmed record and has been accepted by BBRC (Christine & Max Maughan, Jon Carter and Kevin Kelly).

YELLOW WAGTAIL

Motacilla flava flavissima

Scarce breeding bird, fairly common passage migrant

Although this species' breeding status remains precarious at best there has been a steady increase in both the volume and distribution of spring and autumn passage since at least 2014, and 2018 continued that trend.

One over Knott End and three at Hesketh Out Marsh on 14 April began a lively and widespread spring passage; there were singles at Birkdale Green Beach and the Eric Morecambe complex next day and the 18th saw the first of the year's 13 records in east Lancashire. There were 16 more April records in the Fylde including six on Braides Floods on the 21st and birds were recorded at seven locations in the south-west with a peak of six at Hesketh Out Marsh on the 28th, where an apparent Blue-headed x Yellow Wagtail intergrade was present on the 22nd; a single Yellow Wagtail was at Bretherton Eyes, Chorley on 22-24 April.

Apart from another bird at Bretherton Eyes on 12 May all of that month's records were on the coast. There were eleven Fylde reports including a total of 15 birds over Knott End; up to three Yellow Wagtails were at each of seven sites in the south-west from Oglet to Longton and there were singles at Leighton Moss and Morecambe on 4-5 May.



Black-headed Wagtail, Leighton Moss,
15 April (Paul Ellis)

An extensive survey of the south-west mosslands located eleven territories from which five pairs fledged 13 young; a pair on Hesketh Out Marsh had three fledged young on 21 July but breeding did not take place at Lunt Meadows this year. Further north a territorial male was present at Arkholme in the Lune Valley from 26 May to 6 June but without further evidence of breeding; a juvenile bird at Foulridge Reservoir, Colne on 9 June was intriguing, as it seems very early for it to have moved from any distance.

A widespread and prolonged coastal passage began with six over Knott End on 10-11 July and one over Sefton Park on the 11th. Movements were recorded from ten sites in the south-west with peaks of six at Hesketh Out Marsh on 4 Aug and five at MMWWT on 9 Sept. There were eleven August and four September records in the Fylde to the last two birds on Newton Marsh on 9 Sept; a total of twelve Yellow Wagtails passed over Knott End to 30 Aug.

A total of five was recorded in east Lancashire on 24-25 Aug, at Stocks, Cant Clough and Alston Reservoirs; a juvenile at Dean Clough Reservoir on 13 Sept was the last of the year there. There were single Yellow Wagtails at Clowbridge and Calf Hey Reservoirs, Rossendale in early September and a bird at Oakenclough on the 24th was the last inland record of 2018.

Two laggard migrants were recorded in October, at New Lane, Burscough on 9 Oct and a grey-and-white first-winter at Leighton Moss on the 17th.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Fairly common breeding bird, common passage migrant

The Lancaster & District January survey recorded 19 widespread Grey Wagtails and ones or twos were at numerous sites throughout the Fylde and the south-west in January-February and November-December; as usual many remained in the core breeding areas, for example at seven sites in Rossendale in January and four in Chorley in November.

A spring passage of average volume in coastal regions began in mid-February and continued without any marked peaks until it effectively petered out in early April. A total of 102 was recorded over Knott End from 18 Feb to 8 June with a peak of ten on 21 Feb; elsewhere in the Fylde 23 moved over Rossall between 13 March and 6 May, peaking at five birds on 24 March, and there were three migrants at Heysham during 13-26 March.

Twelve Grey Wagtails were located along the River Lune by the July Inland WeBS and reports from the rest of the county also indicate thriving populations with successful pairs both in urban centres and by remote moorland streams. Nesting was recorded throughout Rossendale including in the centre of Rawtenstall; there were three pairs at Strongstry and at least five on the Stubbins-Ewood Bridge stretch of the River Irwell. ELOC received reports of confirmed breeding from eight locations; pairs in Bowland fledged young at Cross of Greet and in the Brennand, Whitendale and Langden Valleys. Successful nesting was recorded throughout Chorley region including the Anglezarke-Rivington area and the low-lying Yarrow Valley; two pairs bred in Cuerden Valley Park. Seven pairs nested by brooks and reservoirs in the central West Pennine Moors and there was one territory on the Darwen & Turton Moors.

The slow penetration of lowland and coastal regions by breeding Grey Wagtails may have advanced further this year. In the Fylde nesting was recorded in Stanley Park, Blackpool, at St. Michael's on Wyre, on the River Brock at Bilsborough and in the Pilling area; in the south-west pairs bred at nine locations from Southport and Aintree to Stadt Moers Park, Huyton and St Helens, where nesting was recorded at Carr Mill Dam and Stanley Bank.

Autumn movements, almost entirely confined to coastal regions, took an unusual shape this year in that they began quite suddenly in the last days of August and had effectively peaked within ten days, by 8 Sept. Knott End recorded a total of 110 Grey Wagtails between 25 June and 25 Nov, peaking at eight on 2 Sept; 108 were recorded at Heysham from 28 Aug to 22 Oct including eleven on 30 Aug, when 14 also moved over Fairhaven Dunes. Another twelve were at Fairhaven and seven at Crosby Coastal Park on the following day; there were nine at Starr Gate and eight at Heysham on 2 Sept and five further inland at Brockholes Wetland on the 5th. A second brief surge of movements in mid-September brought 17 to Fairhaven Dunes, six to Cabin Hill and a season's peak count of 21 to Heysham on the 17th; passage dwindled away very quickly thereafter and five over Cabin Hill on 18 Oct was the last noteworthy report received.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Common breeding bird, very common passage migrant

Two substantial three-figure roosts were reported in January, 200 at Blackburn Royal Hospital on the 13th and 400 in Lancaster on the 25th. Elsewhere, numbers in early year were about average; there were six double-figure counts in the Fylde in January and 58 birds at Marshside on the 13th was the largest gathering in the south-west. Counts further inland included 50 at Walton-le-Dale Sewage Works on 6 Jan, 34 at Colne Sewage Works on the 27th and 44 at Ecclestone, Chorley on 2 Feb.

Over 40 Pied Wagtails moving at Marshside on 20 Feb were the first spring migrants reported; the main passage got underway on schedule in the first week of March, peaked in mid-month and continued intermittently until mid-April. Movements at Heysham totalled 65 birds and peaked at 25 on 11 March; a total of 612 Pied Wagtails over Knott End from 17 Feb to 30 May also peaked on the 11th at 76, and there were 80 at Middleforth Green, Preston and 25 at Cabin Hill on the same day. Other significant counts in the Fylde included 60+ at Peel Hill and 44 at Fleetwood on 14 March; 22 at Presall Sewage Works on 17 April was the last significant movement of the spring. Twenty-five at Arkholme in the Lune Valley on 17 March and 81 at nearby Loyn Bridge on 1 April were the highest counts in inland regions.

The Fylde and Rossendale datasets indicate widespread breeding across both regions and nesting was confirmed at six locations in east Lancashire and at seven in the south-west; there were eight territories and six family groups at Belmont Reservoir and two territories on the Darwen & Turton Moors, although at least ten birds died at Belmont in July in an outbreak of Avian Botulism. Twenty-three Pied Wagtails were located along the River Lune by the April Inland WeBS, and 27 in May.

Post-breeding assemblies and early movements were widely reported from early July, including 19 at Brockholes Wetland on 8 July, 27 birds, including many juveniles, at Bank End, Fylde on the 27th and 20+ at Clowbridge Reservoir on the 30th; a roost at Belmont peaked at 60 on 9 Aug.

The passage that followed was unspectacular, with only two three-figure counts, but also prolonged with small parties still moving in the first week of November; there were two well-marked peaks, in late August-early September and in early- to mid-October. Two hundred and sixteen were recorded at Heysham with a peak of 41 on 15 Oct and a total of 962 was recorded over Knott End from 22 June to 27 Nov with a late peak of 41 on 5 Nov. Noteworthy counts included 282 at Arkholme and c.50 at Stocks Reservoir on 24 Aug, 73 at Bank End on 5 Sept, 100+ in the Grane area of Rossendale on the 7th, 50 at Warton Slag Tips on 5 Oct and 28 at Croston Sewage Works on the 7th.

A roost of c.240 had assembled in Lancaster by 1 Nov; other late year gatherings included c.50 at Fishmoor Reservoir on 26 Nov and up to 35 roosting on Lord Street, Liverpool during December. There were five double-figure counts in the Fylde in December, the highest 43 at Todderstaffe Hall on the 16th.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba alba*

Common passage migrant

The first of six March White Wagtails on the coast was at Fleetwood on 21 March followed by three more in the Fylde on 26 & 29th and two at Cabin Hill, Formby on the 28th; three singles were recorded at inland locations, at Ewood Bridge Sewage Works in Rossendale on 24 March, Brockholes Wetland next day and Gressingham in the Lune Valley on the 31st.

Coastal movements in April, which peaked in the third week, were the heaviest for several years, although markedly skewed towards the south-west. Thirty-five at the Eric Morecambe Complex on 23 April was the highest count in the north and there were c.40 April records in the Fylde, peaking at 75 birds at Fleetwood on the 15th and 53 at Bank End next day. Five three-figure counts were reported between Southport and Hesketh Bank during 14-25 April, the highest 250 on Banks Marsh on 14 April and 200+ by Southport Pier on the 18th; seven double-figure flocks included 70 on Birkdale Beach on 18 April and 52 at Marshside on the 28th. Meanwhile a scatter of arrivals further inland brought one or two to Bretherton Eyes, Chorley from 9 April to the month's end, two to Alston Reservoir on 14 April and three to the River Calder at Altham on the 17th; one was at Holden Wood Reservoir, Rossendale on the 25th.

Movements dwindled away very quickly in May. One at Aldcliffe on the 5th was the last spring bird in the north, there were five May records in the Fylde, the last a single on Fairhaven Beach on the 20th; two at Marshside on 12 May were the last migrants in the south-west.

Autumn movements were exceptionally light this year, ten-plus birds at Rishton Reservoir in east Lancashire on 5 Sept being the highest count reported; there were seven on Mawdesley Moss, Chorley on 10 Sept. A very thin passage on the coast from 25 Aug to 25 Sept included a total of 13 at Crosby Coastal Park with a peak of seven on 12 Sept, and one August and three September records in the Fylde; the last three birds there, at Bank End on 25 Sept, along with a single at Bare, Morecambe on the same day were the last White Wagtails of 2018.

RICHARD'S PIPIT* *Anthus richardi*

Vagrant

One was sound-recorded over Knott End during the morning of 6 Nov (Chris Batty), our 34th record; the most recent occurrence was over the same site in November 2016.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Common breeding bird, abundant passage migrant

Forty-six Meadow Pipits were recorded by the Lancaster & District January survey, half of these in coastal SD45; the five-year average is 85. Double-figure flocks were fairly widespread in the lowlands during January-February with 83 at Thurnham on 7 Jan and 75 at Holmes on the 16th the peak counts in the Fylde and the south-west; 70 at Alston Reservoir and 50 at Jackhouse on 20 Jan were the largest inland gatherings.

In bitter weather there were few signs of spring migration until the middle of March; although no four-figure counts were received subsequent passage overall was well up to average and substantial movements continued in both coastal and inland regions until mid-April. Heysham recorded 2352 Meadow Pipits from 11 March to 22 April with peaks of 975 on 26 March and 857 on 4 April; 3534 moved over Knott End from 18 Feb peaking at 277 on 9 April. Fifteen three-figure counts were recorded in coastal regions in the second half of March and early April, almost entirely confined, as usual, to the north and the Fylde, including 535 at Rossall on 24 March, 425 there on 1 April and 538 at Morecambe Stone Jetty on the 4th; another 500+ were in the Fluke Hall-Pilling area on 15 April. There were two three-figure movements in Rossendale, 100+ at Cribden Flats on 21 March and c.250 at Whitworth Quarry on 1 April; 80+ Meadow Pipits were at Belmont on 24 March and there were 47 at Martholme in east Lancashire on the 28th.

A number of site reports from inland and coastal regions give an indication of this species' abundance in favoured areas. Three to four hundred pairs were estimated on the Darwen & Turton Moors; there were 31 birds in April and 45 in May in a 1km BTO-BBS square on Darwen Moor in May (46 and 54 in 2017) and twelve in a similar square at Stonefold in Rossendale on 30 June. On the south-west coast there were c.40 pairs at Marshside, nine at Hesketh Out Marsh and c.30 on Birkdale Dunes and Green Beach, but on the negative side breeding was not recorded at either MMWWT or Heysham.

The first significant autumn movement was 100+ at Crown Point in Rossendale on 11 Aug; widespread passage got underway in the last week of the month with five three-figure counts including 100+ at Clowbridge Reservoir on 27 Aug and 198 over Fairhaven Dunes and 159 at Crosby Coastal Park on the 31st. Something of a lull in early September was followed by a brief but heavy surge of movements in the second half of the month that brought seven three-figure counts to coastal sites and ten to inland locations, including 406 at Fairhaven on 17 Sept, 272 at Jackhouse and 230+ at Cabin Hill in two hours on the 20th; later peaks included 100+ at Winter Hill on 23 Sept, 199 in an hour over Belmont on 25 Sept and 190 at Fairhaven on the 28th. Knott End recorded 1388 Meadow Pipits between 22 June and 27 Nov with a peak of 126 on 28 Sept.

Movements faded away very quickly in October with the season's peak of 210 at Heysham on the 6th and c.100 at Pilling Lane Ends on the 8th the only three-figure counts reported; 55 at Jackhouse on 10 Oct and c.60 at Swinden Reservoir were the highest of five double-figure reports in the uplands. A small number of double-figure flocks was recorded at year end, 80 at Hesketh Out Marsh on 9 Dec the largest coastal gathering and 45 at Cribden Flats next day the peak count in inland regions.

RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus*

Vagrant

One was sound-recorded over Knott End on 10 Nov (Chris Batty); the record has been accepted by the BBRC. This is the fourth county record, the most recent being a bird over Marshside in October 2009.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Scarce breeding bird and passage migrant

Our knowledge of migratory movements by Tree Pipits has been greatly enhanced in recent years by the establishment of sound-recording and ringing stations in both coastal and inland regions. A lively spring passage in the lowlands began with the first of a total of 193 birds over Knott End on 1 April; movements there continued until 9 June with a peak of 23 on 5 May. Elsewhere in the Fylde 15 Tree Pipits were recorded in April and ten in May, all but one at Fleetwood; six were recorded on the north coast in April and four in May. In the south-west a total of eleven moved over Billinge Hill, St Helens during 5-28 April and another twelve were at four coastal sites from 5 April to 5 May. The first to arrive in inland regions was at Alston Reservoirs on 7 April and there were three singles during 20-26 April at Belmont, Brockholes Wetlands and Beacon Country Park.

Reports of territorial presence were widespread this year but without any confirmation of breeding success. It was considered possible at Halsteads and Gisburn Forest in east Lancashire and there were territorial males at Heatherlea Woods in Chorley, at Belmont in the West Pennine Moors, at Calf Hey Reservoir in Rossendale and at Dalton, Thrushgill, Docker Moor and Tower Lodge in the north.

Autumn movements in upland regions, which began with a bird at Clowbridge Reservoir on 14 July, were rather lighter than last year's. Thirty-one Tree Pipits were ringed at Crown Point, Rossendale from 11 August; 28 others were recorded at a total of six inland locations to the last in east Lancashire, at Rishton Reservoir on 5 Sept.

Passage was, however, heavier than usual at lowland and coastal sites from the first bird at Brockholes Wetland on 5 Aug. At least 19 moved south over Billinge Hill during 6-30 Aug and another three on 2 Sept, and 50 were recorded over Knott End from 20 Aug to 5 Sept with a peak of 19 on 21 Aug. There were six migrants in the north, three at other Fylde sites and two on the south coast in August and eight, four and two individuals, respectively, in September; seven more migrants were recorded at Brockholes to 1 Sept. A bird at Fairhaven Dunes on 25 Sept ended the passage in the Fylde and the last Tree Pipit of 2018 was at Seaforth on the 29th.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor; first bred in 2018

There was a good number and spread of coastal migrants and winterers this year and the county's first breeding record, when a pair raised two young on Heysham Head (SD46A) from a first and only



Rock Pipits, Heysham,
6 July (Steve Childs)

brood, and a second pair reared one young from a late brood at the South Harbour (SD35Z), with all the indications suggesting that a first attempt failed.

Our wintering and migrant Rock Pipits are presumed to belong predominantly, if not entirely, to the Scandinavian subspecies *littoralis*. However, it has long been thought that some at least of the tiny handful of birds seen regularly in the Heysham area frequenting rocky shores (as opposed to the saltmarshes where almost all of Lancashire's wintering birds are seen) were more likely to be the nominate British race *petrosus*; certainly no late birds there have shown any sign of the bright summer plumage indicative of *littoralis*. This was confirmed in 2018 with the nesting of two pairs there; although the species has bred on one previous occasion in Morecambe Bay in Cumbria, the nearest regular populations to Lancashire are further north in the St. Bees Head area and in North Wales.

Single Rock Pipits were reported at four locations on the north coast in the early year and there were five on Heaton Marsh on 4 March. In north Fylde, the species' longtime winter stronghold, presence was recorded at 13 sites in January and six each in February and March, with peak counts of at least 15, ten and eight at The Heads on 5 Jan, 2-3 Feb and 4 March and five at Wardley's Creek on 18 Feb. Single birds were at three sites south of the Ribble in January with two at Marshside on the 4th.

A total of six single coastal migrants was recorded from 28 March at Heysham and others were at The Heads, Fleetwood, Seaforth and Hightown, where the last spring bird was recorded on 5 May.

Singles at Barnaby's Sands on 9 Sept and at Fleetwood on the 23rd began a fairly busy and widespread coastal passage; nineteen October records included five birds at Heysham, ten records in the Fylde with four birds on Barnaby's Sands on 14 Oct and six singles on the south-west coast at Garston Coastal Park, Seaforth, Lunt Meadows and Marshside during 6-21st. Further inland there were two Rock Pipits at Brockholes Wetland and singles at Alston and Parsonage Reservoirs in east Lancashire between 5 and 24 Oct. November was a little quieter with seven birds at Pilling Marsh on the 25th the highest count at ten locations in the Fylde and three at Heysham in the first half of the month; a bird at Parsonage Reservoir on 2 Nov, two at Marshside on the 18th and one at Southport Pier on the 25th ended the autumn passage.

The year closed rather more quietly than it opened: there were no records in the south-west, a bird at Heysham on 26 Dec was the only overwinterer recorded on the north coast, and five at Pilling Marsh and Cockerham Sands on 23-24th were the peak counts at nine sites in the Fylde during the month.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant

For the fourth year in succession there was a good tally of winter and passage birds, this year almost the length of the coast, from Leighton Moss to Ainsdale.



Water Pipit, The Heads,
15 April (Paul Ellis)

A bird on Heaton Marsh on 7 Jan & 4 March was the only early-year record in the north. Birds were recorded at four sites in the Fylde in January including two apiece at Pilling Marsh, The Heads and Warton Marsh on 4-5th; four were at The Heads on 2-4 Feb and one at Fleetwood on the 18th and there were March records at Lytham Jetty with three on 3 March, The Heads, where up to six were present on eight dates, Fleetwood and Warton Marsh. South of the Ribble there were singles at Ainsdale on 5 Jan and at Marshside on the 6-7th; a bird on Crossens saltmarsh was seen on at least eleven dates from 14 March to 11 April. Up to six birds at The Heads on dates in April to the last on the 19th may or may not have been spring migrants.

