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***BIRD NEWS***  
***Vol. 31 No. 4 Winter 2020***

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please contact the Secretary who holds some.



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## Club news and announcements

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### Subscriptions

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

#### To pay by bank transfer:

Pay into Barclays Bank, Carlisle (sort code 20-18-47) for Cumbria Bird Club, a/c no. 30464821

Please put your name in the reference so that the treasurer can tell who has paid. It would also be useful if you e-mailed Dave Piercy [daveandkathy-piercy@btinternet.com](mailto:daveandkathy-piercy@btinternet.com) to confirm you have paid.

Subscription rates: Joint/Family £15; Single/Corporate £12.50;  
Reduced/Junior £9.50; Reduced Joint/Family £11.50

### CBC Swift survey 2020

Please send your completed forms/spreadsheets to Dave Piercy. It is still not too late !

### CBC bird race 2021

Unfortunately the prospect of two, three or four people jumping into a car together and scouring the county in the annual Bird Race will not be possible, under covid restrictions, this New Year. Phil Evans and Christine Nuttall who have organised the event over recent years have however pledged to run the event later in the year, as and when restrictions allow. Watch this space. Also see overleaf for the CBC New Year Bird List Challenge 2021.

### **CBC Meeting programme 2020/2021 (subject to changes - check the website)**

**Date to be arranged (AGM): Penrith United Reformed Church 7.30pm**  
Members slide show by Mike Carrier, Jake Manson & Adam Moan

**Wednesday 6th January 2021: Cancelled**

**Monday 8th March 2021: Cancelled**

## CBC New Year Bird List Challenge 2021 - 1st to 4th January 2021

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Under the lockdown and restrictions of recent months most of us have found salvation in getting outdoors and in our appreciation of wildlife in the county. Many ardent bird 'listers', and even those less motivated, like to start the year with their tally during a New Year outing. It gets the year off to a new start – 'that's my first Great Spotted Woodpecker of the year,' or 'do you know I haven't seen a Mallard yet this year' become a commentary on our days as the year progresses.

For some this might simply take the form of a family walk for an hour or two while others might really go for it. The annual Bird Race certainly got many lists well under way for the year so in it's absence why not have your own New Year Bird List Challenge.

Covid restrictions on the day will still hopefully allow us to get out in the outdoors, with household members or to meet up with a socially distanced friend (depending on Government instructions at the time). The garden birds make a good start to the list but then planning a route for a walk or maybe a bike ride, in order to tap into more varied habitats, gets the species list climbing.

### **CBC New Year Bird List Challenge 2021.**

- On one day of the long weekend 1st-4th January 2021 draw up your list of species seen.
- Your list may comprise of your garden birds and those seen during a single outing while travelling under your 'own steam'.
- You may use vehicle transport to get to and from a start point but no use of vehicle transport to get from one place to another.
- Walk, cycle, row or paddle your canoe but if your bike is electric then limit yourself to 20 miles travel. . . and no counting en route to a start by car!
- Take part as an individual or with others according to Government restrictions in place at the time.
- There is no maximum or minimum time limit set. Let your enthusiasm, energy and the weather dictate.
- This is a challenge and open to all. Look after yourselves, stay safe and enjoy the diversity of Cumbrian birdlife.

Please send in your list for the day to Mike and Lyn Mills [mike.lynn@talktalk.net](mailto:mike.lynn@talktalk.net) along with your guess at the number of different species in the combined list of all those taking part (small prize on offer for nearest guess). If you have a good outing please share your experience by writing up a short account and sending it in. Separate fun prizes for submissions from young people (so include your age if you qualify).

### **BirdingCumbria Email Group**

As many of you will be aware the group has moved from the “yahoo” site it has used since 2002, “yahoo” having closed down the support of groups like ours. We are now fully set up on **Google Groups** and have 105 members many of whom contribute sightings on a regular basis. This enables members to keep in touch with what’s going on in the county, and the more who contribute the better the group can become.

Whilst the group is independent from Cumbria Bird Club all records appearing on the group are passed to the bird club on a monthly basis enabling local recorders to follow up relevant records soon after observation rather than doing so perhaps at the end of the year.

We stress that we aim to complement, rather than replace the CBC reporting systems. Birdguides and Rare Bird Alert also take records from the site.