Autumn movements began with single Water Pipits at Marshside on 4 Nov and Leighton Moss on the 6th; it is a matter of conjecture whether the next to be reported, at Crossens on the 16th and Warton Marsh on the 18th were on passage or already in winter quarters. Up to two were seen intermittently on Crossens saltmarsh from 29 Nov to 16 Dec and there were singles at Hesketh Out Marsh on 9 Dec and Longton Marsh on the 12th. In the Fylde there were records from Warton Marsh, with up to four birds, and The Heads, with up to seven, on five dates from 7 Dec.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant breeding bird, passage migrant and winter visitor.

In the first winter period three-figure counts of Chaffinches were hard to come by although a feeding station at Eagland Hill regularly attracted up to 300 throughout January and peaked at 350 on 6 Feb. Other three-figure counts submitted were 100 on Churchtown Moss on 9 Jan, 125 in a rhododendron roost site at Belmont on the 7th and 100 at Croston Finney throughout January. The Lancaster January survey recorded 508 which was down on the five-year average of 659. Peak numbers in the east of the county were just 39 at Burnside near Slaidburn and up to 28 at Ribchester whilst a feeding station at Strongstry held up to 22 in February.

Spring passage was not particularly noticeable but monitoring at Knott End produced a total of 503 with a peak of 59 on 21 March.

Singing birds were noted in east Lancashire from 1 Feb, Aintree on the 2nd and by mid-February, the song of Chaffinches was recorded widely. There were five singing males at Carr House Green Common on 21 Feb and eight at Clowbridge Reservoir on the 25th, for example. Regular site surveys recorded nine pairs at Freshfield Dune Heath, fifteen singing males on Birkdale Dunes and also at MMWWT, and five pairs at both Carr Mill Dam and Aintree. Breeding Bird Surveys in the West Pennine Moors recorded twelve territories on the north section of the Goit and 14 on Darwen and Turton Moors. A total of 35 singing males were recorded along the River Lune between Leck Beck and Wenning Foot which was well below the five-year average of 50.

Reported autumn passage was reasonable on coastal sites. Heysham recorded 1302 between 30 Aug and 17 Nov with highs of 84 in September, when most British birds pass through, and 185 on 18 Oct when birds from further afield are moving through the region; 2530 were recorded over Knott End in a similar period peaking at 370 on 29 Oct while Fairhaven recorded 2072 over 17 days with peaks of 376 on 10 Oct and 430 on the 19th. Similarly at Crosby a total of 3408 in late October/early November with the year's highest counts being 889 and 1764 on 5 & 6 Nov.

Inland, there were notable falls too; at Belmont, 509 were recorded over 19 days with a peak of 99 over in one hour on 15 Oct and 150 going to roost on 11 Nov. Over 300 were at Stocks Reservoir on 4 Nov.

Decent numbers remained into the second winter period with up to 200 remaining at Stocks Reservoir and 75 at Eagland Hill in December

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Winters in variable numbers. Fairly common double passage migrant, mostly in autumn.

The hangover from 2017 meant that there were only a few records in the first part of the year which contrasted sharply with what happened from October onwards.

There were several reports of one or two in January and February from Huyton, Bretherton, Challan Hall, Eagland Hill, Clowbridge Reservoir, Marl Hill, Moor Piece, Garstang and Clitheroe and the only larger counts were seven at Folly Clough, Rossendale on 31 Jan, eleven in a Belmont garden on the 7th and 25 at roost in nearby rhododendrons on the 20th.

March and April saw more widespread reporting as birds moved north, including nine at Billinge Hill on 26 March and eight at Goodshaw Chapel, Rossendale on 7 April. Belmont retained birds throughout April with a male last seen (and heard in song) on 4 May.

Autumn brought a multitude of records with some very large numbers both passing through and wintering. The first record was rather early, at Leighton Moss on 20 Sept and was followed by singles at Warton Bank, Cockersand and Rishton in the first week of October. More widespread sightings were reported from mid-October onwards. Fairhaven Dunes recorded a total of 66 from 10 Oct into November with a peak of 25 on the 19th. Similarly, 225 were recorded over Knott End with a peak of 70 on the 29th. Crosby recorded 153 from late October with similar numbers at Cabin Hill. Brockholes had 60 on 29 Oct and over 28 were at Billinge Hill on the 19th.

Birds were turning up all over the region with double-figure counts at Shedden Wood but these paled into insignificance with the numbers recorded around Rivington and Belmont, and later near Clitheroe and Stocks Reservoir. What was described as a huge flock numbering around 1000 birds moved through beech trees at Hall Barn, Rivington on 24 Oct with a couple of hundred remaining a week later and at least double-figure counts into December. Passage noted on the other side of the hill at Belmont exceeded anything previously experienced with peaks of 248 in one hour on 5 Nov and 306 in one hour on the 9th. Four roosts in the area held an estimated 2300 throughout November with one roost holding 1882 on the 9th, surpassing records set at the same site in November 2002. As well as the Rivington birds, Bramblings were making use of the local beech in Roddlesworth Plantations.

Numbers dropped off dramatically in December in the West Pennines as the food source was depleted but started to build at Stocks Reservoir, with over 100 on 26 Nov rising to 147 by 7 Dec. A flock of approximately 500 was feeding in a weedy field at Bashall Town on 1 & 2 Dec and 220 were seen at a roost site at Marl Hill on the 9th. During December, double-figure counts were received from Wayoh (15), Waddington (40), Houghton Bottoms (peak of 70 on the 28th) and Strongstry (12).

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Rare and localised breeding resident, very occasional irruptions.

After the influx in autumn 2017 at least one remained into March at the historical breeding site of Pleasington Old Hall, Blackburn. This male bird was heard singing but didn't appear to find a mate and there were no subsequent sightings.

There were several reports from other areas of the county. Two singles were in close proximity in the early part of the year, one at Stadt Moers Park, Huyton and another at Prescott from 8 Jan into early February. There were then two at Stadt Moers Park from 24 Feb to 3 March. Other first-winter-period / spring records were of one over Freckleton Naze on 20 Jan, five over Crossens Out Marsh on 26 Feb, two sat by the roadside at Merrybent Hill near Slaidburn on 13 April and one over Cabin Hill on the 15th. A few birds were seen at Leighton Moss in the early part of the year.

There were no breeding records but five were seen at Gait Barrows on 5 Aug and up to two were seen at Leighton Moss, Silverdale and Haweswater in November and December. One was seen in beeches at Belmont on 15 Oct during a large movement of finches.



Singing male Hawfinch, Pleasington Old Hall,
20 March (Bill Aspin)

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Common breeding resident.

Bullfinches seem to be doing rather well in the county although scarcer towards the coast, and largely absent in the breeding season from the Fylde.

On Merseyside four or five held territory on Birkdale Dunes and one at Freshfield Dune Heath; birds were present in the breeding season at a couple of sites in St Helens, three pairs bred at Aintree and one or more at Sefton Meadows. Birds were present outside the breeding season in small numbers around south Liverpool but it remains a scarce bird here. Elsewhere in the south-west up to twelve were regular in a Banks garden through to the end of June and the species was also encountered regularly at Mere Sands Wood and MMWWT.

The species stronghold remains in the Silverdale area with a count at Woodwell reaching 22 in January. Double-figure counts weren't uncommon at Challan Hall throughout the year and birds were always noticeable at Leighton Moss.

Savick Park, Preston is also a favoured location with 15 present in January and a count of 16 in August included twelve juveniles. Five pairs bred at Cuerden Valley Park and pairs could be encountered eastward through Rivington to Brinscall and on to Darwen & Turton Moors where there were three pairs.

The area around Oswaldtwistle and Rishton had the most sightings in east Lancashire with up to ten at Jackhouse Reservoir throughout the year whilst ringing efforts in Rishton recorded 47 different individuals during the year and a noticeable turnover of birds in April when 19 individuals were processed. Breeding reports came from the sites above as well as Burnley, Marl Hill, Hurst Green and Paythorne. A male in a lone shrub on the top of Champion Moor on 26 Jan was a rather unexpected sight.

A small passage of birds in autumn was noted at Heysham and Cabin Hill but none involving more than three birds. Peak counts in the second winter period included nine at Lee Green Reservoir, Burnley and up to 16 in four flocks around Belmont.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

Common but declining breeding bird. Some autumn movement, flocks in winter.

It was a slightly better year in the fortunes of this species. The Lancaster January survey recorded 98, up on the previous year's all-time low of 56 but still at half of the peak count back in 2008. Ringing activities also noted an increase in birds with Heysham processing 356 in the year. The species is still described as fairly common around Southport, particularly on Birkdale Dunes and at Kew. Freshfield Dune Heath had three pairs but MMWWT recorded no nesting this year.

There were very few large flocks of Greenfinches. The largest of the year were in January with up to 75 in the caravan site at Marton Mere and 80 at the Eric Morecambe complex. At Princes Park, Liverpool, there was a roost of over 35 in January and February. The next highest were ten at a roost at Warbreck Hill, Blackpool on 4 Feb, ten at Stadt Moers Park, Huyton on 3 March and eleven at Grosvenor Park, Morecambe on the 4th.

In east Lancashire, though widespread, nine at Great Harwood and eight at Rishton were, disappointingly, the highest counts in the first winter period. Numbers in the Chorley and Rossendale regions never got above three at any one site.

Singing birds were recorded from the end of January onwards at several locations from Thornton, Fylde to Strongstry. Singing birds were reported from 28 sites on the Fylde, seven in east Lancashire and four in Rossendale. Two pairs nested in the Brinscall area and two were on Darwen & Turton Moors. There was a good number of young passage birds ringed at Heysham in July/August. The autumn passage that followed was reasonable with most birds coming through at the end of October and well into November. Peak counts included 21 at Seaforth on 8 Oct, 25 at Heysham on the 15th, 19 at Knott End on the 18th, 25 at Crosby on the 24th, 47 at Fairhaven on 2 Nov, 30 at Crosby on the 5th and 29 at Cabin Hill on the 12th & 23rd.

Numbers reached 25 at Leighton Moss in the second winter period and 20 at Marton Mere whilst 21 roosted at Princes Park, Liverpool on 14 Nov. Sixteen birds were on feeders at Marl Hill, Bowland in September with numbers rising to 30 by 23 Nov and 15 remaining into December. Up to twelve visited feeders at High Sym, Briercliffe throughout the latter part of the year.

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
Bank End/												
Cockersand	100	80	100	30						34	110	60
Knott End	54	48	11	20						28	90	80
Southport	117	50	65								60	90
Cant Clough				4	1	0	9	23	20	23		
Swinden										50	14	
Whitworth			3	8	8	9	2	7	5			

Flocks of Twite on the coast in winter are a major draw for many birdwatchers and with several highly visible and mobile flocks from Southport north around the Ribble, Wyre and Lune estuaries there is a good chance that any trip to the coast will be rewarded. It has been shown that these birds generally come from the west of Scotland breeding populations.

The table above shows the numbers at the main sites in winter but also the main summering and post breeding feeding locations for our small breeding populations that head east for the winter.

As well as the oft-reported flock at Southport's Marine Lake and shoreline up to Marshside of 117 birds at its peak, there were 150 at Old Hollow Farm, Banks on 6 Jan. The area used in previous winters at Birkdale seems to have been forsaken for pastures new and the only records received south of Southport were at Ainsdale on 6 Jan and Cabin Hill beach on 15 Oct.

The flock at Knott End slipway was particularly confiding with the last record in the first winter period being 20 on 17 April, returning again on 14 Oct. Sixty at Fluke Hall on 18 Feb were probably the Knott End birds wandering. Flocks at Bank End and Cockersand were very close and could relate to the same birds: the peak at Bank End was of 100 on 6 Jan (with 60 there in March) whilst up to 70 were seen regularly in a horse paddock at Cockerham Sands with the last being 10 on 15 April. Up to 42 were seen at Sunderland Point but these could again relate to the Cockersand birds. Thirty-four returned to Cockersand on 19 Oct.

During the summer months, Twite were present on the moors above Burnley and Whitworth. Three singing males were at Whitworth Quarry on 24 March with nine birds present throughout the breeding season at possibly the only remaining breeding site in the county.

Post-breeding flocks congregated at Cant Clough with up to 23 seen throughout the autumn.

Twenty-seven turned up at nearby Hurstwood Reservoir on 29 Aug and Ogden Reservoir near Barley had six on 31 July. Later in the autumn, 14 were at Swinden Reservoir on 6 Oct, building to 50 by the 21st with 14 still there on 14 Nov. The only record from the Belmont area was of one on 20 Sept.

The first to return to the coast were twelve at Heysham on 12 Oct, a rather early date. Apart from birds returning to the aforementioned key sites, up to 50 were at Warton slag tips from 4-19 Nov, six at Bolton-le-Sands on the 26th and seven at Glasson from 11 Nov.



Twite, Knott End, 6 January (Howard Phillipps)

LINNET *Linaria cannabina*

Common breeding resident. Double passage migrant, common winter flocks in the west.

In the first winter period the largest flocks were around Hesketh Bank with up to 272 along Moss Lane and 175 at Hesketh Out Marsh. Other large counts were made at Croston Moss (150-200

throughout), Lytham Moss (up to 150), Tatham Hall Farm, Wray (126 on 7 Feb), Wrampool (up to 140), and Glasson Marsh (200 on 18 March). Eighteen in a garden at Coppull on 18 Feb was an interesting record as were 36 on a flailed wildflower meadow at Everton Park on 7 March.

The first sighting of the year in east Lancashire was of one at New Laithe Farm, Newton on 24 March and in Rossendale singles at Jamestone Quarry on the 9th and Cribden Moor, Haslingden on the 20th. The only flocks of note were of 50 at Salterforth on 27 April, 30 at the Twite feeding station at Whitworth Quarry on the 14th and 23 at Cribden Moor on the 8th, otherwise records were rather sparse with very few potential breeding records.

Elsewhere, spring passage was rather poor though some movement was noted over Fleetwood with 233 over 17 days between 14 March and 5 May peaking at 73 on 15 April. A weedy field at Preesall held 115 birds on 31 March. 140 were at Cockersand on 16 April, 80 at the Eric Morecambe complex, Leighton Moss on the 18th.

Most breeding data came from south-west Lancashire: a sequence of early morning drives around the mosslands resulted in an estimated total of 129 singing males for one observer. More specific data came from the Ribble marshes with 36 pairs at Hesketh Out Marsh, 16 on Marshside saltmarsh and three on the inner marshes. MMWWT had four pairs, Lunt Meadows six pairs and Freshfield Dune Heath 15. Between eight and ten pairs bred on Birkdale Dunes, four pairs at Roby Mill and the species was present over a number of sites around Oglet, Speke and Halewood. Seven to nine pairs nested on EDF land at Heysham.

Three pairs nested at Belmont which is about average in recent times, two pairs nested at Rivington, eight territories were recorded on Darwen & Turton Moors and four at Wards Reservoir.

Post-breeding flocks started to aggregate from July such as 50 at Croston WwTW on the 13th, 20 at Salterforth on the 20th, 33 at Lunt Meadows on 6 Aug and 30 at Roby Mill on the 9th.

There wasn't much visible migration but large flocks congregated at several places during the autumn passage period. A flock of 200 was at Sunderland Point on 14 August and 150 were at Fairhaven on 9 Sept. 150 were at Bretherton Eyes on 30 Sept increasing to 250 by 13 Oct whilst numbers at Lunt Meadows reached 240 in September and 250 in October.

Very low water levels at Parsonage and Rishton Reservoirs attracted relatively large numbers of Linnets again this year – by far the largest counts of the year in the east. There were 35 at Parsonage Reservoir on 5 Sept, reaching 100 by the 24th and then dwindling through October though there were still 19 present on the very late date of 10 Dec. Rishton Reservoir had 30 on 8 Sept, rising to 70 on the 13th and ten present on 16 Oct. Flocks of 15 and 20 were seen around Belmont in November.

Winter flocks on the Fylde included up to 300 at Wrampool from mid-December, 200 at Little Plumpton on the 19th and 150 at Glasson Marsh on the 23rd. A flock of 300 was at Windmill Farm, Holmeswood on 22 Dec.

MEALY (COMMON) REDPOLL* *Acanthis flammea*

Scarce winter visitor.

The only submitted and accepted record was of one on garden feeders at Oswaldtwistle from 25-31 Dec (Mark Jones). Single birds that were probably of this species (or subspecies depending on your point of view) were recorded at three sites in east Lancashire in the peak time of 10 -12 April.

LESSER REDPOLL *Acanthis cabaret*

Fairly common but decreasing breeding bird. Common double passage migrant and winter visitor.

In the first winter period, the only double-figure counts came from Rishton (with up to twelve birds at any one time at garden feeders throughout January to March) and Moor Piece where there were eleven on 3 March. Ones and twos were scattered across the county, though mainly in the east as few were reported in the south-west and just three on the Fylde at Marton Mere. Around Lancaster, only seven were counted in the January survey and a maximum of four birds were at Leighton Moss.

Spring passage was generally poor with lower than usual numbers moving through the region. At Cabin Hill, peak counts included 42 on 19 April and 68 on the 22nd whilst Marshside had better numbers peaking at 20 on 21 April. Just 69 passed over Fleetwood over 16 days but Knott End recorded 377 with a peak of 74 on 21 April; one flock of 19 was seen over Pilling Lane Ends the same day. Heysham recorded a poor total of 48 with 22 on 21 April. Numbers going through Rishton were still reasonable with 66 ringed in April, including 17 on the 8th.

Birds were present into the breeding season at Birkdale and Rishton and territorial males were noted at, for example, Moor Piece, Clowbridge Reservoir, Dean Clough Reservoir, Shedden Clough, Newton Fell, Whitendale, Gannow Fell, Tower Lodge, Crook O' Lune and other prime upland habitat. Ten were displaying in new regrowth at Belmont in April: four territories were recorded there (with juveniles seen in June), with a further four on Darwen & Turton Moors, one at Brinscall and one at Abbey Village. Calling birds were noted at Lee Quarry, Calf Hey and Holden Wood Reservoirs.

A flock of 50 appeared at Stocks Reservoir on 12 Aug and a small passage was recorded at Crown Point, Burnley during the month. Autumn passage at coastal locations was dreadful with totals barely reaching double figures. There were a couple of larger day counts at sites elsewhere in the county – 23 at Jackhouse Reservoir on 14 Oct and 20 at Rivington on the 18th. Numbers at Stocks Reservoir built up to 70 on 5 Oct and 80 by 28 Nov. Thirty were feeding on birch seed at Worsthorpe on 26 Nov and 15 were at White Coppice on the 7th. Otherwise, there were very few second winter period records.

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Rare breeding bird, scarce passage migrant, occasional irruptive movements.

Rather a quiet year for Crossbills on the whole. Certainly, the first winter period had very few sightings with one at Marl Pits, Rossendale on 14 Jan, one at Leighton Moss on the 17th, a couple at both Beacon Fell and Moor Piece in February, then singles at Cabin Hill and Longridge Fell in March.

Three over Knott End on 14 April was the only April record and two at Cross of Greet, two at Gisburn Forest, one over Knott End and one at Marshaw were the only May records.

June brought birds to Galgate, Gannow Fell, Whitendale, Newton-in-Bowland, Calf Hey Reservoir, Knott End, Cabin Hill and Belmont. At the last site the peak count reached nine on the 21st. Crossbills were seen more regularly in Bowland during July and 15 were at Entwistle Reservoir on 20 Aug. Eight were at Stocks Reservoir on 4 Sept and seven at Towneley Golf Course, Burnley on the 25th. A total of 14 birds noted over Knott End between the end of June and 24 Nov.

October brought a flurry of records. A flock of 22 was at Lead Mines Clough on the 3rd where numbers increased to 120 by the 27th including a single flock of 80. There was a report of 350 there on 3 Nov but only ten were present the following day. On 7 Oct there were singles at Freckleton, Fairhaven and Newton-in-Bowland as well as one flock of 19 south over Billinge Hill. There were four at Hesketh Golf Club on 14 Oct, six at Crook O' Lune on the 15th, ten over Birkdale Dunes on the 18th, three at Houghton Bottoms on the 19th, four over Brockholes on the 29th and 20 at Coldwell Reservoirs the same day.

On 2 Nov a minimum of 55 passed over Clough Head, Haslingden, 24 were at Belmont on the 9th and eleven were at Crown Point on the 30th. A few birds remained around Stocks Reservoir to the end of the year. Twelve were at Belmont on 14 Dec and singles were noted at Freshfield Dune Heath on the 19th and Heap Clough on the 14th.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Common breeding resident and passage migrant. Flocks in winter.

This highly successful species is the commonest finch in many gardens these days, a function of increasing numbers utilising feeders and decreases in other species. A Belmont garden had 40 on 3 Feb whilst a nearby roost held 80 on 70 Jan. It was the commonest finch in the Chorley winter garden survey (though only occupying ninth place overall) and the Lancaster January survey recorded 259, an average showing.

There were no three-figure counts recorded in the first winter period; the most were 95 at Stodday on 12 Jan followed by flocks of 50 or more at Eagland Hill, Brock and Lytham Moss. Further inland, peak counts in January were 40 along Haslingden Grane on 5 Jan, 26 at Rishton on the 27th and 36 at Ribchester on 25 Feb.

Three hundred and eighty-five Goldfinches passed over Rossall Point during spring vis mig with peak passage in the third week of April, peaking at 92 on the 15th. There were 45 at Marshside on 19 April.

Breeding was widespread with several pairs at Cuerden Valley Park raising two broods and

three in some cases. At least ten pairs nested at Heysham, again with double broods recorded. Other breeding counts included 21 at Warton/Carnforth, seven along the north section of the Goit at Brinscall, five on Darwen & Turton Moors, 15 at MMWWT, four at Freshfield Dune Heath, five at Kirkdale Cemetery, 10 around Aintree and two at Lunt Meadows NR.

With many juveniles appearing from mid-June, post-breeding flocks started to amalgamate at several locations. The largest of these were 200 at Silverdale Moss on 31 July, and 60 at Alston Wetland on the 30th, with 80 at Lunt on 6 Aug, 80 at Barnaby's Sands and 120 at Blea Tarn on the 12th, 83 on the Keer Estuary on the 14th, 80 at Pilling on the 23rd, 80 at Hoghton on the 26th, 100 at Peel on the 29th and 130 at Cocker's Dyke on the 31st. An estimated 250 in a few flocks were in the Belmont area in Mid-August.

Three-figure counts during September were received from Jackhouse Reservoir (100 on the 12th), Haslingden Grane (150 on the 16th) and Stanah (105 on the 20th). This flocking means that any clear-cut visible migration is difficult to discern, although 60 south over Heysham on 2 Sept was obvious and 626 over Crosby between mid-August and mid-November included a peak of 60 on the 14th. Numbers at Seaforth built steadily from late August to 200 by mid-October. The turn-over in birds was apparent at Rishton with 145 birds ringed in the autumn and new birds turning up in the winter months. Several flocks were in the Rossendale area in October including 120 at Edenfield, 50 at Clough Bottom Reservoir and 50 at Clowbridge Reservoir. Elsewhere, the maximum flock sizes were of 220 at Lytham Hall on 22 Nov, 80 at Fairhaven and Ramper Pot after which numbers dropped off quickly with 80 at Wheelton Plantation on 1 Dec the highest reported.

SISKIN *Spinus spinus*

Fairly common breeding bird. Common double passage migrant and winter visitor.

A very similar year to 2017 for this species with widespread reports but numbers generally down further with few large flocks. There were a few counts in double figures in January with 40 at both Worston and Hoghton Bottoms, 25 at Belmont, 22 at Longridge and 12-15 at Gawthorpe Hall, Ribchester and Newton-in-Bowland. Fifty at Taylor Park, St. Helens on 4 Feb was the largest flock of the first winter period although birds were reported from all over the county in very small numbers. Thirty at Crook O' Lune on 18 Feb and 20 at Knowsley Safari Park on the 22nd were exceptions to that.

Spring passage of Siskins is noticeably early, starting in late February although primarily through March and early April. This year's passage was described as very poor from most correspondents but at Rossall Point 75 were counted on ten days from 19 March to 16 April, peaking at 30 on 8 April. Marshside had 25 between 9 March and 20 April. Ringing at feeders in Rishton captured 26 birds out of the annual total of 28 in the same period, one of which was recovered in Norway a few weeks later; 27 were at Jackhouse Reservoir on 23 March. Visible and audible migration monitoring at Knott End recorded a much more impressive 456 between 18 Feb and 9 June with a maximum of 43 on 9 March.

Birds were present at many locations in the upland areas of the county but sightings in summer weren't confined to those regions. Four pairs bred successfully at Belmont with juveniles seen from 25 May. One or two pairs bred on Darwen & Turton Moors and birds were probably breeding at Gisburn Forest, Moor Piece, Roddlesworth Woods, Haslingden Grane, Stubbins, Gannow Fell, Langden Valley, Dunsop Valley and Tower Lodge. Birds were present well into the breeding season at Birkdale Dunes.

Dispersal happens quite quickly with juveniles reported at the end of June at Roby Mill and birds overhead at Silverdale and Galgate. July and August were very quiet though 27 were at Cuerden on 29 July and 50 were at Stocks Reservoir on 12 August whilst odd birds were heard over Treales and Sefton Park, Liverpool

Autumn passage was also very subdued with Heysham recording a paltry 22, 76 at Fairhaven Dunes and 105 over Knott End. Peak counts were 20 at Leighton Moss on 9 Oct, 49 over Formby Dunes and 14 over Seaforth on the 10th, 32 over in one hour at Belmont on the 15th and eleven at Brockholes on the 29th.

The population in the second winter period was low with the only regular reports coming from Leighton Moss, Stocks Reservoir and Jackhouse. Twenty were at White Coppice on 8 Dec and 40 at Leighton Moss on the 26th.

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Common but declining breeding bird in the south-west and Fylde.

2016 Erratum: Reference to Corn Buntings at Billinge Hill in September actually related to Reed Buntings.

2018: The largest counts this year came from SD31 & 41, the area to the north of Burscough to Croston and east of Southport. 119 at Churchtown Moss on 9 Jan was only surpassed by 130 at Windmill Farm, Holmeswood on 22 Dec. Other locations in the area with significant numbers during the first part of the year were 28 near Mere Brow, 40 at Martin Mere, 32 at Scarisbrick and 30 at Croston Moss but smaller numbers were recorded from Hesketh Out Marsh south to Ince Blundell.



Corn Bunting, Bradshaw Lane,
9 June (Paul Slade)

The feeding stations on the

Fylde were quiet to start with as the main flocks fed in fields; they included 47 at Peel on 20 Jan, 40 at Nateby on the 29th and 26 at Lousanna Farm on the 6th. Birds frequented the feeding sites at Eagland Hill in larger numbers during February with up to 60 in the area though to March. A flock of 15 feeding in the furrows of a newly-sewn crop at Cockersand on 24 May was rather unusual.

A peripatetic survey of the mosses of the south-west estimated 212 singing males in the spring whereas on the Fylde, singing males were recorded from only nine locations from Lytham Moss to Cockerham. Probably included in the former may have been three at Hesketh Out Marsh, six on Mawdesley Moss, Curlew Lane, Burscough, Scarisbrick and Shirdley Hill where they've been absent for some years.

Reports in the second winter period were rather scant from south of the Ribble with the majority coming from Eagland Hill and Pilling with 20 there in late November and up to 112 on wires at Birk's Farm on 25 Dec. A flock of 45 was at Bretherton Eyes on 2 Nov, 15 were at Croston Moss on the 18th and 40 were at New Cut Lane, Birkdale on 4 Dec. Two at Simonswood Moss on 31 Dec and five at Windle Farm, St Helens on 25 Oct were the only records from that area.

Some migrants were noted in the year: four over Knott End on three days in spring, one at Seaforth on 29 April and two over Cabin Hill on 15 Nov.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Fairly common but decreasing resident, mostly in the south. Scarce autumn passage migrant.

A roving survey of the southwest Lancashire mosses produced an estimated total of 149 singing males, mostly concentrated around Ormskirk and Burscough. More specifically, a minimum of ten singing males were counted on Bretherton Moss, up to five were regular south of Ulles Walton, five singing males were located around Roby Mill and eleven at Highfield Moss straddling the border between St Helens and Greater Manchester. Eight males had territories at farms around the Halewood area, Tarbock and Speke. Three were singing at Newton Common, St Helens and one at Chadwick Green.

A male singing at Cabin Hill on 15 April was a sound from the past and birds were singing at Haskayne Cutting and along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal at Scarisbrick.

On the Fylde, a small number of singing birds were noted at Inskip (4), Treales, Elswick, Churchtown, Out Rawcliffe, Ratten Row, Eagland Hill and Skitham.

Some coastal observations were made during passage periods with Knott End recording one on 23 May and singles on 7 Oct & 11 Nov. Heysham had one over on 9 Nov and Cabin Hill had three records in November.

Winter records were rather sparse with up to eleven visiting Fylde feeding stations in the early part of the year and up to eight at the end. Larger parties were noted south of the Ribble with ten on Croston Moss in January, 18 at Bretherton Eyes on 4 Nov and 15 at Croston Finney on 15 Dec. In Knowsley, a flock at Kirkby Moss grew from twelve on 4 Oct to 22 by 2 Nov. A flock of 24 was at Windle Farm near St Helens on 25 Oct and birds were also present along Dairy Farm Road and Old Coach Road, Altcar and Formby mosses as well as Speke Millwoods and Oglet.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common breeding bird and winter visitor. Double passage migrant.

The largest numbers in the first winter period were of 35 at Croston Moss and 20 at the Eric Morecambe complex in January and 39 at Bradshaw Lane, Pilling in February. Nowhere in east Lancashire had significant numbers, indeed there were only two records of counts in double figures there all year. The Lancaster January survey recorded a below-average 21 birds.

There was a hint of spring passage as birds turned up at gardens in March, for example 13 in a garden at Knott End on the 20th and seven different birds from the previous two days in a Rishton garden were the highest ever totals at each location. There were notable increases at several other sites such as Cabin Hill, Brockholes and Leighton Moss.

Singing males were recorded all over the county. The ELOC database had spring-summer records from 70 sites including six singing males at Clowbridge, seven at Brookside, Oswaldtwistle five at Dean Clough Reservoir and four along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal between Rishton and Blackburn. In Rossendale, this was 18 sites including eight at Mitchell House Reservoirs, Accrington and eight at Holden Wood Reservoir. Thirteen pairs bred around Belmont Reservoir which is about average over the past decade and six in-by-land nearby. Fourteen territories were located on Darwen & Turton Moors and three along the north section of the Goit. Six pairs bred in Buckshaw Village.

MMWWT recorded 57 nesting pairs, Marshside had 17 and Lunt Meadows recorded 14 pairs. Four pairs were at Hesketh Out Marsh but Freshfield Dune Heath had just one. There was a good population in the Birkdale Dunes with a minimum estimate of 15 pairs. Five pairs were found at Tray Ashes Farm, Halewood whilst three were on territory at Garston Shore and 'several' pairs were at Oglet. Four pairs were recorded at Roby Mill and three around Aintree.

On the Fylde, birds were present at 39 locations in the late spring and summer with peak counts of seven singing males at Carr House Green Common and over 13 males at Marton Mere.

Autumn passage was rather average with lower ringing totals at Heysham but higher at Leighton Moss. There wasn't much visible migration in September save for 12 at Cabin Hill on the 17th and 50 the same day on moorland between Clowbridge and Clough Bottom Reservoirs. At least 40 birds were in the small reedbed area of Marshside on 14 Oct. Knott End recorded 270 in the autumn passage period with a peak of 20 on 15 Oct and 113 were recorded over Crosby peaking with 18 on 31 Oct. Forty were present around Belmont in early-October with a total of 60 in six flocks in December. A flock of 35 was at Bretherton Eyes on 27 Oct with 20 there mid-November. Very few other double-figure counts were received.

LAPLAND BUNTING* *Calcarius lapponicus*

Rare autumn passage migrant and winter visitor to coasts.

The only record was of one on Pendle Hill on 10 Oct (John Metcalf).

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Fairly common winter visitor to summits and coasts.

In the first winter period, the flock on Downham Moor on the north side of Pendle Hill remained from 2017 with 25 on 5 Jan and 22 on 11 Feb but just one on the 16th. On the coast, one was again at Crosby from 1 Jan to 12 March, up to two birds were on St Anne's beach from 28 Feb to 6 March and one was at Carnforth Outer Marsh on the 26th.

The first record in the second winter period was on 8 Nov when one turned up again at St Anne's beach. One flew south along Blackpool shore on the 21st. Two were present at St Anne's beach from 25 Dec to the end of the year. One was on Pendle Hill on 14 Nov with another at Great Hameldon on the 15th-21st. Three were again seen on Pendle Hill on 11 Dec.

ESCAPES

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

Singles were at Copthorne on 15 Feb, Anchorsholme on 1 May and Foulridge Reservoirs on 9 June.

GREATER SNOW GOOSE *Chen caerulescens*

An adult white-morph of unknown provenance associated with Pinkfeet on Crossens Outer Marsh and Banks Marsh from 29 April to 4 May.

EMPEROR GOOSE *Chen canagica*

One or a hybrid was with Canada Geese at Alston Wetland on 10 Feb and another at 'Flying Fish', Fylde on 5 April.

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus*

Black Swans are our most widely reported escaped/feral birds but it is next to impossible to estimate their numbers in the county with any degree of accuracy. A dozen or so were reported from the Fylde this year with around half that number in the south-west and a single record in the east, one in the Ribble Valley at Three Rivers.

All these records were singles and it is likely that the number of individuals is very low as birds wander around the county and probably beyond; although seen during most months they were absent between May and July. Black Swans are nomadic in their native Australia and they give that impression here too. Certainly, no breeding attempt has ever been recorded in Lancashire although a pair was displaying at Lunt Meadows from 31 Aug to 25 Sept this year (in the austral spring!).

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Four were at Mere Sands Wood on 20-28 Sept and up to five at Alston Reservoirs between 21 Oct and the end of the year; four at Aldcliffe on 4-10 Nov may have been the Mere Sands birds.

RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*

One was seen at several sites in the south-west, Ince Blundell, Hightown, Marshside and MMWWT during January and February, at Mere Sands Wood, on 3 June and again at MMWWT on 21 July, and another at Warton Slag Tips on 9 and 26 Nov.

WOOD DUCK *Aix sponsa*

There were two records, a male on a pond at Eagland Hill on 14 Jan and 1 & 28 April, and a pair at Rowley Lake on 8 Feb.

MUSCOVY DUCK *Cairina moschata*

At least five were resident on Croft Lodge, Brinscall for most of the year and elsewhere in Chorley three were at White Coppice on 17 May.

In east Lancashire one or two were present through the summer at Ball Grove and Victoria Park, Nelson, and singles were at Wood End Sewage Works on 24 Jan and at Brookside from January through to May; four were on the River Calder at Padiham Bridge on 20 April, two were at Grove Lane on 7 May and one was at Jackhouse on 8 June.

Elsewhere, three were in Greenbank Park, Liverpool throughout the year, three at Cleveleys on 31 March, singles in Lancaster on 5 Sept and Longton Brickcroft on 2 Oct, and eight at Haverbreaks (Fylde) on 3 Nov.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

The regular bird was at Walton Hall and Stanley Parks, Liverpool until at least early June.

RINGED TEAL *Callonetta leucophrys*

One was at Longton Brickcroft on 2 Oct.

INDIAN PEAFAWL *Pavo cristatus*

Up to seven were at the usual household waste disposal site, Siddows, Clitheroe all year.

GOLDEN PHEASANT *Chrysolophus pictus*

One was at Stocks Reservoir on 4 May and possibly the same bird at nearby Dale Head church on 13 July.

REEVES'S PHEASANT *Syrnaticus reevesii*

One was Eagland Hill on 6 Feb and 15 March.

SILVER PHEASANT *Lophura nycthemera*

One was at Stalmine on 13 March.

WHITE-CRESTED KALIJ PHEASANT *Lophura leucomelanos*

One was at Stalmine on 13 March.

NORTHERN BOBWHITE (QUAIL) *Colinus virginianus*

One was on various parts of the site at Marshside from 26 April into mid-May, showing frequently and calling occasionally.

HELMETED GUINEAFOWL *Numida meleagris*

The feral flock of up to nine by Belmont Reservoir was present for most of the year. Another was at Eagland Hill on 6 Feb.

HARRIS'S HAWK *Parabuteo unicinctus*

Single(s) were at various Fylde sites, Mowbreck, Salisbury Woodland and Treales, on several dates between January and early March.

One at the Royal Blackburn Hospital on 11 Oct was thought to be possibly on pigeon-scaring duty rather than an actual escape.

EAGLE OWL *Bubo bubo*

At least one pair bred successfully in the usual area of Bowland.

An apparently moribund bird, wearing jesses was at Kincaig Lake, Fylde on 16-17 Aug.

GYR FALCON *Falco rusticolus*

One was sat on a lamp-post in Maghull on 25 Nov and an all-black bird caused confusion high in the sky at Heysham on 21 Aug.

SAKER *Falco cherrug*

An escaped (satellite-tagged) juvenile was at Belmont Reservoir. on 6-7 July and one was found long dead there on 1 Aug.

ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET *Psittacula eupatria*

One was reported in Preston on 11 June.

GREEN-CHEEKED PARAKEET *Pyrrhura molinae*

One was at Blackpool Sixth Form College on 15 June.

BUDGERIGAR *Melopsittacus undulatus*

A very vocal bird was at the Festival Gardens site in south Liverpool on 7 Sept.

WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA *Lonchura striata*

One was at Bispham on 5 May.

ZEBRA FINCH *Taeniopygia guttata*

One was at Pilling Lane on 20 Oct.



LANCASHIRE RINGING REPORT

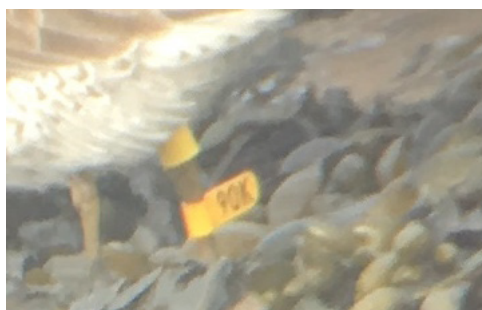
Covering the period July 2018 to July 2019

Pete Marsh

It has been suggested that more information is provided on the logistics of “ring reading in the field”, so I’ve included a few examples below of what you might come across and how to deal with them.

First of all, a flock of ‘tame’ gulls might allow the opportunity to read a metal ring, even above the tarsus. Mediterranean Gull EX78711 has been returning to Heysham every autumn/winter since being ringed in the Czech Republic in 2003. As suggested by the picture, it sits around allowing the number to eventually be read, even on a ‘circular’ ring, and doesn’t even require wasting a loaf of bread.

There are three main types of colour marking using leg rings. The most recent of these, and usually the most user-friendly to document, are coded Leg-Flags, using letters and numbers. Some are easier than others with, for example, the Icelandic black letters on yellow-base Knot are easier than some of the orange-base Sefton coast ones, such as the illustrated example which has stained slightly and the flag ‘crinkled’. The big advantage of the flags is that the bird can be identified providing the flagged leg is being used to stand on! How many of you have ‘waited for Godot’ with one-leg-roosters, when the colour rings



on the other leg were needed for identification only for them all to be rapidly flushed into the dim distance by a Peregrine or ‘mutt’! Occasionally the origin of the colour rings/marks literally flags up an important regional record such as this Dutch nestling-ringed Continental Black-tailed Godwit with its first summer plumage otherwise pretty indistinguishable from its ubiquitous Icelandic relatives.