If you are not a member of the Google Group and would like to be involved you can find us on “Google Groups “ If you have problems don’t hesitate to email. Phil Evans [orcinus.phil@protonmail.com](mailto:orcinus.phil@protonmail.com) or

Bob Jones [rjgreenacres72@gmail.com](mailto:rjgreenacres72@gmail.com) .

We have also resurrected the **SolwaySkuas** site on **Google Groups** (previously on “yahoo”) where more detailed records of the skua passage are shared enabling a more accurate picture of birds passing up the Solway to be established . Hopefully weather patterns will be better for passage than they have been in recent years!

### **Rock Pipit sightings**

Mike and Lyn Mills are carrying out a study of Rock Pipits. Please send any sightings with full details to: [mike.lyn@talktalk.net](mailto:mike.lyn@talktalk.net)



*Rock Pipit, St. Bees, Tony Marsh*

### **New regional bird recorder for Carlisle and Eden districts: Pete Howard**

Pete moved to Cumbria in 2004 to work for the RSPB at their Geltsdale Reserve in the North Pennines. Prior to this he worked for the same organisation in Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Whilst in Cumbria he has been especially involved in monitoring and surveying raptors, owls, and a variety of upland species. Over the years he has birded widely across most regions of Britain, but is particularly drawn to more remote montane and coastal habitats. Pete is currently Vice Chair of the Cumbria Bird Club. He also has a special interest in butterflies. He is a published nature writer and poet.

### **Bird Records for 2020**

It is extremely helpful if bird records are submitted as early as possible after the end of the year. They certainly need to be sent to one of the Regional Recorders by the end of January 2021 if they are to be included in Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria 2020 ( the Bird Report ).

With the rise of social media there has been a drift away from submitting records directly to the Cumbria Bird Club. The most useful records are the ones we receive directly from observers, particularly if they include some interesting detail.

A wonderful team of writers has been formed to produce the Bird Report. But they can only write interesting accounts if observers have submitted interesting and detailed records.

### **Rare Breeding Birds**

Records of these are very valuable for our submission to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel each year. These should be noted 'Confidential' although we do look out for such records and mark them as such in any case. Confirmed successful breeding is not necessarily required – any breeding attempt or the presence of rare breeding birds in suitable habitat is worth recording.

There is more on the Rare Breeding Birds Panel at <https://www.rbbp.org.uk/>

*Chris Hind County Recorder*

### **Books for sale**

We have received some bird books from someone who recently passed away and wondered if they would be of interest to anyone in the bird club. We are asking for donations to the RSPB and they can be picked up at RSPB Campfield Marsh, Bowness on Solway. If anyone is interested they can get in contact with me.

Mhairi Maclauchlan Tel 01697 352225 [Mhairi.Maclauchlan@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Mhairi.Maclauchlan@rspb.org.uk)



*Blue Tit, Greenfinch & Great Tit, Portinscale, Tony Marsh*

## Peregrine observations

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Had an amazing sighting last week at Haweswater. I was near the Rigg when I heard a loud rushing sound from above. I looked up, thinking that perhaps it was a drone, or a jet, and saw six Peregrine Falcons pulling up out of a stoop at a group of Crossbills. The sound was the air being forced against their extended wings and tail feathers as they braked to avoid plummeting into the trees, into which the Crossbills had taken refuge. The pair of Peregrines that bred at Haweswater this year successfully reared four chicks, so presumably this was all six of them hunting together. They flew off in the direction of the nest site when the action was over.

*Lee Schofield*

### Observations on a Peregrine 13th November 2020



Very brief observations on unusual aspects for a Peregrine. I think this is a first winter male that was hunting on Cumrew Fell at mid day in a nice, steady force 4 westerly wind on 13th November. He harassed, stooped on and nearly had a female Kestrel that was patrolling the same ridge top. This was far more than just territorial interaction and he ignored at least six Red Grouse that looked to be easy pickings as they were already starting to pair up.

He seemed to have lost his moustache, either shaved off for Children (Chicks) in Need, Covid Lockdown, or maybe just in embarrassment at recently being re-classified with Budgies and Parrots owing to his DNA ? So much for tracing distant relatives and TV's Who Do You Think You Are ? Also NB. Who wears the Trousers in this Grouse Household.

*Guy Broome*

### Anthorn 6th November

Using one of the masts as a look-out, he launched a spectacularly unsuccessful attack on 9000 Golden Plovers. Returned to his lookout and watched eastwards instead.