The other form of coded colour ring is a vertical sequence of three or four characters, often a mixture of letters and numbers but sometimes all one or the other. The most familiar to many local ring readers are Mediterranean and Black-headed Gulls, with



many colours and combinations as befits the various European ringing schemes providing the birds. It is Important here to draw your observation, so the direction of the reading is obvious and not forgotten before you try and trace. Sixes and nines, for example, need to be read the right way round and your drawing solves any problem! Here is a 'vertical lettering' (two-code) Common Sandpiper; other two-coded species such as Pale-bellied Brent Goose have horizontal lettering.

Many birds are ringed with a unique combination of colour rings accompanied by the 'usual' metal. With the longer-legged waders, this involves the tibia and tarsus and perhaps confusingly sometimes accompanied by unmarked flags. Here it is essential that you note down where the rings or flags are (again use a drawing) and carefully assess whether, for example, Green rings are dark/medium/light or lime. It can be very difficult sometimes to see Black or Grey rings or separate White from faded Light Blue or Lime Green. Plus, they can get muddy! Note that they all should have metal rings, so make sure that you have not recorded it as a Grey colour ring. The Grey Wagtail report via the picture below (Heysham to Worsley canal) raised the problem of White vs. Pale Blue, but we were fortunately able to solve it. We have managed to cease using the problem colours with Grey Wagtail, but this freedom of options would not have been possible had we been ringing 100 as opposed to about 50 per year. This Tees-ringed Avocet is quite a fistful to document, but Avocets like hanging around in front of hides, tend to have fairly lengthy stays and not cause problems in 'one-legged' tightly packed flocks, making life a lot easier.

Any need for art work to describe the positions and codes can be avoided by a decent picture. For example, Chris Batty's methodology is to take HD video using a camcorder at 10x magnification through a telescope at 20x and then select the sharpest frames ('videograbs') as photographs. This has been used to good effect on Knott End Gulls and Sandwich Terns.



A quick glance through the Heysham Bird Observatory annual ringing totals confirmed what I had thought. There was nothing remarkable about 2018 as regards land-bird migration and high ringing totals of certain species; this was also confirmed by checking the BTO on-line totals. The early March 'beast from the east', the obvious meteorological survival problem during the year, was very difficult to evaluate and may have been more disruptive for early migrants on the move, as they were 'caught out' in unfamiliar localities, and certainly the Goldcrest total was otherwise inexplicably way down, although a westerly October



undoubtedly helped to reduce the number of Northern European birds migrating through 'our side' of the country, as well as limiting mist netting opportunities. It may also be significant that the only two 'found dead' recoveries from the Grey Wagtail colour-ringing programme were during early March 2018 and memories from this period included record numbers of miserable passage Stonechat temporarily 'grounded' on the relatively sheltered and unfrozen Ocean Edge saltmarsh edge. On the other hand, it was a good year for Lesser Whitethroat and Goldfinch were ringed in record numbers – the latter a comment echoed in many parts of the country

Publication of a Shetland-ringed Linnet in the 2016 report was perhaps thought of as 'unusual' at the time, but perhaps the outstanding land-bird recoveries in this report are two others indicating a far Northern origin for at least some of the birds in the Fylde Ringing Group's winter Linnet flocks, contrasting with another bird on the short hop to Walney for the breeding season

Ringing issues relating to non-passerines were dominated by a massive number of leg-flag-bearing Knot being targeted by Rose Maciewicz, Peter Knight and others, involving some rather King Canute-like strategies in obscure areas of mudflat/shallow water, such as standing there and letting the feeding Knot surround you! Other more conventional observations from, for example, incoming/dropping tide roosts involved more people and also brought other species into the ring-reading equation, notably Sanderling and Sandwich Tern. Most of this has taken place south of the Ribble with Morecambe Bay sites, with its channel-filled saltmarshes often in the way, being more awkward, although Heysham old heliport had its moments in spring 2019 and the Eric Morecambe complex has been very good for Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit. Hopefully some other northern sites will prove fruitful. The life-histories of these species will, of course, become progressively more interesting the older they get and the documented Knot provide ample incentive to keep going.

Thanks to those not already mentioned: Peter Alker, Jon Greep, Ian Walker, Steven Grimshaw, Bill Aspin, Chris Batty, Bob Danson, Craig Bell, Hugh Jones, Mark Breaks, North Lancs RG, Ian Hartley, Pete Woodruff, Malcolm Downham, Janet Packham, Janice Sutton, Mark Nightingale, Tim Vaughan, Tony Conway, Gavin Thomas, Stuart Darbyshire, Mike Standing, Charlie Liggett, Kane Brides, Pete Kinsella, Richard du Feu, Paul Ellis, Paul Slade, South West Lancs RG, Merseyside RG, Jeff Neale, Steve White, Jean Roberts, Pete Crooks, Jon Carter, Kevin Kelly.

PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE

VTRB	Ad F	02/08/2014	Stang Bay, Axel Heiberg Island, CANADA
	Seen	23/01/2015	Walney Island, Cumbria
	Seen	19/09/2015	Ballyreagh, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	07/10/2015	Greyabbey Bay, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	20/09/2016	Ballyreagh, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	21/9-4/10/16	Strangford Lough Gasworks, Co Down
	Seen	07/10-26/10/16	Greyabbey Bay, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	03/11/16-20/2/17	Walney Island, Cumbria
	Seen	19/09/2017	Castle Espie, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	29/9-10/10/17	Greyabbey Bay, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	31/10/2017	Walney Island, Cumbria
	Seen	09/12/2017	Foulney Island, Cumbria
	Seen	28/10/2018	Mill Bay, Carlingford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	winter 2018/9	Walney Island, Cumbria
	Seen	10/02/2019	Walney Island, Cumbria
	Seen	04/3-22/3/19	Heysham Village Bay/Red Nab, Lancashire
	Seen	01/4-2/4/19	Heysham Village Bay/Red Nab, Lancashire
VDRB	Ad M	02/08/2014	Stang Bay, Axel Heiberg Island, CANADA
	Seen	23/02/2015	Walney Island, Cumbria
	Seen	19/09/2015	Ballyreagh, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	07/10/2015	Greyabbey Bay, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	20/09/2016	Ballyreagh, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	21/9-4/10/16	Strangford Lough Gasworks, Co Down
	Seen	07/10-26/10/16	Greyabbey Bay, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	03/11/16-20/2/17	Walney Island, Cumbria
	Seen	24/03/2017	Tralee/Blennerville, Co Kerry
	Seen	04/05/2017	Álfanes/Hlíðsnes, Hafnarfjörður, ICELAND
	Seen	19/09/2017	Castle Espie, Strangford Lough, Co Down
	Seen	29/9-10/10/17	Greyabbey Bay, Strangford Lough, Co Down

Seen	14/10/2017	Castle Espie, Strangford Lough, Co Down
Seen	31/10/2017	Walney Island, Cumbria
Seen	05/11/2017	Foulney Island, Cumbria
Seen	09/12/2017	Walney Island, Cumbria
Seen	22/04/2018	Álftanes/Bessastaðir, Skerjafjörður, ICELAND
Seen	28/10/2018	Mill Bay, Carlingford Lough, Co Down
Seen	winter 2018/9	Walney Island, Cumbria
Seen	10/02/2019	Walney Island, Cumbria
Seen	04/3-22/3/19	Heysham Village Bay/Red Nab, Lancashire
Seen	01/4-2/4/19	Heysham Village Bay/Red Nab, Lancashire

The above pair definitely absent from the Heysham area 23/3-31/3/19 inclusive and also from 3/4/19 (daily checks of routine). They come from the ECHA (East Canadian High Arctic) population of Pale-bellied Brent Geese. They were ringed on the breeding grounds very far north in Canada as part of an expedition there in 2014, during which 183 geese were caught. These birds experience one of the longest migrations of any goose species, and stage through Iceland. They mainly overwinter in Ireland, although some birds, like these, disperse to western and southern GB, and to France (mainly Normandy). Thanks very much to the Irish Brent Research Group (IBGRG) for the details.

(P)T(R)Y	Ad M	17/05/2008	Pálshús, Álftanes, Hafnarfjörður, SW ICELAND
Seen		21/5-30/5/08	Álftanes area, Hafnarfjörður, SW ICELAND
Seen		21/12/2008	North Slobs, Wexford, Co Wexford
Seen		16/02/2009	North Slobs, Wexford, Co Wexford
Seen		08/04-25/05/09	Álftanes area, Hafnarfjörður, SW ICELAND
Seen		02/11/2009	Cross Island, Strangford Lough, Co Down
Seen		15/11-26/11/09	Greenore, Carlingford Lough, Co Louth
Seen		28/03/2010	Greenore, Carlingford Lough, Co Louth
Seen		09/04/2010	Port Beach, Co Louth
Seen		19/04/2010	Rogerstown Estuary, Co Dublin
Seen		28/4-13/5/10	Blautós, Grunnaðfjörður, ICELAND
Seen		17/10-16/11/10	Greenore, Carlingford Lough, Co Louth
Seen		9/5-19/5/11	Blautós, Grunnaðfjörður, ICELAND
Seen		20/9-19/10/11	Castle Espie, Strangford Lough, Co Down
Seen		03/5-18/5/12	Blautós, Grunnaðfjörður, ICELAND
Seen		23/09/2012	Castle Espie, Strangford Lough, Co Down
Seen		27/09/2012	Ballyreagh, Strangford Lough, Co Down
Seen		29/11/2012	Dublin Bay, Co Dublin
Seen		02/05-20/5/13	Álftanes, Skerjafjörður/Hafnarfjörður, SW ICELAND
Seen		17/01/2014	Roa Island, Cumbria
Seen		07/10-9/10/14	Greyabbey Bay, Strangford Lough, Co Down
Seen		20/12-21/12/14	Walney Island, Cumbria
<i>NO DATA ACCEPTED but identifiable bird present at Walney for the remainder of 2014/5 and subsequent winters (see below)</i>			
Seen		04/03/2019	Walney Island, Cumbria
Seen		10/3-18/3/19	Heysham Village Bay/Red Nab

Ring PR fell off soon after 21/12/14 sighting on Walney and, as is the policy with most colour-ringing schemes, that is as regards certain identification in the field in the future. However, Colin Raven kept tabs on this bird after the ring fell off and was able to easily identify the pics from our side as being this bird. Thanks to Colin for help here. Breeding location not known for this bird but plenty of Icelandic and Irish stop-over sightings. Also a suggestion that it probably wintered in Ireland prior to winter 2013/4 as it is unlikely to have been overlooked in SW Cumbria

CANADA GOOSE

5233897	Adult	25/06/2017	Llangorse Lake, Powys
	Freshly dead (shot)	04/10/2018	Southport 191km N

Known moulting locality and longest distance reported 2018.

GREYLAG GOOSE

L03052	First-year	18/11/2017	Wig, Gwynedd
	Freshly dead (shot)	28/08/2018	Cockerham 114km N

Most records involve movements related to the Windermere summer moult captures.

GREENLAND WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

X6U	Adult male		
	(& fem, 3 young)	late winter 2016/7	Wexford Slobs, Co Wexford, Ireland

Seen (alone)	winter 2017/8	Wexford Slobs, Co Wexford, Ireland
Seen	04/11/2018	Marshside RSPB
Seen	10/11/2018	Bank Marsh, Ribble Estuary
Not recorded	winter 2018/9	Wexford Slobs (no sign during careful monitoring)
Seen	27/03/2019	Manor valley, Castlehill, Peebles, Scotland

The accompanying ringed female had no history subsequent to winter 2016/7 and this male was subsequently unpaired as regards migration and winter. The second sighting of a displaced ringed GWFG affecting our area. Did it winter unrecorded this side of the Irish Sea in 2018/9?

MUTE SWAN

ZZ6744	First-year Female	04/10/2008	Harrington, Cumbria
	Seen	29/03/2018	Marine Lake, Southport 112km SSE

Longest distance of the year

WHOOPEE SWAN

Z88189	Adult Female	23/11/1999	Martin Mere Swan Pipe
	Seen	19/05/2008	Armotasel, Nordur-Mula: 65°18'N 15°18'W
			ICELAND 1,472km NNW
	Caught	28/01/2009	Martin Mere Swan Pipe
	Caught	24/02/2015	Martin Mere Swan Pipe
	Caught	24/11/2017	Martin Mere Swan Pipe
	Seen	23-24/10/18	Fair Isle 661km N

Always good to publish movements linking Fair Isle and Lancashire!

SHELDUCK

GN81532	Adult Female	03/02/2016	Newton Farm, near Cardiff
& CRs	Seen	24/02/2017	Martin Mere WWT 236km N
	Seen	21/2-6/3/18	Martin Mere WWT 236km N

In addition, there were three movements between Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) and Martin Mere to go with Devonian bird published last year

PINTAIL

FH00130	Adult Male	19/11/2018	Martin Mere Swan Pipe
	Caught	11/12/2018	Slimbridge Swan Pipe, Gloucestershire 211km S

Two swan pipes ticked off within a month!

FH00054	Full-grown Male	13/02/2013	Martin Mere Swan Pipe
	Caught	01/12/2014	Martin Mere Swan Pipe
	Caught	24/11/2017	Martin Mere Swan Pipe
	Freshly dead (shot)	12/05/2018	Reka Meyen': 65°10'N 46°25'E
			(Arkhangelsk Oblast) RUSSIA 2,972km ENE

The longest lateral movement in this report involving the most predictable species.

TEAL

EX31699	Adult Female	16/07/2018	Horsham Marsh, Kent
	Freshly dead (shot)	04/11/2018	Salwick, nr Preston 354km N

LITTLE EGRET

GR16284	Nestling	27/05/2013	Norfolk (site confidential)
	Seen	03/09/2013	Shard Bridge, Wyre 249km WNW

Recently unearthed from a time when nesting sites were still documented as 'confidential'.

GJ60689	Nestling	05/06/2012	near The Laurels Farm, Terrington St Clement: (Norfolk)
	Seen	26/02/2017	Birkdale 241km WNW
	Seen	13/03/2018	Birkdale

The longest movement in 2018.

GV75213	Nestling	27/05/2018	Rossmere (Hartlepool), Cleveland
	Seen	15/08/2018	Carnforth Marsh 119km SW
	Seen	10/07/2019	Carnforth Marsh

The first dispersing nestling from a colony to the north of us. We need to ring some of ours to obtain a 'balanced' picture.

SHAG

1496178	Nestling	13/06/2017	Puffin Island, Anglesey
	Dead on beach	28/12/2017	Ainsdale 72km ENE
See last year's report for a different one (1496251) ringed on the same date found under Southport Pier 22/1/18			
1470959	Nestling	11/06/2016	Puffin Island, Anglesey
	Freshly dead (storm)	11/01/2018	Lytham St Anne's 81km NE

Unusual: As can be seen from previous reports, the majority of records in the county (ringed or otherwise) are juveniles in their first autumn/winter.

CORMORANT

5269790	Nestling	25/06/2016	Puffin Island, Anglesey
	Seen	20/03/2017	Eccleshill, Darwen, 114km NE

A reminder that not all inland ones are sinensis. Another Puffin Island carbo was found dead at Caton, Lune Valley, much nearer the coast

5210011	Nestling	26/06/1999	Puffin Island, Anglesey
	Freshly dead	30/03/2018	Knott End-on-Sea 96km NE (18yr 9m 4 d)

The longevity record for this species is about 21.5 years. Another four Puffin Island birds were found dead on tidelines, mainly late winter

5243282	Nestling	30/06/2018	Hestan Island, Auchencairn: 54°49'N 3°49'W (Dumfries and Galloway)
	Freshly dead	05/10/2018	Preston Docks 139km S

COMMON BUZZARD

MA19932	First-year	10/02/2017	Brimstage, Wirral, Merseyside
	Sick (nat. causes)	12/07/2018	Freckleton, nr Lytham 47km NNE

COOT

GR24364	First-winter	24/09/2010	Stanley Park, Blackpool
	Seen	28/07/2016	Titchwell RSPB, Norfolk 259km ESE

By far and away the longest movement reported in recent times

OYSTERCATCHER

FP47550	FG	17/03/2018	Newtonmore, Strathspey, Highland
& CR	Seen	08/02/2019	Heysham old heliport
FH77064	Nestling	21/06/2016	Whitehillocks Farm, Glen Clova, Angus
& CR	Seen	08/02/2019	Heysham old heliport
FH23768	Adult	01/02/2010	Heysham
	Freshly dead	25/03/2018	Huntly, Aberdeenshire 380km N
FH23211	Adult	12/12/2008	Heysham
	Freshly dead	15/05/2018	Haugh of Glass, Huntly, Aberdeenshire 379km N
FH77086	Nestling	13/06/2017	Gella, Glen Clova, Angus
	Seen	20/09/2017	Hoylelake, Wirral, Merseyside 376km S
	Seen	28/07/2018	Seaforth NR 368km S
FH23100	Adult	12/12/2008	Heysham
	Caught by ringer	01/02/2010	Heysham
	Dead (nat. causes)	26/03/2018	Turrerich, Glen Quaich, Perth & Kinross 283km NNW
FJ06105	First-year	14/3-17/3/16	The Gann, Dale, Pembrokeshire
	Seen	11/08/2016	The Gann, Dale, Pembrokeshire
	Seen	16/07 & 29/10/17	The Gann, Dale, Pembrokeshire
	Seen	15/07/2018	Formby, Merseyside 245km NE
	Seen	11/11/2018	The Gann, Dale, Pembrokeshire

Sometimes the dates of multiple sightings fail to answer any questions! It may have summered on the Gann in its first year, possibly also in the second year, late October and early November sightings may have indicated wintering but are not conclusive and the Formby sighting may have indicated passage from a more northerly breeding site?