*Stephen Mott*

## Wagtails on the move

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Visual migration of hirundines, mainly Swallows, along the West Cumbria coast provides a running commentary during April and into May, sometimes worthy of timed counts. These are the easily recognised determined fliers, northward bound on suitable days and even in some quite hostile conditions. Their motto seems to be to 'keep the sea to the left and press on north,' St. Bees – Parton – Harrington and often noted by John Callion as they pass Allonby.



*Pied Wagtail, River Derwent, Tony Marsh*

This year however Pied Wagtails came onto our 'radar' in an unexpected way. On 16<sup>th</sup> March there was a regular sighting of 20+ around a couple of wet patches in fields on St. Bees Head – presumably passage birds, they were on the move. Thereafter we noted Pied Wagtails on the move during lockdown walks along the Lowca – Harrington stretch of coast on several days. We might pass three or four of the birds feeding round puddles or dung heap but we could not be sure if these were local birds or not. Passage birds came to our attention, however, due to their alternative travel motto of 'keep the land to the right when heading north,' they were travelling over the sea in preference to journeying over the land.

During a coffee stop, on the walk, we would scan the sea through binoculars and telescope – Cormorants, Gannets, distant Manxies, Curlew, Whimbrel, Sandwich Terns, and . . . Pied Wagtails. Rarely did we pick up the wagtails with the naked eye, almost invariably they were picked up through binoculars or scope 100-300metres off the beach in small loose groups of up to eight birds, with their bouncing flight, quite low to the water. Previously they were passing by at this range, unseen by us, and presumably by predator; now we were picking up wagtails crossing our field of view in the foreground while looking for Gannets in the distance. Migrating over the sea, rather than over the land, seems to be a perfectly sensible strategy for wagtails.

Others may have been aware to look over the sea for passing wagtails but it was something of a light bulb experience for us. Watching along the coast through the scope gave the opportunity to latch onto approaching birds then check them out as they pass – a close range variation on sea watching. Having now tuned in to wagtail vis mig we will make the effort to better record it in future years.

*Mike and Lyn Mills*



## **Pied-billed Grebe at South Walney** another Island addition to Cumbria's avifauna

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On the 6th November 2020 a Pied-billed Grebe was found on the pools complex at South Walney and it remained in residence until 8th November 2020. Whilst it is a first record for Cumbria, there have been three previous records in the northwest of England at Dockacres, Lancashire between 24th May and 8th June 1997, Hollingworth Lake, Greater Manchester on 7th to 21st November 2010 and Leighton Moss, Lancashire from 25th April to 4th May 2015. (Full details will appear in *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria 2020*).

Although a number of images of the bird have since been published by various photographers none appear to show the true colours better than the quick record shot phone/scope image grabbed through my scope by CWT warden Sarah Dalrymple.



*Pied-billed Grebe, 6th November 2020, Sarah Dalrymple.*

It is perhaps surprising that more Cumbrian birders are not tempted to visit Walney Island on a regular basis, especially in the autumn when the site has an unrivalled record in the county for attracting rare and unusual species. Following a Cetti's Warbler on 14th-28th November 2005, Hudsonian Whimbrel from 14th June to 19th August 2007, Rustic Bunting between 27th September and 2nd October 2008, Red-eyed Vireo on 14th November 2014, Citrine Wagtail on 11th August 2015 and Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike on 28th October 2016, Remarkably this is the island's seventh addition to Cumbrian avifauna this century.

*Colin Raven*

## Whinchats at RSPB Geltsdale 2020

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A British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Re-trap Adult Survival (RAS) project for Whinchat has been undertaken at RSPB Geltsdale in the North Pennines for ten years. The project has been carried out by locating nests and colour-ringing the young, then in subsequent years looking for the returning birds; some adults have been caught and colour-ringed too. Amanda Proud and Martin Ketcher, two RSPB volunteers from Hertfordshire, have spent the summer at Geltsdale for the last ten years and have done the majority of the work on the RAS.



This year they were not allowed to stay on the reserve as residential volunteers until early July due to the Covid restrictions, consequently there was less effort put into finding territories this year. However, John Callion and Rhys Findlay-Robinson helped out by spending a day locating and ringing Whinchat broods in early June.

The number of territories found in 2020 was down again, to 38, compared to 42 last year and 46 the previous year, this is a worrying trend considering some of the habitat management being carried out on the reserve that should be of benefit to breeding Whinchats.