FH23805	Adult	01/02/2010	Heysham
	Freshly dead (hit by car)	14/05/2018	Uddu, Rissa: 63°34'N 9°55'E (Sor-Trondelag) NORWAY 1,289km NE

AVOCET

EY98058	Nestling	24/05-13/6/2015	Seal Sands, Teesmouth
	Seen	17/07/2015	Alkborough Flats, North Lincolnshire, 109 km, SSE

	Seen	from 05/04/2017	Eric Morecambe pools 115Km WSW
	Seen	29/3-29/4/18	Eric Morecambe pools
	Seen	28/3-20/4/19	Eric Morecambe pools
EY21410	Nestling	03/07/2013	Long Bank Marsh, nr. Kilnsea, East Yorks. 53°37'N 0°6'E
	Seen	26/4-29/4/18	Eric Morecambe pools 200Km WSW
EX15786	Nestling	23/05/2011	Seal Sands, Teesmouth
	Caught	31/05/2011	Seal Sands, Teesmouth
	Seen	08/08/2011	Alkborough Flats, North Lincolnshire 110km SSE
	Seen	30/06/2012	Seal Sands, Teesmouth
	Seen	13/07/2012	Alkborough Flats, North Lincolnshire 110km SSE
	Seen	15/04/2013	Seal Sands, Teesmouth
	Seen	29/08/2013	Alkborough Flats, North Lincolnshire 110km SSE
	Seen	21/04/2015	Greenabella Marsh, Graythorpe, Hartlepool
	Seen	06/03/2017	Greenabella Marsh, Graythorpe, Hartlepool
	Seen	27/04/2018	Eric Morecambe pools 115Km WSW
	Seen	01/05/2018	Eric Morecambe pools
EY98058	Nestling	24/05/2015	Seal Sands, Teesmouth
	Seen	28/05/2015	Seal Sands, Teesmouth
	Seen	17/07/2015	Alkborough Flats, North Lincolnshire 110km SSE
	Seen	05/04/2017	Eric Morecambe pools 115Km WSW
	Seen	29/03/2018	Eric Morecambe pools
	Seen	01/05/2018	Eric Morecambe pools
EW28899	Nestling	28/06/2016	Nosterfield: 54°12'N 1°35'W (North Yorkshire)
	Seen	13/08/2016	Alkborough Flats, North Lincolnshire 84 km SE
	Seen	22/06/2017	Alkborough Flats, North Lincolnshire 84 km SE
	Seen	06/09/2017	Breydon Water, Norfolk 280km SE
	Seen	02/10/2017	Alkborough Flats, North Lincolnshire 84 km SE
	Seen	24/03/2018	Marshside RSPB, Southport 110km WSW
	Seen	24/3 & 19/4/19	Marshside RSPB, Southport

Update from last year's report including missing data and 2019 sightings. No evidence received that it actually bred on the Sefton coast

RINGED PLOVER

8B80586	First-winter	02/09/2017	Makkevika, Giske, NORWAY 62 30N 6 02E
& CMs	Seen	18/05/2019	Alston wetland, nr Longridge 1088km SSW
8A56614	First-winter	30/08/2012	Makkevika, Giske, NORWAY 62 30N 6 02E
& CMs	Seen	02/10/2012	Wet Moor, Somerset 1383km SSW
	Seen	15/05/2019	Sunderland village, Lune Estuary 1078km SSW
NW86134	Adult	12/08/2017	Llanfairfechan, Conwy
& CMs	Seen	08/05/2018	Lytham St Annes 87km NE

Presumably Arctic breeding birds, given the late spring migration dates

NW86122	Adult	12/08/2017	Llanfairfechan, Conwy
& CMs	Seen	11/08/2018	Birkdale, Southport 75km NE

Uncertain breeding origin.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT

DB61591	Adult	14/08/2006	Heacham, Norfolk
& CMs	Seen	13/11/2017	Crosby beach 244km NW
K04742	First-winter	29/09/2017	Revtangen, Rogaland, NORWAY 58 45N 5 29E
& CMs	Seen	18/11/2017	Hunstanton, Norfolk 715km S
	Seen	01/12/2017	Holme Dunes, Norfolk 713km SW
	Seen	22/12/2018	Heacham, Wash, Norfolk 721km SW
	Seen	13/01/2019	Heacham, Wash, Norfolk 721km SW
	Seen	18/05/2019	Seaforth NR, Liverpool 788km WSW
7218378	First-winter	06/09/2017	Revtangen (Rogaland) NORWAY 58 45 N 5 28 E
& CMs	Seen	13-14/04/2019	Eric Morecambe Pools, Leighton Moss 721 km SW
DT10587	Adult	30/03/2018	Altcar Rifle Range Foreshore, Hightown
& CMs	Seen	01/05/2018	Ainsdale 14km N
	Seen	10/08/2018	Bass Pool, Roa Island, nr Barrow-in Furness, Cumbria 59km N
	Seen	18/8-8/10/18	Ainsdale/Altcar, Merseyside

ICELANDIC BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

583001 & CMs	Nestling F	01/07/2009	A-Barðastrandarsýsla, Reykhólar, NW ICELAND 65 44N 22 20W
	Seen	03/09/2009	Plouénan, Lanneunet, Finistère, NW FRANCE 48 62N 3 95W
	Seen	07/09/2009	Goulven, Finistère, NW FRANCE 48 65N 4 27W
	Seen	19/9-18/10/09	Le Curnic, Etang, Finistère, NW FRANCE 48 63N 4 43W
	Seen	05/03/2010	Goulven, Finistère, NW FRANCE 48 65N 4 27W
	Seen	02/06/2010	Newton Marsh, Ribble Estuary
	Seen	10/9 & 19/9/11	Marshside Marsh RSPB
	Seen	09/02/2012	Preesall Park, Fleetwood
	Seen	11/9-2/12/12	Marshside Marsh RSPB
	Seen	20/03/2013	Sunderland Point
	Seen	26/04/2013	Eric Morecambe Pool, Leighton Moss RSPB
	Seen	16/09/2013	Marshside Marsh RSPB
	Seen	9/10 & 21/12/14	Marshside Marsh RSPB
	Seen	28/3-31/3/15	Eric Morecambe Pool, Leighton Moss RSPB
	Seen	10/10-26/10/15	Marshside Marsh RSPB
	Seen	18/3-19/3/16	Hellifield Flash, North Yorks
	Seen	5/9-7/11/16	Marshside Marsh RSPB
	Seen	12/11/2016	Crossens Marsh, Ribble Estuary
	Seen	4/3-5/3/17	Newton Marsh, Ribble Estuary
	Seen	07/03/2017	Marshside Marsh RSPB
	Seen	12/3-19/4/17	Hellifield Flash, North Yorks
	Seen	26/8-27/8/17	Lytham Jetty, Ribble Estuary
	Seen	29/10-4/11/17	Crossens Marsh, Ribble Estuary
	Seen	07/11/2017	Marshside Marsh RSPB
	Seen	09/02/2018	Lytham Hall
	Seen	26/02/2018	Hellifield Flash, North Yorks
	Seen	22/08/2018	Lytham Jetty, Ribble Estuary
	Seen	9/3-30/3/19	Hellifield Flash, North Yorks
	Seen	31/03/2019	Long Preston Deepes, North Yorks
	Seen	6/4-7/4/19	The Snab, nr Aughton, Lune Valley
	Seen	09/04/2019	Eric Morecambe Pool, Leighton Moss RSPB

Note the Hellifield Flash detour during wanderings prior to the northbound migration.

Metal ring & CMs	Ad male	07/01/2019	Evøa, Tagus Estuary, Setúbal, PORTUGAL
	Seen	22/04/2019	Alftafjörður, Hofn, Starmýri, ICELAND
	Seen	06/07/2019	Seaforth NR, Merseyside

These two sampled from many other returns; an old bird and a new one with rapid movements. Separate article next year? Any volunteers?

CONTINENTAL BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

Metal ring & CMs	Nestling	13/05/2018	Koudum, Polder de Samenvoeging, NETHERLANDS 52 29N 5 46E
	Seen	to 13/6/18	Koudum, Polder de Samenvoeging, NETHERLANDS 52 29N 5 46E
	Seen	17/7-10/8/19	Eric Morecambe Pool, Leighton Moss RSPB

The plumage and structural differences on this first summer were, let's say, 'subtle' and the ringing details were essential for definite identification.

KNOT

ST42173 & CMs	First-winter	24/01/2015	Kilnsea, Humber Estuary, Yorkshire east riding
	Seen	03/02/2019	Heysham 204 km WNW

Despite having over 300 recoveries this is the first ringing record of Knot from the Humber to North Lancashire.

HN51162 & CMs	First-winter	21/08/2015	Ujście Wisły, Swibno, POLAND 54 21N 18 55E
	Caught	30/03/2018	Altcar 1443km W
	Seen	08/04/2018	Crosby

The Polish colour ring was black and as, for example, we found with Grey Wagtail before ceasing to use them, not easy to see in the field and the only report came from careful intensive observations of the Knot following the cannon-net catch on 30/3/18.

SR77364	Adult	30/03/2018	Altcar
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& CMs	Seen	03/08/2018	Formby
	Seen	03/02/2019	Heysham old heliport
	Seen (09:00 hours)	29/07/2019	Hvalfjörður, Midsandur, ICELAND 64 23N 21 27W
	Seen (morning)	31/07/2019	Formby Point
	Seen	01/08/2019	Ainsdale
	Seen	06/08/2019	Formby

This one certainly didn't go 'round the houses' via the Waddensee/Wash to moult before arriving at Formby during the 2019 autumn migration!

791805	Ad	22/05/2017	Straumfjörður, ICELAND 64 29N 22 13W
& CMs	Seen	09/07-22/8/17	Formby/Weld Road
	Seen	02/09/2017	Crosby
	Seen	19/4 & 3/5/18	Southport
	Seen	19/05/2018	Skogarnes, ICELAND 64 46N 22 36W
	Seen	6/8 & 4/9/18	Crosby
	Seen	10/03/2019	Heysham old heliport
	Seen	20/03/2019	Weld Road, Southport
	Seen	23/03/2019	Heysham old heliport
	Seen	6/4-7/4/19	Weld Road, Southport
	Seen	at least most of July	Seaforth NR

Note the mobility between the Sefton coast and Morecambe bay during March/April. On just one occasion the Heysham Knot roost arrived with a significant flock of Sanderling. These are very rare at this time of year at Heysham and were probably 'dragged' from at least as far south as Rossall.

SR77072	Ad	22/09/2017	Altcar, nr Southport
& CMs	Seen	12/10/2017	Thurstaston, Merseyside
	Seen	13/10/2017	Crosby
	Seen	23-26/1/18	Thurstaston, Merseyside
	Seen	21-28/2/18	West Kirkby, Merseyside
	Seen	07/09/2018	Sao Miguel, AZORES 37 44N 25 40W
	Seen	22/09/2018	Sao Miguel, AZORES 37 44N 25 33W
	Seen	09/10/2018	Sao Miguel, AZORES 37 44N 25 33W
	Seen	13/08/2019	Formby Point

It was described as looking worse for wear whilst moulting after its presumed non-stop from Greenland +/- via Iceland, but many waders have found plenty of sustenance at Sao Miguel's wetlands, including large numbers of Nearctic birds

A summary was in last year's report and the Knot ringing scheme has now amassed an enormous amount of information through the ring reading efforts of Peter and Rose and others. In our region, this was hitherto mainly limited to the Ribble and Sefton Coast with the sites in Morecambe Bay being logistically awkward, but a reliable roost at Heysham Heliport gave about 50 readings in late winter 2018/9; success depending on Oystercatchers not blocking the view! Like Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit, I will try and commandeer a major article on this species in a Lancashire context with the permission of the researchers.

SANDERLING

TOO6949	First-winter	07/11/2018	Rons, O Grove, Pontevedra, SPAIN 42 14N 8 47W
& CMs	Seen	30/11 & 13/12/18	O Vao, O Grove, Pontevedra, SPAIN 5.3km
	Seen	02/08/2019	Ainsdale 1309km N
H321892	Full-grown	15/12/2009	Banc d'Arguin, MAURETANIA 19 87N 16 30W
& CMs	Seen	4/12-8/12/10	Banc d'Arguin, MAURETANIA
	Seen	27/05/2011	Brittany, FRANCE 47 84N 4 03W
	Seen	25/11/11 & 29/1/12	Banc d'Arguin, MAURETANIA
	Seen	14/12/12-3/2/13	Banc d'Arguin, MAURETANIA
	Seen	28-29/11/13	Banc d'Arguin, MAURETANIA
	Seen	10/05/2016	Grafham Water, Cambs
	Seen	03/02/2017	Banc d'Arguin, MAURETANIA
	Seen	11/08/2018	Southport
B05004	Full-grown	10/09/2012	Esiama, GHANA 4 9N 2 31W
& CMs	Seen	30/10/2012	Swakopmund, Walvis Bay NAMIBIA 22 97S 14 48E
	Seen	18/10/13-30/3/14	Swakopmund, Walvis Bay NAMIBIA 22 97S 14 48E
	Seen	04/09/2014	Esiama, GHANA 4 9N 2 31W
	Seen	19/08/2016	Ainsdale, Merseyside
	Seen	5/11-2/12/16	Swakopmund, Walvis Bay NAMIBIA 22 97S 14 48E
	Seen	20/08/2017	Southport, Merseyside
	Seen	14/10-6/12/17	Swakopmund, Walvis Bay NAMIBIA 22 97S 14 48E

	Seen	06/05/2018	Plage de Sian, Vendee 46 70N 1 9W
	Seen	11/08/2018	Southport
D42326 & CMs	Full-grown	07/10/2010	Setubal, PORTUGAL 38 73N 8 9W
	Seen	10/11/11-17/2/12	Setubal, PORTUGAL
	Seen	20-23/2/13	Setubal, PORTUGAL
	Seen	19/4-21/4/18	Southport
	Seen	15/10/2018	near Setubal, PORTUGAL

A slight change of location leading to lack of sightings in the wintering area in recent years? Another Setubal-ringed bird was not seen after the ringing date in 2014 until appearing at Southport on 22/4/18.

D42783 & CMs	Full-grown	13/11/2011	Setubal, PORTUGAL
	Seen	04/11/2013	Setubal, PORTUGAL
	Seen	21-22/5/18	Trischen, Schleswig-Holstein, GERMANY
	Seen	11/08/2018	Southport

Sanderling in May/June in the eastern Waddensee have been tracked NE towards Iceland and also, if it was a Siberian bird, highly unlikely to have been in Portugal in November (Reneerkens *et al* (2009) WSGBull.) (thanks to Peter Knight for highlighting this).

6246178 & CMs	Nestling	09/07/2016	Zackenber, East GREENLAND 74 29N 20 31W
	Seen	to 19/7/16	Zackenber, East GREENLAND
	Seen	11/08/2018	Southport
8248126 & CMs	Adult	28/06/2016	Zackenber, East GREENLAND 74 29N 20 31W
	Seen	to 10/7/16	Zackenber, East GREENLAND
	Seen	11-12/5/17	Scuthvie Bay, Sanday, Orkney
	Seen	27/07/2018	Southport

Only those which involve wintering sites outside the UK or Greenland breeding sites have been tabulated above. Plenty of birds ringed/seen in Iceland and especially wintering on the south coast Hampshire/Isle of Wight/East Sussex which have been also recorded on the Sefton coast on passage.

DUNLIN

Metal ring & CMs	Breeding female	05/07/2014	Zackenber, East GREENLAND 74 29N 20 31W
	Seen	20/08/2017	Southport beach

This bird is definitely arctica and a video is available if anyone wishes to see what one looks like in August (c/f recent correspondence on a Southport Facebook site on Dunlin races)

JT69077 & CMs	Adult	09/08/2017	Ujscie Wisly, Swibno: 54°21'N 18°55'E (Pomorskie) POLAND
	Seen	24/02/2018	Crosby 1,442km W
8N60411 & CMs	First-year	08/09/2017	Makkevika, Giske: 62°30'N 6°1'E (More og Romsdal) NORWAY
	Caught	30/03/2018	Altcar, nr Southport 1,130km SSW

The second two are typical nominate alpina recoveries

REDSHANK

DD49399 & CMs	First-winter	25/10/2018	Welwick Pond, E Yorks
	Seen	14/04/2019	Eric Morecambe Complex 193 km WNW
DT24673 & CMs	First-year	02/04/2018	Ynyslas National Nature Reserve, Borth, Ceredigion
	Seen	01/9-16/9/18	Eric Morecambe complex 199km N

KITTIWAKE

FX26897	Nestling	28/06/2016	Point du Raz, Plogoff, Finistere, FRANCE
	Freshly dead	15/01/2017	Liverpool 608km NNE

BLACK-HEADED GULL

FS29311 & CMs	Nestling	13/06/2017	Stawy, Kiszkowo, Wielkopolskie, POLAND 52 35N 17 16E
	Seen	15/9/17-23/2/18	Heysham Harbour
	Seen	3/10/18-31/1/19	Heysham Harbour
EX68904 & CMs	Adult	08/03/2011	Preston Docks
	Seen	29/11/2014	Runcorn Boating lake 48km S
	At breeding colony	26/03/2016	Belmont Reservoir, 21km SE
EY26801 & CMs	Adult	26/02/2014	Pine Lake, Carnforth
	Seen	21/04-26/05/2014	Carrickfergus, Antrim 209 km WNW
	Seen	25/12/2016	Pine Lake, Carnforth
	Seen	01/08/2017	RSPB Hodbarrow, Cumbria 34 km WNW
	Seen	26/03/2018	RSPB Hodbarrow, Cumbria 34 km WNW

	Seen	13/03/2019	Pine Lake, Carnforth
5406745	Adult	22/03/2013	Tonning, Schleswig-Holstein, GERMANY 54 17N 8 55E
& CMs	Seen	11/8-24/12/18	Heysham village bay 772km W
EP37937	Adult	13/11/2003	Hyde Farm, near Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire
& CMs	Caught by ringer	22/05/2009	Zbiornik Przykona, Radyczyn, Przykona: 52°0'N 18°39'E POLAND 1,326km E
	Seen	05/04/2012	Dumpiu Savartynas, Klaipeda: 55°37'N 21°15'E LITHUANIA 1,510km ENE
	Seen	25/03/2015	Dumpiu Savartynas, Klaipeda: 55°37'N 21°15'E LITHUANIA 1,510km ENE
	Seen	25/11/2015	Slimbridge, Gloucestershire 123km W
	Seen	12/03/2016	Little Marlow Gravel Pits, Buckinghamshire 8km WSW
	Seen	11/11/2018	Stocks Reservoir 293km N

Did this change its breeding location from Poland to Lithuania with a lot of 'random' wanderings as regards wintering in UK. Atypically unpredictable for this species

EY90428	Nestling	03/06/2016	Martin Mere WWT
& CMs	Seen	11/11/2016	Sean Walsh Park, Tallaght, Dublin 234km W
	Seen	08/06/2017	Martin Mere WWT
	Seen	11/11/2018	Sean Walsh Park, Tallaght, Dublin 234km W
EY90355	Nestling	28/05/2016	Martin Mere WWT
& CMs	Seen	08/06/2017	Martin Mere WWT
	Seen	26/05/2018	Martin Mere WWT
	Seen	22/11/2018	Phoenix Park, Dublin 231km W

Born/nesting at Martin Mere, wintering around the Dublin area, contrasting routine with EP37937 above.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL

Returning birds where full history otherwise already published in previous reports:

British 2A36/EW31761	29/03/2019	Seen at Belmont Res colony
Dutch 3693897/LCG	17/7-17/8/19	Seen at Heysham PS outfalls also sighting at usual Gijon wintering site on 2/2/19
German 1A121586/ASRE	from 31/07/2019	Seen at Heysham PS outfalls, also seen Beaugency, Loiret, FRANCE 47 46N 1 38E on 1/7/19
German 5405056/ANLT French R14T	from 09/08/2019	Seen at Heysham PS outfalls

Continues to use the Wyre Estuary for autumnal moult and occasional winter sightings in Lancs. Despite being born in France, suggestion in recent years it breeds in Lancs with a paired sighting at Martin Mere on 25/3/17 and copulation observed at Marshside 10-12/4/17. It was then seen in the large colony at Belmont on 9/7/19 where individual birds are difficult to observe.

ET07866	Nestling	08/06/2017	Šenov, Volensky fishpond, Ostrava, CZECH REPUBLIC
& CMs	Seen	09/01/2019	Kilkieren Harbour, Galway, Ireland (with 35 others)
	Seen	10/6-16/6/19	Eric Morecambe complex, Leighton Moss
	Seen	24/06/2019	Conder Pool, Lune Estuary
1A177914	Nestling	19/06/2017	Leipzig, GERMANY 51 36N 12 21 E
& CMs	Fledged juvenile	02/07/2017	Leipzig
	Seen	2/9-7/9/17	Whitehead, Belfast Lough, N Ireland
	Seen	12/04/2019	Eric Morecambe Complex
E94775	Nestling	09/06/2018	Total, Antwerp, BELGIUM
& CMs	Seen	21/09/2018	Heysham Power Station outfalls
FN16131	Nestling	07/06/2013	J.Rynskie, Rybical, Ryn: 53°55'N 21°30'E (Warminsko-Mazurskie) POLAND
& CMs	Seen	31/12/2013	Men-Aver Beach, Nare Point, Cornwall 1,867km WSW
	Seen	15/06/2014	Slimbridge WWT, Gloucestershire 1,623km W
	Seen	15/01/2016	Ainsdale Sands 1,616km W
	Seen	25/08/2016	Hightown 1,615km W
	Seen	21/03/2017	Marshside RSPB, Southport 1,606km W
	Seen	17/03/2018	Marshside RSPB, Southport 1,606km W

Accidentally left out of 2017 report, so published here in full.