The survival data comes from calculating the percentage of returning adult birds each year. Once the project was underway the number of colour-ringed adults recorded each year has ranged from 37 to 76. This year 52 colour-ringed adults were seen, 21 of which were adults last year, a return rate of 55%, the highest return rate recorded for this RAS. The average return rate



for all adults is 40%, more males return than females. The return rate for nestlings was 17%, an average year. These encouraging figures really don't fit with a declining population, whatever is going on is complex and we haven't figured it out yet.

Only 25 nestlings were ringed this year, the lowest total since 2011 when the RAS started. As well as less effort being made to find nests, productivity was very low due to nest predation. The low productivity was also reflected in the low number of



Whinchats later in the year at Stagsike Meadow, near the reserve visitor centre. Both adult and juvenile Whinchats use this area while they moult. In previous years it was not uncommon to see a dozen birds at one time in the meadow and over 20 different colour-ringed birds if you spent half an hour watching them and recording the colour-ring combinations. This year there were only half that number.

Before colour-ringing here, I thought that these Whinchats were passage birds just going through as in poor weather they vanish, and I assumed they had moved on. Because we have good numbers of colour-ringed birds it became apparent that we have the same birds in the same area from late July to early September. There must be other areas in the county where Whinchats congregate to moult. It would be interesting to hear from anyone who regularly sees Whinchats in one place in August and early September. Areas of dense ground vegetation such as late cut meadows or ungrazed areas would seem to be a good place to look.

The oldest known Whinchats in the UK did not return this year, but five four-year old birds were recorded. On the Whinchat page of the ringing report on the BTO website:

<https://app.bto.org/ring/countyrec/resultsall/rec11370all.htm>, all the oldest known Whinchats listed at the moment are at RSPB Geltsdale.

Only one Whinchat with a geolocator, fitted last year, was located this year. These small devices record information which can be used to locate when and where the bird has been in the previous year. Frustratingly they have to be retrieved to obtain the data. This male had a nest with young, but the nest was predated in the 12 hours before we were going to catch the bird. The bird was not seen again, presumably he relocated and a search to find him or his mate (also colour-ringed) was unsuccessful. Several siblings of the geolocated juveniles from last year were found nesting on the reserve.



*Stephen Westerberg.*

*Photos by Adam Moan all taken at RSPB Geltsdale*

## Raven voices

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*Raven, St. Bees Head, Roger Ridley*

Ravens are now known to be a highly intelligent birds, capable of solving problems or puzzles set up during scientific experiments, and able to make use of tools to achieve various outcomes. It is also a very garrulous bird. It is the largest of all songbirds, with arguably the greatest repertoire of calls of any species. It has long been famed for its powers of mimicry, and has indeed been taught to speak human words, much in the manner of parrots.

Aside from this talent for imitation, the range of standard call types is both extensive and highly varied. Depending upon which authority you consult, it is claimed that up to 79 separate calls have been distinguished, within 33 different category types (Cornell Laboratory, Audubon Society et al.).

I have monitored Ravens at RSPB Geltsdale since 2004, and every year I still hear calls that are quite new to me. Living in Cumbria, many of us will doubtless be familiar with some of the more common Raven calls. The deep, resonant 'cronk'; the harsh, rolling 'krra – krra – krra'; the sharp, metallic 'pruk'; the hollow, echoing 'toc – toc – toc'; the gong-like 'klong'; the curious, bow-twanging 'boing'. In addition to these I have also heard a wide range of what could best be described as 'knocking' and 'clucking' sounds. There is understandably much dispute over what all these calls mean, and they are variously described as 'courtship', 'pair-bonding', 'contact', 'territorial', 'alarm', 'comfort', 'distress', 'begging' etc...

On one November afternoon, close to dusk, I found myself on the fringes of a moss in north-east Cumbria. Walking along a shelter belt of pines I became aware of a very strange noise coming from somewhere in the trees. I could not work out what it was. It was a very 'liquid' series of notes, ending in a sort of 'pop'. My best attempt at transcribing it would be something like 'boo-du-loo - blop'. It had something of the quality of the song of the male Capercailie! After some peering up into the canopy from a number of different angles, I was eventually able to spot a perched Raven, who appeared to be snapping his/her bill to produce the sounds. This behaviour continued for several minutes, with a second, silent, Raven (mate or rival?) sat within 25m of the vocal bird. The Raven finally stopped calling, and both birds soon disappeared from view.

I have subsequently done quite a bit of internet searching to find mention of such a call. One source refers to it as the 'water droplet' sound, which is not a bad description. I was even able to find video footage showing a Raven bill-snapping to produce these notes. However, there was no consensus on the purpose of these calls. They were variously ascribed to:

A female claiming a territory, or asserting dominance over another female

A comfort call used in pair-bonding (male or female)

A male trying to attract a female to a nest

More vaguely, it was also described as a courtship/territorial call, which could safely cover all of the above possibilities! As a result of all this I am still none the wiser as to whether it was in fact a male or a female, or indeed a courtship or a territorial dispute call. But be that as it may, this will remain for me a particularly memorable and magical encounter with such a complex and charismatic bird.

*Pete Howard*

### **Barn Owl success**

Dave Shackleton installed this box over ten years ago in a barn of a friend of ours at an altitude of about 1,000 feet. I think it was thought to be too high up the fell.

The friend is now 95 and almost blind so can't see this first nesting. Her carer has set up the camera.



Dave says it is the first confirmed breeding in the Lowther Valley. Also sent evidence from a barn over the other side of the valley where an owlet has been seen with adults.

*David Cooke*

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## Lockdown Birding

(part 1 to June 2020)

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I started birding as a child and can still remember buying my first field guide aged 11. For the next 10 years, I did little else, hobby wise. I was always at my happiest outside and preferably watching birds. After university I got more into caving and mountaineering and the birding took a bit of a back seat, though you never lose interest. Once a birder always a birder. I moved to Cumbria in 1986 because I wanted to be nearer the mountains. I've been here ever since. Mountain Rescue has taken up a lot of my time over the last 27 years as has my own hill walking and cycling. For the last 16 years my work as a freelance photographer has been somewhat involved, as I set myself the task of documenting the impacts of climate change on every continent. I did manage a little birding on my many travels. In the last five years I've really got back into my birding and am loving every minute of it.

I know for many birders the lockdown was a frustrating time, not able to jump into the car and shoot off to distant hot spots to bird. The vast majority of my birding nowadays is very local on my home patch around Ambleside, so the lockdown didn't bother me too much. If I'm honest, I loved the peace and quiet of it, and the empty roads which meant the cycling was so much more enjoyable. It also helped that during the first lockdown the weather was fantastic. I've always enjoyed setting myself challenges, so during lockdown the challenge was to see how many species I could see locally, just powered by walking or cycling. My best day was the 4th May. I did my normal morning walk down the Brathay to the head of Lake Windermere, cycled to Grasmere, Walked up Greenburn onto the tops. Then cycled Grasmere to Far Sawrey, walked up to Wise Een Tarn and cycled back round Esthwaite. The days total was 82 species which I was very pleased with. Nothing unusual spotted, but did pick up the vast majority of birds that I thought I was likely see.

Like most birders, I keep lists. I have a garden list, which includes all birds seen in the garden and also anything seen or heard from the garden. It now stands at 93. we have been in the same house now for 16 years, on the edge of the village, and I have good views over the surrounding fells. Highlights in the garden have been a flock of 35 Waxwing a few winters ago. Most unusual birds probably include a Grasshopper Warbler reeling in a neighbours hedge. Hearing Whimbrel migrating over in Spring and a fly over Red Grouse. I have no idea where the Red Grouse came from, as they are highly sedentary and tend to stick to heather moorland. I'm not aware of any within 15 miles of the house. This year I've added Snipe, Tree Sparrow, Red-breasted Merganser and Merlin to the garden list.



*Merlin, Cardunock,  
Tony Marsh*

I hope to make it to 100 before they carry me out in a box. I'm toying with the idea of noc migging as this would undoubtedly add new species calling as they fly over while I'm in bed at night.

My patch list. This currently stands at 141 again not bad for an inland area which covers a fairly small area. Essentially I count anything seen within the northern watershed of Lake Windermere, as far south as Bowness and Esthwaite and north to Dunmail. Virtually every morning, I walk from the house, down the Rothay to the head of the Lake, in this small area alone, my list is 131. For me I get as much pleasure and excitement from adding a new spe-



*Pintail, Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

cies to the patch list, as I would some exotic lifer. Some things that may be of interest include 14 species of duck on Windermere. these are Mandarin Duck, Mallard, Pintail, Wigeon, Teal, Pochard, Scaup, Tufted Duck, Common Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Goldeneye, Ruddy Duck, Goosander and Red-breasted Merganser.