FS15738	Adult Female	17/05/2016	Mietkowski, Domanice, Mietkow: 50°57'N 16°36'E
& CMs			(Dolnoslaskie) POLAND
	Seen	4/7 & 8/8/18	Seaforth NR, Merseyside 1,365km WNW

COMMON GULL

EY02458	Adult	20/12/2011	Southport Marine Lake
& CMs	Seen	09/01/2017	Galway City, Ireland 403km W
EZ29258	Nestling	25/06/2016	Tillypronie, Aberdeenshire
& CMs	Seen	30/07/2018	Knott End 360km S

Note significant change of wintering ground and a welcome (and relatively unusual) nestling from Scotland

HERRING GULL

FA25461	Nestling	14/07/2018	Ferkingstadoyane, Karmoy, Rogaland
& CMs			NORWAY 59 13N 5 04E
	Seen	22/04/2019	Seaforth NR, Merseyside 812km SW

Very few continental recoveries involving this species once likely misidentified LBBG chicks seen in e.g. Iberia are taken out of the equation

CASPIAN GULL

EA202486	Nestling	03/06/2018	Sachsen, GERMANY 51 34N 12 38E
& CMs	Seen	25/11/2018	Ashworth Moor Reservoir, Gtr. Manchester 1107km NW
	Seen	23/01/2019	Altham Tip, Whinney Hill, Lancs 1040km NW
	Seen	10/05/2019	Millquarter Bay, Co Down, N IRELAND 1255km NW

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

GN16452	Nestling	02/07/1999	Tarnbrook Fell, Abbeystead, Bowland
& CMs	Seen	22/05/2001	Reserve de Chanteloup, Ile D'olonne: 46°33'N 1°46'W (Vendee) FRANCE 832km S
	Seen	27/09/2017	St Peter-Ording: 54°19'N 8°34'E (Schleswig-Holstein) GERMANY 728km E
	Seen	05/07/2018	St Peter-Ording: 54°19'N 8°34'E (Schleswig-Holstein) GERMANY 727km E
GR98471	Adult	09/06/2015	Langden Head, Bowland
	Freshly dead	28/10/2017	Village de Peche de Lassarga, Dakhla: 23°37'N 15°58'W, WESTERN SAHARA 3,551km SSW
GV42923	Adult	28/05/2016	Langden Head, Bowland
& CMs	Seen	23/02/2017	Village de Peche de Lassarga, Dakhla: 23°37'N 15°58'W WESTERN SAHARA 3,551km SSW

SANDWICH TERN

DS14878	Nestling	19/06/2013	Blakeney Point, Norfolk
& CMs	Seen	01/09/2016	Ainsdale Beach 277km WNW
DS14862	Nestling	19/06/2013	Blakeney Point, Norfolk
& CMs	Seen	04/09/2016	Ainsdale Beach 277km WNW
DK10764	Adult	06/06/2016	Scolt Head Island, Norfolk
& CMs	Seen	21/08/2016	Ainsdale 260km WNW
	Seen	12/05/2017	Scolt Head Island
NL1232	Nestling	18/06/2013	Markenje, Grevelingen, Zuid-Holland, NETHERLANDS
& CMs	Seen	02/04/2014	Utopia, Texel, NETHERLANDS
	Seen	6/11/14-29/11/14	Various beaches in Calvados/Manche, FRANCE
	Seen	1/1 & 17/1/15	Plage de la Banche, Binic, Cotes d'Armor, FRANCE
	Seen	26/01/2015	Illien beach, Finistere, FRANCE
	Seen	2/11/15-3/11/15	Omaha Beach, Calvados, FRANCE
	Seen	03/01/2016	Plage de la Banche, Binic, Cotes d'Armor, FRANCE
	Seen	6/11-5/12/16	Various beaches in Calvados/Manche, FRANCE
	Seen	21/02/2017	St Pair sur Mer, Manche, Normandy, FRANCE
	Seen	09/07/2018	Formby Point (Photo taken)
	Seen	16-27/8/18	Le Portel, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Pas de Calais, FRANCE
	Seen	17-18/2/19	Calvados beaches, FRANCE

As the Formby observer points out, this would possibly have been rejected as a misread but for the photograph. However there is no other evidence where it might otherwise be in July and implicitly during the breeding season.

DE81121	Adult	15/07/2014	Ythan Estuary, Aberdeen, NE Scotland
& CMs	Seen	27/01/2015	Walvis Bay Oyster beds, NAMIBIA 9027km S
	Seen	26/04/2015	Girdleness, Aberdeen, NE Scotland
	Seen	13-19/7/15	Ythan Estuary, Aberdeen, NE Scotland
	Seen	21-22/12/15	Walvis Bay Oyster beds, NAMIBIA 9027km S

	Seen	5/5-18/7/16	Ythan Estuary, Aberdeen, NE Scotland
	Seen	27/08/2016	Ainsdale beach, Merseyside 418km S
	Seen	19/06/2017	Ythan Estuary, Aberdeen, NE Scotland
	Seen	17/11/2017	Mile 4 Salt Works, Swakopmund, NAMIBIA 8979km S
	Seen	31/7 & 6/8/18	Formby Point 425km S
DE65875	Nestling	13/06/2013	Forvie NNR, Ythan Estuary, NE Scotland
& CMs	Caught	19/07/2013	Ythan Estuary, Aberdeen, NE Scotland
	Seen	27/8 & 7/9/16	Ainsdale beach, Merseyside 418km S
	Seen	13/07/2018	Ythan Estuary, NE Scotland
	Seen	27/08/2018	Rhos Point, Conwy, Wales
	Seen	29/08/2018	Birkdale, Southport
D707163	Nestling	02/06/2016	Forvie NNR, Ythan Estuary, NE Scotland
& CMs	Seen	02/07/2016	Ythan Estuary, Aberdeen, NE Scotland
	Seen	14/7 & 18/7/16	Port Seton, Lothian, Scotland, 160km S
	Seen	27/08/2018	Kinmel Bay, Denbigh, & later in day Rhos Point, Conwy, Wales, 455-459km S
	Seen	29/08/2018	Birkdale, Southport 415km S
DD78436	Nestling	29/06/2018	Sgarbheen, Lady Island's Lake, Wexford, Ireland
& CMs	Seen	23/07/2018	Gronant beach, Denbigh, Wales
	Seen	06/08/2018	Formby Point

One of three virtually identical sightings involving Ireland/North Wales/Sefton coast in 2018

Metal ring	Nestling	12/07/2013	Inner Farne, Northumberland
& CMs	Seen	02-29/8/16	Coquet Island, Northumberland
	Seen	28/4-20/7/17	Coquet Island, Northumberland
	Seen	14/8/17 & 8/9/17	Rhos Point, Conwy, Wales
	Seen	22/4-17/8/18	Coquet Island, Northumberland
	Seen	29/08/2018	Birkdale, Southport

ARCTIC TERN

SR32527	Nestling	10/07/2005	Glas Eileanan, Sound of Mull, Argyll and Bute
& CMs	Seen	08/07/2017	Seaforth NR, Merseyside 378km SSE

COMMON TERN

ST13241	Nestling	06/08/2016	Cowpen Marsh, Teesside
& CMs	Seen	01/08/2019	Conder Pool, Conder Green, Lancs 210km SW
XS97124	Nestling	23/06/2014	Wanlip, Leicestershire
& CMs	Seen	31/07/2016	Cropston Reservoir, Leicestershire 6km WSW
	Seen	11/08/2018	Altcar Ranges, near Southport 164km NW

Some new locations involved here

HN55738	Nestling	22/06/2018	Gdansk, POLAND
& CMs	Seen	26/07/2019	Rhyl, North Wales
	Seen	04/08/2019	Seaforth
Metal ring	Nestling	03/07/2018	North Duffield, Derwent Valley, Yorks.
& CMs	Seen	29/6/19 to 4/8/19	Seaforth
SR23759	Nestling	13/07/2018	Seaforth
& CMs	Seen	24/07/2019	Seaforth

Prior to 2019 there had been only 9 sightings of definite first-summerers at Seaforth (and possibly in Britain), so to get three in a year was quite remarkable. The Polish bird was our first from there.

4H65734	Adult	06/04/2013	La Simone, SENEGAL
	Breeding	2016-2019	Skerries, Anglesey
	Seen	11/08/2019	Seaforth

GUILLEMOT

Y21280	Nestling	25/06/2017	Puffin Island, Anglesey
	Sick (nat. causes)	29/07/2017	Blackpool 85km NE
Y15398	Nestling	25/06/2017	Puffin Island, Anglesey
	Freshly dead	29/10/2017	Cleveleys 90km NE

WOODPIGEON

FB38395	Adult	27/03/2017	Bardsey Island, Gwynedd
	Sick (injury)	03/07/2017	Burnley 202km ENE
FH85942	Nestling	21/07/2016	Sefton Park, Merseyside

FH03844	Freshly dead (shot)	09/02/2017	Shincliffe, Durham 179km NNE
	Adult	15/03/2011	Thornton, Merseyside
	Found dead	19/12/2018	Lancaster 68km NNE

Despite all the vis mig data, three lengthy movements are unprecedented, although two should have been in last year's report! Was the first returning to Lancs from Ireland via Bardsey?

BARN OWL

GV46264	Nestling	24/06/2017	Nr. Pateley Bridge, N Yorks
	Found dead	28/03/2019	Middle Knoll, Dunsop Bridge, Bowland 52 km SW

By far the longest movement reported

LITTLE OWL

EY33542	Nestling	03/06/2014	Baildon, West Yorkshire
	Freshly dead (hit by car)	17/07/2017	Coldwell Activity Centre, Colne 25km WSW

KESTREL

EZ22986	Nestling	06/06/2018	Sheddon Clough, nr Burnley
	Sick (hit glass)	27/10/2018	Ravenstone, Coalville, Leicestershire 126km S

MERLIN

DD47936	Nestling Male	27/06/2018	near Catshaw, South Yorkshire
	Freshly dead (hit by train)	31/07/2018	Blackpool

MAGPIE

EW94844	Full-grown	03/08/2018	Thornton, Merseyside
	Freshly dead (hit by car)	29/09/2018	Pilling, Fylde 48km N

There have been suggestions of southbound vis mig at e.g. Heysham in autumn, but this northerly dispersal most unexpected

BLUE TIT

X250554	Nestling	21/05/2010	Lancaster University, Bailrigg
& CMs	Nesting F, seen, etc.	2010-2017	Lancaster University, Bailrigg
	Seen	14/02/2019	Lancaster University, Bailrigg (8y 269d)

Absent 2018, so just possibly still around, but not nesting Bailrigg. National longevity record 9y 8d.

ABD1683	Juvenile	10/07/2018	Leighton Moss, RSPB
	Caught	20/10/2018	Heysham NR 17km SSW

COAL TIT

Z854432	First-year	26/09/2015	Billinge Hill, Merseyside
	Caught by ringer	25/11/2018	Fox Howl, Delamere Forest, Cheshire 32km S

The longest movements by any tit species received during the period under review.

SAND MARTIN

D335631	Adult Male	09/07/2013	Nether Burrow, Lancashire
	Caught at colony	09/07/2018	River Lune, Whittington 1km (5y 0m 0d)

The longevity record is 7y 9m 1d

S531196	Juvenile	25/07/2018	River Lune, Whittington
	Caught by ringer	06/08/2018	Pett Level, Sussex 426km S
S531116	Juvenile	18/07/2018	River Lune, Whittington
	Caught	06/08/2018	Sandwich Bay Estate, Kent 420km S
D350512	First-year Male	02/09/2013	Pett Level, Sussex
	Caught at colony	31/07/2015	Cockerham Marsh 416km NW
	Caught at colony	23/05/2018	Cockerham Marsh
RA2369	First-winter	05/09/2018	Torreta Ampia, Valencia, SPAIN 39 21 N 0 22 W
	Caught at colony	22/06/2019	River Lune, Whittington 1657km N
	Caught at colony	03/07/2019	River Lune, Whittington
AJB4369	Juvenile	08/07/2018	South Milton ley, Devon
	Caught at colony	24/07/2019	River Lune, Whittington 444 km NNE

Note the early date in Devon as a juvenile

CETTI'S WARBLER

AKC5855	1st winter	22/09/2018	Leighton Moss RSPB
	sexed as female	05/05/2019	Brook Vale, Liverpool 79 km S

The capture date, in association with the 2019 status fits in with it being on northerly autumnal dispersal when caught at Leighton - it may have wintered there or moved to another suitable location. Not enough data yet to show that this dispersal involves a single event, followed by wintering in the most suitable habitat near the landing point, or a series of movements until suitable habitat is found. Did it return to its 'exact' natal area to breed?

AYB2141	Juvenile	12/07/2018	Potteric Carr Doncaster, S Yorks
	Caught	28/03/2019	Leighton Moss RSPB 134 kmNW

The ringing date shows Potteric Carr as the natal area, similar to a previous recovery from Winterset Reservoir. Presumably it either wintered at Leighton or was caught there on return migration (south?).

CHIFFCHAFF

KRE115	First-year	06/10/2018	Middleton NR, nr Heysham
	Caught	10/10/2018	Lytchett Bay, Poole Harbour, Dorset 370km S
KTA420	First year	27/09/2018	Durlston Country Park, Dorset
	Caught	17/04/2019	Heysham NR 389km N
KXH574	First year	17/09/2018	Leighton Moss RSPB
	Caught	21/03/2019	Mannez Quarry, Alderney, Channel Islands. 497 km S

SEDGE WARBLER

ABD1759	Juvenile	27/07/2018	Leighton Moss RSPB
	Caught	19/08/2018	Mar-Quest, Loire Atlantique, FRANCE 47 7N 1 40E 788Km S
ADA2644	Juvenile	08/07/2018	Middleton NR, near Heysham
	Caught	19/08/2018	Mar-Quest, Loire Atlantique, FRANCE 47 7N 1 40E 772km S
ADA2677	First-year	25/07/2018	Middleton NR, near Heysham
	Caught by ringer	31/07/2018	Pett Level, Icklesham, East Sussex 423km S
ADA2692	First-year	25/07/2018	Middleton NR, near Heysham
	Caught	09/08/2018	Squire's Down, Dorset 342km S

REED WARBLER

S457547	Juvenile	11/07/2018	Brockholes NR LWT, nr Preston, Lancs
	Caught	15/08/2018	Brasfemes, Coimbra, PORTUGAL 1562km SSW
L714941	Juvenile Male	20/06/2011	Leighton Moss RSPB
	Caught	2012/13/14/16/18	Leighton Moss RSPB
	Caught by ringer	28/07/2018	Titchfield Haven NNR (Hampshire) 387km S
	Caught	03/08/2019	Leighton Moss RSPB

The longevity record for this long-lived species is 12y 11m 21d. Note the later date of imminent migration in autumn 2019 (Fat 2 score)

S046787	First-year	12/08/2017	Stanford Reservoir, Northamptonshire
	Caught	08/07/2018	Fleetwood 209km NW
ABD1800	First-year	04/08/2018	Leighton Moss RSPB
	Freshly dead (nat.causes)	28/08/2018	Tui, 42°3'N 8°39'W, Pontevedra, SPAIN 1,414km S

BLACKCAP

ARB4298	1st W male	15/10/2018	Heysham NR
	Caught	01/12/2018	Woolston Eyes Warrington 77km SSE

If this was a central European prospective wintering bird, why did it move south? Suggests north European or British origin

X555333	FG female	20/09/2009	Beachy Head, East Sussex
	Freshly dead	22/06/2017	Martin Mere WWT 385km NNW
AEB9461	First-year Male	30/09/2017	Sewage Treatment Works, Swindon, Wiltshire
	Freshly dead (hit glass)	08/04/2018	Blackpool 259km NNW

GOLDCREST

KNC366	First-year Female	07/10/2017	Billinge Hill, Merseyside
	Caught	04/04/2018	Calf of Man, Isle of Man 150km WNW
JVH570	First-year Male	19/09/2017	Heysham NR
	Freshly dead (cat)	09/01/2018	South Elmsall, Pontefract, West Yorkshire 117km ESE
JLE064	First-year Male	17/02/2017	Ipsley Alders Wood, Worcestershire
	Freshly dead	13/03/2017	Lancaster 202km NNW
	(hit glass)		

STARLING

LJ73268	Juvenile Male	04/06/2017	Little Clacton, Essex
	Seen	10/01/2018	near Belmont, Blackburn with Darwen 317km NW
LJ13773	First-year Female	06/02/2018	Didcot Railway Centre, Oxfordshire
& CRs	Seen	22/08/2018	Southport 256km N

Both presumably British-born with the north-westerly movement of the first one unusual - maybe caught up in a migratory group of Starlings in autumn?

BLACKBIRD

LJ89910	First-year Female	05/11/2017	Kilnsea, East Riding of Yorkshire
	Seen	15/12/2017	Belmont, Blackburn with Darwen 174km W
FRP	First-year Male	03/11/2016	Grand Predembourg, Grande-Synthe:51°1'N 2°16'E
JA695195			(Nord) FRANCE
	Seen	10/11-12/11/17	Belmont, Blackburn with Darwen 435 km NW
LK25253	First-year Female	29/11/2016	Crawford, near Upholland: 53°31'N 2°45'W (Lancashire)
	Caught by ringer	29/03/2018	Sore Merkeskog, Utsira, Rogoland, Norway 795km NE

FIELDFARE

LC94559	First-year Male	01/11/2017	Barnacre Reservoir, nr Oakenclough
	Freshly dead (shot)	12/12/2018	Val D'ornain, 48°48'N 5°4'E (Meuse) FRANCE 785km S

REDWING

RZ12720	Adult	07/10/2016	Billinge Hill, Merseyside
	Found dead	02/05/2018	Kauhajoki, Vaasa, FINLAND 1772km ENE

ROBIN

S338842	Adult	27/08/2016	Deer Park Forest Croft, Avoch, Moray, Highland
	Seen	20/03/2018	Liverpool 466km S

The ringing date suggests a British origin, but the date of re-sighting may have been after the start of spring passage

ATB7402	Breeding female	01/05/2018	Billinge Hill, Merseyside
	Freshly dead (cat)	25/11/2018	Liverpool, Merseyside 16km WSW

PIED FLYCATCHER

S429616	Nestling	04/06/2017	Folly Hall, Otley, North Yorks
	Breeding female	17/05/2019	Deep Gill, Broadwood Farm, Wray 61 km WNW
D078988	Nestling	13/06/2015	Thruscross Reservoir, N Yorks
	Breeding female	11/06/2017	New Laithe Farm, Newton-in-Bowland 48km WSW
	Breeding female	18/05/2019	Marl Hill 49 km WSW
L351907	Nestling	17/08/2016	Edmondbyers, Durham
	Breeding female	2017/18/19	Colleyholme Wood, nr Slaidburn
S374802	Nestling	04/06/2017	Moor Piece, nr Clitheroe
	Breeding female	15/05/2019	Barnacre Reservoir, nr Oakenclough 18 km WNW
Z494767	Nestling	11/06/2016	Cwm Clydach, Swansea, Wales
	Breeding female	16/05/2019	Botton Mill, upper Hindburndale 275 km NNE
AVA3713	Nestling	08/06/2018	Feldom Ranges, N Yorks
	Breeding female	16/05/2019	Botton Mill, upper Hindburndale
S605208	Nestling	08/06/2018	Strid, Bolton Abbey N Yorks
	Breeding female	20/05/2019	Hare Clough, nr Slaidburn 36 km W
Y333481	Nestling male	11/06/2017	Pott Yeats Wood, nr Caton
	Caught	21/04/2019	Eccles-on-Sea, Norfolk 315 km ESE

Some nice recoveries here. Note the North Yorks/Durham birds relocating as returning breeding females to Colleyholme Wood, a not unprecedented scenario. The Welsh nestling was more unusual but again not unprecedented.

Why was Y333481 so far east on its return migration - would be very interesting to know where this was heading. Many more 'next valley jumping' individuals, especially between Roeburndale, Hindburndale and Hodder.

GREY WAGTAIL

Z835405	First-winter	18/09/2015	Heysham NR
	Seen	07/01/2016	Stockbridge Common Marsh, Hants 338 km SSE

This belated report was a classic case of a fortunate retrieval of what would otherwise have remained unreported, involving contacting three different people and amazingly resulting in the exact date. It represents the longest movement from the Grey Wagtail study. It represented a warning as regards keeping colour sequence details up to date on e.g. the Dirk Raes site and therefore not lose a sighting in the 'perceived untraceable' bin.

ADA2915	First-winter	31/08/2018	Middleton NR, near Heysham
	Seen	23/12/2018	Penwortham Preston 34km SSE

A 'bog standard' wintering location for Heysham/Middleton-ringed birds

Z835266	First-winter	31/08/2018	Middleton NR, nr Heysham
	Breeding male	at least 28-29/5/19	Crawshawbooth, Rossendale, Lancs SD810255 51.7km SE

The third one which was ringed whilst being enticed down from observed NW to SE vis mig in autumn and has ended up on breeding territory to the SE of the ringing site. Any assumptions that they may have been of northerly origin and subsequently paired with 'local' birds in the wintering areas needs to bear in mind a nestling ringed in Roeburndale to the east of Heysham which was then caught at Heysham on "NW to SE vis mig" in the same autumn!

TREE PIPIT

S648050	First-year	06/08/2017	Clow Bridge, nr Burnley, Lancashire
	Caught	16/08/2017	Durlston Country Park, Dorset 353km S

CHAFFINCH

AKC5300	First-winter male	23/09/2018	Heysham NR
	Caught	10/12/2018	Kirkcudbright, Dumfries & Galloway, 116 km NW

Odd direction in autumn?

Z965119	1st winter male	12/12/2017	Ince Blundell, Merseyside
	Caught	02/11/2018	Underhand, Newton-in-Bowland 60km NE

Suggesting a change of wintering area?

BRAMBLING

EL43841	First-winter male	30/09/2018	Bomyra Randaberg; 59°0'N 5°34'E, Rogaland, NORWAY
NOS	Caught	02/11/2018	Underhand, Newton-in-Bowland 747km SW

GREENFINCH

VZ35463	First-winter female	20/10/2016	Challan Hall, nr Silverdale, N Lancs
	Found dead	02/05/2019	Horsley, Northumberland 111 km NE
VZ95936	First-year Male	01/10/2018	Whitburn Country Park, Tyne and Wear
	Seen	21/12/2018	Clitheroe 138km S
NF10318	Adult male	19/10/2018	Heysham NR
	Caught	18/05/2019	Brook Vale, Liverpool 64 km S
NY22550	1st winter female	27/09/2017	Heysham NR
	Dead (cat)	24/07/2019	Hesketh Bank, Ribble Estuary 38km S
NF18115	Juvenile	09/06/2018	Dronfield, Derbyshire
	Caught	22/11/2018	Heysham NR 127km NW
NY22612	First-winter female	26/10/2017	Heysham NR
	Dead	07/08/2018	Bolton, Greater Manchester 61km SSE
VZ82410	First-winter male	01/12/2016	New Mills, Derbyshire
	Caught	17/02/2018	Rishton, nr Blackburn 51km NNW

The first two of these show a well established pattern of birds from Northumberland and Durham wintering or passing through our area and returning to breed. There has been some east to west movement in autumn but the origin of the Derbyshire bird is further south than usual. Unusually, NF10318 shows southerly movement to the breeding site and VZ82410 indicates two widely spaced wintering locations.

TWITE

Z295815	First-year Male	15/02/2015	Heysham north harbour wall
	Caught	05/12/2017	Askam Pier, Cumbria 26km N
	Caught	26/11/2018	Askam Pier

An update on the bird documented last year

LINNET

AYD5167	First-year Male	08/09/2018	Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	Caught	24/12/2018	Pilling Marsh 604km S
S348682	First-year Female	02/12/2016	Pilling Marsh
	Caught	27/04/2018	Clachtoll, Lochinver, Highland 496km NNW
S800115	First-year Male	10/08/2017	Pilling Marsh
	Caught	04/05/2018	South Walney, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria 23km N

These far northern returns from the wintering Linnet flocks in north Fylde have been a revelation. The last one shows that some of them are of more local origin.

See Phil Slade's 'Any bird blog' for more detail

LESSER REDPOLL

S374412	First year male	08/04/2017	New Laithe Farm, Newton-in-Bowland
	Caught	31/10/2017	Jardin, la Neuville: 50°28'N 3°1'E (Nord) FRANCE 536km SE
S829217	First-year	26/10/2017	Target Farm, Marden, Kent
	Caught	21/04/2018	Rossall School, Fleetwood 387km NW
AEA2802	Adult male	27/10/2017	Ballard Down, Dorset
	Caught	01/05/2019	Rishton, nr Blackburn 348km N
S083099	Adult female	22/10/2017	Orfordness, Suffolk
	Caught	28/01/2019	Rishton, nr Blackburn 325km NW
AKC4453	Adult male	30/03/2019	Rishton, nr Blackburn
	Caught	09/04/2019	Leswalt, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway 218 km NW

The last was a bit surprising as the only Scottish recovery I could find in this time period. The rest are the three longest distances I could find from the many lengthy movements to mainly SE England and places en route

GOLDFINCH

Z470813	First-year Female	18/02/2016	Bank Farm, north Fylde
	Caught	01/03/2017	Newburgh, Aberdeenshire 379km N
Z019887	First-year female	01/01/2016	Crawford, near Upholland, Lancashire
	Caught	26/03/2018	Leswalt, Dumfries & Galloway 218km NW
ABD1416	First-winter male	16/12/2018	Claughton, Lune Valley
	Caught	11/05/2019	Mockerkin, Cumbria 74 km NW
ABD1141	Juvenile	02/10/2018	Claughton, Lune valley
	Caught	27/10/2018	Rishton, nr Blackburn 40km SSE

SISKIN

Z301623	First-yearMale	11/02/2016	Clayton Brook, nr Chorley
	Caught	10/5-15/5/17	Shebster, Highland 541km N
Z435227	First-yearMale	05/09/2015	Clow Bridge, nr Burnley
	Caught	06/05/2016	near Kildary, Highland 459km NNW
	Caught	17/03/2017	near Kildary, Highland 459km NNW
S770971	Juvenile female	09/04/2017	Calliburn Corner, Argyll & Bute
	Caught	24-28/3/19	Rishton, nr Blackburn 281 km SE
ACA4952	Adult female	12/02/2018	Hazel Heath, Hampshire
	Caught	01/05/2019	Rishton, nr Blackburn 291km NNW
S374260	First year male	12/03/2017	New Laithe Farm, Newton in Bowland
	Caught	27/04/2018	Drummond, Highland 407km NNW
	Caught	11/2 & 11/3/19	Drummond
D257052	Adult male	03/04/2018	Tain, Highland
	Caught	16/02/2019	Crow Wood, Newton in Bowland 445km SSE
S051386	First-winter male	29/03/2016	Fort Augustus, Highland
	Seen	12/01/2019	New Laithe Farm, Newton in Bowland 383 km SSE
	Caught	21/01/2019	New Laithe Farm

REED BUNTING

S387264	First-winter male	08/01/2017	Chelmarsh Reservoir, Bridgenorth, Shropshire
	Caught	03/05/2019	Middleton NR 174 km N

The third movement between Middleton and the winter roost at Chelmarsh with a further individual from North Fylde

SKYLARK STUDIES ON THE SEFTON COAST

Ian Wolfendon

A colour-ringing study of Skylarks on the Crosby to Hightown Dunes and Seaforth Nature Reserve was carried out between 1980-2002, when 2602 pulli and 196 full-grown birds were ringed. The dense population declined from an estimated 80-100+ pairs in 1980 to c.16 pairs in 2002, when the study became no longer viable.

Towards the end of this study period a population was established on newly-developing dunes and amenity grassland between the two primary study sites and in the final few years this contributed increasing numbers of pulli to the totals. Despite the forever increasing numbers of dogs exercised on the area, the population had increased to about 25 pairs in 2016. A colour-ringing study was started in 2017 to compare the breeding data with the earlier study and to try and evaluate the effects of dogs on breeding success.

The current study has better all-year access to much of the population. There were 2464 records (over 23 years) of 376 birds in the initial study compared to 1539 records (over 23 months) of 56 birds so far in the current study. This much higher rate of sightings is a result of the use of sports mode on a digital camera with a 200x zoom facility to identify the birds.

Mean brood size for the years 2017-18 was only 2.98 compared to 3.36 for the earlier study, a decrease of 11%. Brood sizes increased until near the end of the breeding season in contrast to the earlier study which had the more normal trend of a peak around the middle of the season. Several factors are considered at least partly responsible for these changes. There is an apparent decrease in insect numbers and therefore in the populations of food species, probably due to factors such as climate change and environmental pollution. There is also competition from the large local suburban Starling population which collect food for their young from within Skylark territories, particularly early in the breeding season.

Totals of 64 and 74 pulli were ringed in 2017 and 2018. With the aid of a thermal imaging scope, 24 new birds and 19 retraps were caught while roosting, between late winter and early spring or the late summer to autumn moult period.

Sex differences in wintering numbers

During the winters of 2017-18 and 2018-19 totals of 10 and 12 first-year birds (ringed as pulli) were seen feeding on the shore and dunes. The evidence from colour-ring sightings was that females were very rarely seen in the larger flocks, totalling c.30 birds, and that the few which overwintered mainly fed alone or within small groups in the dunes. The larger groups and flocks were almost exclusively resident males which in late winter to early spring were able to visit territories during mild morning weather. Most females returned to the dunes from unknown wintering sites, perhaps on the nearest farmland, from early to mid-February.

Survival rates

All 13 colour-ringed birds in the study area survived the unseasonal bad weather from the end of February 2018 (the so-called "Beast from the East"), possibly with the help of my temporary daily seed supply which also attracted the wintering Snow Bunting, corvids, Magpies and gulls.

At the time of writing (April 2019), survival rates between breeding seasons 2018 -19, are 86% for males and 75% for females. More females may yet return.

Minimum survival rates for nestlings from 2017 and 2018, as indicated by birds known to reach independence, are currently 25% and 22% respectively. These survival rates are surprisingly high considering the disturbance levels, both human and canine.

So far, nest failure (mainly due to predation) has been less than that found in the previous study.

Possible reasons for the higher survival rates of nests, "young-out-of-the-nest" and adult birds are:

- Milder winters
- High "people and dog presence" deterring birds of prey and nest predators such as crows and Magpies.
- Disturbance and dog predation of mammalian predators such as foxes, stoats, weasels and rats.

Field observations, including at night with a thermal imaging scope, suggest populations of these animals are very low or non-existent. Only Hedgehogs and mice were recorded at night in any number.

This is not to say that dogs are not a problem for the Skylark population. Survival rates for young birds are higher later in the breeding season which is in contrast to the findings of the earlier study. This is probably due to a higher disturbance/predation rate by dogs, of young that have left the nest, particularly newly-flying birds, earlier in the season when ground cover is less developed. Dogs have been responsible for attacking incubating females, resulting in nest damage, loss of eggs and desertion. They have also destroyed nests of chicks. Close inspection of nest records suggest that those found in less disturbed areas were more likely to successfully rear young.

Amazingly, three from a brood of four birds, ringed on 20 June 2018 are currently present in the 2019 breeding population.

Habitat improvements carried out since autumn 2018 by the ranger service of Sefton Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust should help maintain and possibly increase this population.



Male Skylark, ringed as a pullus in May 2015, photographed in its fourth year and back on territory (Ian Wolfendon)

BREEDING WILLOW TIT SURVEY IN LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE, 2019/2020

Steve White

The Willow Tit is Britain's fastest declining passerine and only the Turtle Dove is more imperilled. Its decline has been so dramatic that the usual means of monitoring bird populations, the Breeding Bird Survey, now includes only a very bare minimum of squares.

With that in mind RSPB launched an ambitious national survey, which L&CFS has been coordinating in cooperation with the Chorley & District Natural History Society and a number of other groups and individuals.

The national survey provided a list of tetrads to be surveyed, to which we added a number of others where Willow Tits have been seen in recent breeding seasons. A total of 66 tetrads were identified for survey.

A standardised methodology was followed nationally, identifying the number of territorial birds in each tetrad by playing a tape of calls on a measured transect and noting responses.

Results

Fifty-four tetrads were covered in 2019, leaving another twelve to be done in 2020.

Thirty-five Willow Tit territories were identified in 19 of the 54 surveyed squares, averaging 1.8 per occupied tetrad and ranging from one to six – the latter in SD515 (Birkacre).

However, it was felt that this almost certainly underestimated the current breeding distribution which it was felt would be better represented by including areas where Willow Tits had been reported to the county report as proven or probably breeding in recent in 2017 and 2018, some of which are tetrads due for survey in 2020).

This produced an additional 18 tetrads, giving a county total of 37 (see map below). Surprisingly, this was exactly the same number as was identified in the 2008-2011 atlas survey, so it appears that there has been no further contraction in the breeding population – which had been estimated to have declined by 50% between 1999 and 2011 – over the past ten years or so.



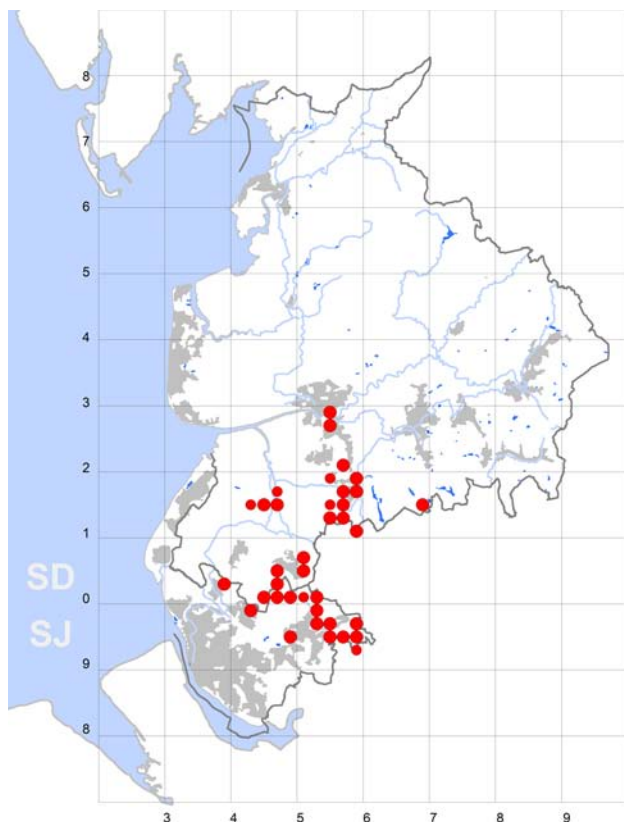
This bird spent the winter of 2018/19 coming to garden feeders in Aintree. It is the only recent record in Sefton and one of small number of birds that have wintered on sites out of range but which may indicate undiscovered small populations. (Tony Small)

On the assumption of 1.5 pairs per tetrad the county population was estimated at 50 pairs in 2008-2011, which at the time was calculated to represent some 1.5% of the national population. The current survey has given no grounds to amend this population estimate and, given the scale of the known national decline, it may be that the county's importance for this species has increased somewhat.

It is not possible to account for the apparent stability of Lancashire's Willow Tit population against the continuing sharply downward national trend but it is certainly the case that conservationists have become much more aware of the species' requirements in recent years and habitat management has been adjusted on some sites to meet them.

The overall range remained essentially unchanged between the two surveys and there have been only a handful of changes in distribution within that range during this period, probably mostly a result of habitat changes.

All records are south of the Ribble with two major clusters: one centred in St Helens and extending into adjoining areas of Knowsley and West Lancashire, the other in Chorley north to the southern edge of Preston. There was one outlying record in the West Pennine Moors at Longworth Clough and tiny cluster in the Rufford area around Mere Sands Wood and Martin Mere (an area that is due for more thorough survey in 2020).



The distribution of breeding Willow Tits in Lancashire & North Merseyside in 2019
(large dots = proven/probable breeding; small dots = possible breeding)

SURVEYS OF BREEDING SEABIRDS IN LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE, 2018-2019

Steve White and Steve Martin

The last national census of breeding seabirds in the UK took place at the turn of the century (Seabird 2000) and, although a sample of colonies are monitored annually via the Seabird Monitoring Programme, another was long overdue, especially in the light of increasing awareness that populations of several species were in severe trouble.

The latest UK census was planned by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to take place from 2018; the Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society undertook to carry it out in cooperation with the county's regional bird clubs and other conservation organisations. There were two phases: in 2018 terrestrial breeding sites were surveyed and in 2019 an attempt was made for the first time to assess the size of the country's urban populations.

Almost full coverage was achieved in Lancashire & North Merseyside in both years, although for some colonies that are monitored over a different time cycle data from previous years (2016 and 2017) were used.

Lancashire is of major national importance for several seabird species as it holds a significant percentage of the UK's breeding Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed Gull plus notable inland colonies of Great Black-backed and Mediterranean Gull.

TERRESTRIAL COLONIES

A total of 36898 seabird pairs (Apparently Occupied Nests and/or Territories) were located. These are dealt with species by species. Year of survey in parentheses.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

21650 pairs (amounting to almost 60% of the county's seabirds), of which 9057 nested on Tarnbrook Fell (2018), 5573 on Langden Head (2018) and 7022 on Banks Marsh (2016). One pair at Belmont Reservoir. The Bowland colony is the largest in the UK.

Herring Gull

780 pairs on Banks Marsh (2016) and estimates of 150 pairs on Tarnbrook Fell and 100 at Langden Head (both 2018). Two pairs at Stocks Reservoir. At least one pair on Morecambe Bay gas rigs (2018) was thought to be an underestimate.

Black-headed Gull

13607 pairs (37% of the county's seabirds). Belmont Reservoir held 11553 pairs in 2019 and has been confirmed as, by far, the largest colony in the UK. The remainder were 838 pairs at Marshside (2017), 820 on the Eric Morecambe complex, 190 at Stocks Reservoir, 120 at Martin Mere, 57 at Ainsdale NNR, one at Barnacre Reservoir (all 2018), three at Jamestone Quarry (2017) and 35 at a newly-established colony at Lunt Meadows (2019). 250 pairs at Waddington Fell, 50 pairs at Pine Lake and 29 pairs on Silverdale Moss in 2017 but not in 2018.

Mediterranean Gull

74 pairs, 72 of which were at Belmont Reservoir in 2019, making it the largest inland colony in the UK. Two pairs nested at Marshside in 2017.

Kittiwake

220 pairs were estimated on the Morecambe Bay gas rigs in 2016 but this is thought to be a significant underestimate; we await the results of a more comprehensive survey. The small colony in the Liverpool docks has disappeared in recent years.

Great Black-backed Gull

30 pairs: 16 on Tarnbrook Fell, two at Langden Head, nine on Banks Marsh and three at Leighton Moss. The Bowland colony is thought to be the largest inland in the UK.

Common Tern

278 pairs in 2018; 171 at Seaforth, an estimated 100 at Preston Dock, three at both Conder Green and Mere Sands Wood and one at Brockholes.

Arctic Tern

Seven pairs, four on Hesketh Out Marsh and three at Preston Dock.

Guillemot

A minimum of 20 birds were present on one of the Morecambe Bay gas platforms during the breeding season (2018), albeit no proof of nesting was obtained. This number was considered an underestimate for the whole field, a photographic survey to determine the true status and numbers is awaited.

Cormorant

No signs of establishment yet despite colonies on our doorstep.

URBAN ROOF-NESTING GULLS

Survey work was carried out in 2019. It followed the national methodology which was based on a stratified random survey of 1km squares. This meant that direct comparison with the 2008-2011 atlas survey cannot be made as that surveyed whole tetrads. As a result up to 75% of potential breeding areas were not surveyed.

However, all regional organisers confirmed that no areas were known which roof-nesting gulls had deserted since the previous survey. The probable current range is therefore likely to extend across all tetrads where gulls were found nesting in 2019 (shown as red dots on the map) together with those where they were breeding in 2008-2011 (blue dots).

A total of 83 1km squares were surveyed, encompassing 56 tetrads in the Liverpool conurbation, the Fylde coast and Heysham and Morecambe in the north. Gulls were present in 61 1km squares (23 in North Lancashire and 19 in both Fylde and Merseyside) and 42 tetrads with some evidence of nesting in all of them.

Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls were each found in 51 1km squares and both together in all but 13 squares.

Great Black-backed Gulls were found in just four squares, in Blackpool and Fleetwood and two in Heysham.

Population size

Great Black-backed is the only one of our urban gulls whose population can be stated with any accuracy – seven pairs divided between Heysham and the Fylde coast in 2019.

A minimum of 506 probably breeding (AONs or AOTs) Lesser Black-backs were counted. They were heavily concentrated in north Lancashire, where 266 pairs included 103 in a single 1km square in Heysham, and in North Merseyside where 190 pairs were located; in contrast only 50 pairs were found in the Fylde.

Herring Gulls were slightly more numerous with 610 probable pairs located, but their distribution within the county was much different. Fylde held more than 60% (369 pairs) while Herring Gulls were relatively scarce in both Merseyside (84 pairs) and north Lancashire (107 pairs).

It is difficult to come up with a plausible explanation for these population differences between various parts of the county.

Nor is it possible to derive accurate population estimates from these figures, beyond stating that they represent absolute minima. This is partly because in very many instances it was impossible to get good enough views of all roofs to count all possible pairs. Equally significantly, 2019's was only a sample survey – albeit of areas known to support breeding gulls – and the number of squares surveyed were insufficient to use statistical methods to scale up the results to the county.

Changes in distribution

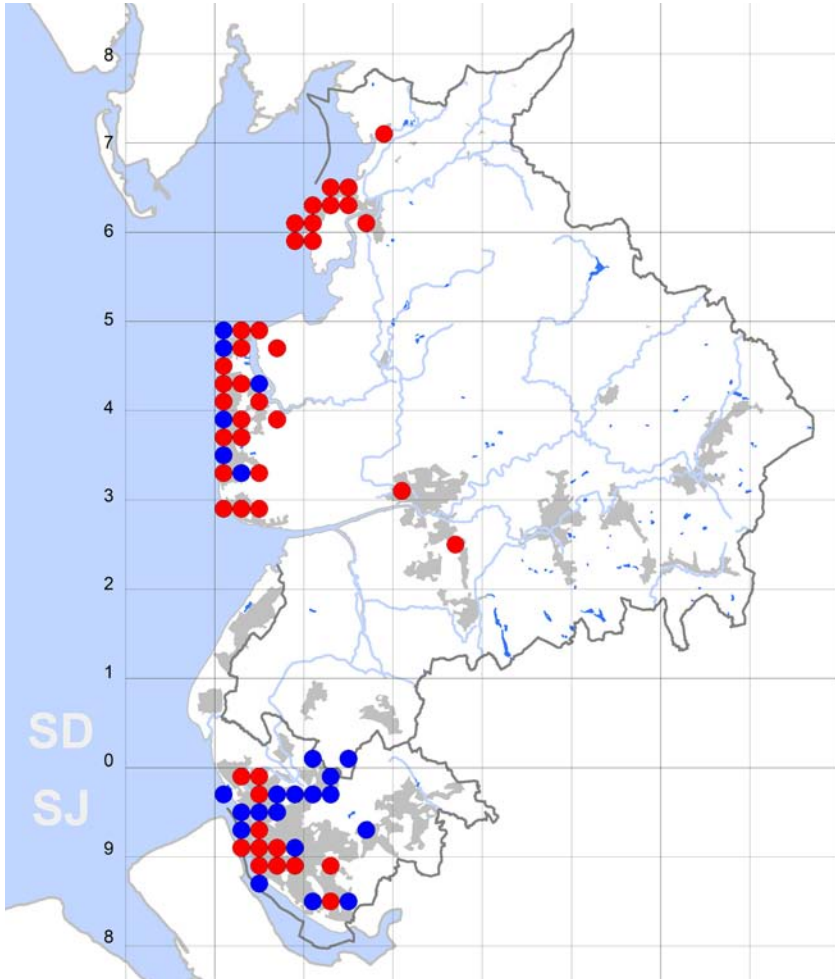
There appears to have been very little change in the distribution within the established range of any species since the atlas survey at the tetrad level, although it is likely that some 1km squares have been newly occupied and others abandoned. However, breeding has spread into Lytham St Annes and Preston and gained a toehold in Walton Summit.

Population changes

Lesser Black-backs began to colonise urban areas in the late 1980s but the population had increased to just 26 pairs by 1994, restricted to Liverpool, Fleetwood and Heysham, and to 89 pairs by 1999, when Blackpool had also been colonised. It had increased dramatically within these same areas by

2008-2011, when the Liverpool population alone was estimated at possibly more than 500 pairs. The current survey does not provide any real evidence of significant changes and we can only guesstimate the urban population at very approximately 1000-1500 pairs.

Roof-nesting Herring Gulls appeared earlier, in the mid-1970s, and by 1994 numbered 32 pairs and increased to 189 pairs across their current range by 1999. The 2019 survey indicated that this was slightly the more numerous of the two species over the county as a whole so 1000-1500 urban pairs also seems the best estimate we can come up with.



Distribution of roof-nesting gulls (Herring and Lesser and Great Black-backed) in Lancashire & North Merseyside, 2019. Red dots = confirmed breeding in 2019; blue-dots = confirmed breeding in 2008-2011 and confirmed presence in 2019.

Migrant Dates 2018

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 2018.
- The earliest recorded spring and latest recorded autumn records.
- The average (mean) first arrival and last departure dates 1990-2018.
- The trends for earlier or later arrival or departure where these are statistically significant between 1990 and 2018.

Records of overwintering and sickly birds have been omitted.

	Spring				Autumn			
	2018	Earliest	Mean	Trend	2018	Mean	Latest	Trend
Garganey	17/4	24/2/95	29/3		26/11			
Osprey	21/3	4/3/05	22/3	Earlier	29/9	15/11/14	10/10	
LRP	17/3	8/3/10	19/3		9/9	19/10/76	16/9	
Dotterel	9/5	29/3/89	21/4					
Whimbrel	13/4	11/3/78	7/4		6/10	6/11/88	2/10	
Wood Sandpiper	23/4	14/4/83	2/5		8/9	5/12/12	18/9	
Sandwich Tern	14/3	13/3/90	26/3		17/10	2/12/94	15/10	
Little Tern	4/5	12/4/13	23/4		10/10	23/10/03	12/9	
Common Tern	16/4	30/3/07	12/4		10/10	17/11/77	13/10	Earlier
Arctic Tern	17/4	1/4/94	16/4		10/9	18/11/11	10/10	
Black Tern	2/5	11/4/80	29/4		20/9	23/11/14	10/10	
Cuckoo	9/4	23/3/00	16/4	Earlier	10/9	9/10/07	30/8	
Swift	4/4	1/4/04	16/4		22/9	4/12/63	5/10	
Sand Martin	11/3	24/2/90	10/3		26/9	13/10/72	5/10	
Swallow	26/3	5/3/14	21/3		17/11	31/12/86	22/11	
House Martin	28/3	17/3/63	31/3	Earlier	10/10	31/12/81	26/10	
Willow Warbler	28/3	23/3/15	29/3		8/10	18/11/89	10/10	
Wood Warbler	15/4	14/4/79	24/4		15/9	26/9/67		
Sedge Warbler	8/4	27/3/03	11/4		8/9	14/11/96	29/9	
Reed Warbler	29/4	5/4/11	13/4	Earlier	24/9	14/11/93	13/10	
Grasshopper Warbler	9/4	3/4/14	15/4	Earlier	30/8	4/10/12 & 13	20/9	
Garden Warbler	15/4	6/4/11	18/4	Earlier	6/10	13/11/95	12/10	Earlier
Lesser Whitethroat	15/4	3/4/14	18/4	Earlier	22/9	23/11/99	3/10	
Whitethroat	8/4	2/4/14	15/4	Earlier	8/9	23/10/90	1/10	
Ring Ouzel	23/3	7/3/16	21/3		15/10	11/12/00	4/11	
Spotted Flycatcher	16/4	14/4/15	30/4		14/10	15/11/79	2/10	
Pied Flycatcher	2/5	7/4/11	15/4		2/8	3/11/01	20/9	Earlier
Redstart	9/4	28/3/68 & 12	9/4	Earlier	23/9	10/11/82	2/10	
Whinchat	15/4	20/3/76	20/4		22/9	12/11/79	11/10	
Wheatear	12/3	26/2/03	10/3		6/11	27/11/11	31/10	
Yellow Wagtail	14/4	24/3/96	10/4		17/10	11/11/95	10/10	
Tree Pipit	1/4	17/3/57	4/4		29/9	1/12/12	4/10	

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:

- 'Cackling Goose, Marshside, 25 October 2012
- Snowy Owl, Spitler's Edge, 25 March 2018
- Black-headed Wagtail, Eric Morecambe complex, 14 to 16 April 2018
- Savi's Warbler, Brockholes Wetland, 22 to 25 April 2018
- Semipalmated Sandpiper, Skipool Creek, 6 to 18 September 2018
- Pallid Harrier, Bank End, 16 to 18 September, 2018
- Red-throated Pipit, Knott End, 11 October 2018

The following records are under consideration by the BBRC:

- 'North American Night Heron', Mere Sands Wood, 12 February to 21 April 2008
- North American Canada Geese, various north Fylde sites, 20 January to 2 April 2017
- Barolo Shearwater, Heysham & Rossall Pont, 20 September 2018
- Stilt Sandpiper, Lunt Meadows, 17 to 21 May 2019

The following records were found to be not proven by the BBRC:

- Semipalmated Sandpiper, Hesketh Out Marsh, 4 September 2018
- Long-billed Dowitcher, Hesketh Out Marsh, 16 to 17 November 2018 (accepted as dowitcher sp.)

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. Current members of the committee are Steve White (non-voting 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 'description species', and that records of both Willow and Marsh Tit outside of their known ranges also need to be supported by descriptions. Black-winged Stilt and Red-flanked Bluetail have been dropped as national rarities from the beginning of 2017, while Ferruginous Duck is now treated as a national rarity and assessed by the BBRC. Yellow-browed Warblers are now so frequent that records no longer need submission.

Species and Subspecies Requiring Full Descriptions

These are all marked with an asterisk in the systematic list

* All records of both Subalpine Warblers and Arctic Redpolls which have been identified to subspecies level should now be sent to the BBRC. But records of unraced individuals of both species will continue to be assessed locally.

Taiga Bean Goose	White-rumped Sandpiper	Pallas's Warbler
Black Brant	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Radde's Warbler
American Wigeon	Pectoral Sandpiper	Dusky Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Red-necked Phalarope	Siberian Chiffchaff
Lesser Scaup	Long-tailed Skua	Barred Warbler
Surf Scoter	Little Auk	Dartford Warbler
Black Grouse	White-winged Black Tern	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	Red-flanked Bluetail
Wilson's Petrel	Nightjar	Rose-coloured Starling
Night Heron	Alpine Swift	Nightingale
Purple Heron	Hoopoe	Bluethroat
Glossy Ibis	Bee-eater	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Red-necked Grebe	Wryneck	Citrine Wagtail
Honey Buzzard	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Richard's Pipit
Black Kite	Red-footed Falcon	Olive-backed Pipit
White-tailed Eagle	Golden Oriole	Common Rosefinch
Montagu's Harrier	Red-backed Shrike	Common (Mealy) Redpoll
Rough-legged Buzzard	Woodchat Shrike	Arctic Redpoll*
Golden Eagle	Chough	Serin
Spotted Crake	Woodlark	Lapland Bunting
Corncrake	Shore Lark	Cirl Bunting
Common Crane	Short-toed Lark	Ortolan Bunting
Stone Curlew	Red-rumped Swallow	Little Bunting
Black-winged Stilt	Penduline Tit	Grey-headed Wagtail
American Golden Plover	Marsh and Willow Tit	
Kentish Plover	(out of normal range)	
Temminck's Stint	Greenish Warbler	

Abbreviations used in the text

1S - first-summer, 1W - first-winter, and so on.	MSW	Mere Sands Wood (LWT)
GC Golf Course	SNR	Seaforth Nature Reserve (LWT)
GP Gravel Pit	BBRC	British Birds Rareities Committee
LNR Local Nature Reserve	BOURC	British Ornithologists Union Records Committee
ML Marine Lake	BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
NR Nature Reserve	CBC	Common Bird Census (BTO)
NNR National Nature Reserve	BBS	Breeding Bird Survey (BTO)
Qry Quarry	WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey
Res Reservoir	CDNHS	Chorley & District Natural History Society
WwTW Waste-water Treatment Works	ELOC	East Lancashire Ornithologists Club
EMP Eric Morecambe Pools complex	LDBWS	Lancaster and District Birdwatching Society
MBR Morecambe Bay Reserve (RSPB)	LWT	Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside Wildlife Trust
MB(ay)S Morecambe Bay South (Lancashire section of Morecambe Bay WeBS)	SWLRG	South-West Lancashire Ringing Group
MMWWT Martin Mere Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust Reserve		

Contributors

Thank-you to everyone who has sent in their records this year (300 individual contributors) and sincere apologies if we've missed anyone out! The society currently has around 170 members so if you're not a member, please consider joining (see over page). Thanks to everyone who's submitted images and allowed us use them! We would be delighted to receive further submissions from the growing number of Lancashire birders with high quality photographic equipment.

K Abram	D Chew	M Farrar	A Jenkins	A Moore	D Rigby
PJ Alker	S Childs	J Fenton	J Jenkins	J Moore	D Riley
A Anderson	M Chin	JD Fletcher	L Jenkins	P Morri	M Rimmer
S Ankers	T Clare	SG Flynn	A Johnson	J Morris	J Roberts
WC Aspin	G Clarkson	J Frankland	C Johnson	A Myerscough	ST Robinson
S Bagshaw	WJ Clift	J Fry	A Jones	M Myerscough	N Root
P Bainbridge	J Coates	C Fyles	G Jones	T Myerscough	P Ross
A Baines	J Collin	C Galeski	M Jones	M Naylor	D Rothwell
T Baker	S Conroy	I Gardner	S Jones	J Neale	P Rowlands
D Balding	AJ Conway	M Garner	M Jump	R Neville	V Rushworth
I Ball	D Cook	G Gavaghan	K Kelly	M Nightingale	LJ Ryan
JK Bannon	M Cookson	DL Gifford	RJ Kennedy	D Nuttall	S Ryder
JN Barlow	AA Cooper	N Godden	P Kinsella	P Olivant	D Satterthwaite
PD Barnett	S Coote	K Green	P Kirk	PJ Olson	JB Sawyer
CG Batty	I Corbett	ME Greenhalgh	PJ Knight	J Ormerod	J Scragg
S Beastall	A Cornall	S Grimshaw	LW Knowles	J Packham	M Shakeshaft
D Beattie	C Corrigan	P Guy	A Lancaster	H Page	P Shakeshaft
J Beattie	P Crooks	I Hadwin	L Langley	N Park	G Sharples
K Beaver	P Cross	P Haigh	JC Lavin	A Parnell	P Sharples
R&S Bedford	S Cross	R Halsey	A Leach	N Patel	T Sharples
C Bell	MJ Cuff	D Hardaker	A Leeming	M Peers	CJ Sharratt
DA Bickerton	A Culverhouse	R Hargreaves	N Leeming	E Pemberton	D Sheldon
F Bird	RE Danson	IM Harper	J Lees	S Pettit	J Shepherd
LG Blacow	S Darbyshire	I Hartley	C Liggett	H Phillips	P Slade
P Boardman	J Davie	J Hatton	G Lilley	J Pickard	PG Slade
D Bowker	J Davies	C Haworth	K Lister	CJ Piner	P Slater
B Bracken	P Davies	S Hayat	D Lumb	SG Piner	MA Small
J Bray	J Dean	D Haywood	A MacDonald	I Pinkerton	J Smith
Mgt Breaks	J Dempsey	M Higgin	R Maciewicz	DJ Pitman	PH Smith
Mk Breaks	S Dodgson	G Higgins	I Manfield	J Poland	RH Smith
K Brides	B Dodson	Z Hinchcliffe	PJ Marsh	A Pollard	NT Southworth
K Briggs	B Donato	G Hodgkinson	DS Martin	K Pollard	KG Spencer
R Briggs	J Donnelly	P Hodson	SJ Martin	A Powell	D Spiers
D Broome	M Downham	A Holmes	W Martin	J Powell	JA Stinger
B Brown	A Draper	P Holt	J Mason	G Powley	R Stinger
A Bunting	R du Feu	PJ Hornby	M May	L Poxon	M Sutcliffe
R Burns	S Duffield	R Horner	B McCarthy	A Pryce	J Sutton
CI Bushell	S Dunstan	C Horrocks	G McClelland	R Pyefinch	K Sutton
J Butcher	B Dwire	J Howarth	M McGough	P Quinton	JE Taylor
JR Butcher	B Dyson	RE Hoyle	DJ McGrath	C Raby	S Taylor
AJ Cameron	SP Eaves	G Hulme	N Melsom	L Renshaw	Ga Thomas
G Carefoot	J Edwards	R Ives	M Memory	P Rhind	Gr Thomas
J Carter	P Ellis	G Jackson	SM Meredith	P Rhodes	CG Tomlinson
M Carter	M Evans	M Jackson	J Metcalf	RW Rhodes	TM Towey
R Carter	K Fairclough	S Jackson	P Miller	D Rickards	C Tynan

T Vaughan	JF Walsh	WJ Webb	T Westhead	A Wilkinson	PJ Woods
J Wacey	JF Walsh	P Webster	SJ White	J Wilson	JF Wright
G Waddington	M Ward	M Welch	N Whiteside	D Windle	D Young
DF Wadsworth	SD Ward	SP Wende	GD Wilby	B Wood	S Young
I Walker	M Watson	N West	M Wilby	P Woodruff	

Alt WeBS	Fylde Bird Club database	Morecambe Bay WeBS
Birdguides	Heysham NR & Observatory Report	Natural England, Bowland
BTO/RSPB Birdtrack	LDBWS report	Ribble WeBS
Chorley & District Natural History report	Lunt Meadows Bird Report	Seaforth Bird Report
Cuerden Valley Park report	Mersey WeBS	United Utilities
ELOC Report	MMWWT logs	

Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society

Elected Officials of the Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society

Chairman: Alex Whitlock,

9 Sykefield, Brierfield, Lancs. BB9 5NB

e-mail: noil@btinternet.com

Secretary: Dave Bickerton,

64 Petre Crescent, Rishton, Lancs, BB1 4RB

Tel: 01254 886257 e-mail: sec@lacfs.org.uk

Treasurer: Rob Yates

68 Shore Road, Hesketh Bank, Preston, Lancashire PR4 6RD

e-mail: treasurer@lacfs.org.uk

Report Editor and Lancashire Bird Recorder:

Steve White, 102 Minster Court, Crown Street, Liverpool, L7 3QD

Tel: 0151 707 2744 e-mail: recorder@lacfs.org.uk

The next Annual General Meeting will be held on 10am Saturday 7th March 2020 – 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 Vertebrates of Lancashire’ in 2017 and ‘Butterflies & Day-flying Moths’ in 2018). 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.