Lockdown with little work to do has meant I've had more time to bird locally, and this has certainly paid off. My best sighting this year was a Common Crane flying over Loughrigg on the 26th April. I couldn't quite believe my eyes as it flew low over, heading north. Sadly all I managed was a terrible phone pic of it. After an awful lot of searching, I finally added Whinchat to my patch list, seeing birds up the Rydal Valley and in Easedale. I'm told Reed Warblers used to be on Windemere, but I've never seen one, so I was delighted to find them nesting on Esthwaite. On the 20th May, I flushed a Sanderling from the head of the lake, another first, then in June had a Little Gull on the lake. June also delivered a Hawfinch sat in a tree by the banks of the Rothay. I had seen one fly over a couple of weeks previously, but this was my first perched bird on my patch. I watched it for a couple of minutes gathering insects from the branches, it then took off and flew into an adjacent tree. There I saw it feeding a youngster, not long out of the nest. They had obviously bred somewhere nearby.

*Ashley Cooper*

*Lockdown birding - part 2 from July 2020 will appear in the next newsletter*

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## Recent reports

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The period covered is September to November 2020. Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review by the club records panel or the British Birds Rarities Committee.

### **Wildfowl**



*Whooper Swans, Blackdyke, Tommy Holden*

Eight **Bewick's Swans** flew south over Hodbarrow on 22nd October.

**Whooper Swans** arrived in the north of the county at the end of September with three at Drigg and two at Siddick on 26th, two as far south as the Lythe valley on 27th and nine at Walney. The 26 at Blackdyke, Silloth on 29th saw the start of increasing

numbers there, 64 by 11th October, 100 two days later and then 600 on 27th. Initially it was thought the local flock was only 200+ but it was eventually shown that there were two similarly sized flocks present in the locality as well as other smaller groups. Thereafter numbers reduced. In November records were more spread with 37 at Walby on 14th and 64 at Kirkbride a day later.

Initially percentages of juvenile birds were low but tended to increase as family parties started to arrive – some examples: 0.50 juveniles per pair on 18th October at Wedholme, 0.66 juveniles per pair at Kirkbride on 15th November and 1.25 juveniles per pair a day earlier at Walby. Otherwise small groups were mobile in the Eden valley (including 26 over Penrith on 5th November and on the west coast including 32 on the Duddon on 22nd October. Seven adults at Salterhall Quarry on 13th October were a new record for this site. 36 were low in the fog heading south over Keswick Stone Circle on 22nd October.

Six **Brent Geese** arrived at Walney on 4th September but the flock had increased to 125 pale-bellied birds on 30th September and at Foulney at least 290 birds – presumably pale-bellied – on 18th October. In the north of the county two dark-bellied birds were at Skinburness Marsh on 8th November. **Barnacle Geese** arrived back at the end of September with 2000 (including one leucis-



*Barnacle Geese, Cardurnock, Tommy Holden*



tic bird) on Rockliffe Marsh where numbers built up to 6000 by mid October but regular counts were disrupted thereafter. Other numbers of note were 5000 on Morcambe Bay at the same time. Also in mid October 600 on Leven Estuary included tagged and ringed Svalbard birds. Castle Carrock reservoir held the Eden **Greylag Goose** flock on several dates with 1000 on 17th October and 850 in mid November of note; in mid October 350 were in the Eden Valley at Langwathby.

Sixth of September was the day when **Pink-footed Geese** started to arrive with birds seen widely but not in any great numbers over the Solway, Carlisle and on the west coast. Further inland birds were seen over Warcop and also in the Bassenthwaite/Derwent Water valley and over into Ambleside. The next surge of birds seemed to be on 26th with a heavy passage down the west coast including 3280 past Sellafield from 10.00-15.00 hrs. On the Pennines skeins were passing mainly westward at Geltsdale but also a few to the south east; on the border 300 passed over Kershope Forest; there was clearly a wide movement in progress with 12.5 thousand over the Moffat Hills. The next day 5280 passed Sellafield southwards. Overnight into 25th birds were heard over the northern fells and close by 2000 moved through the Bassenthwaite Lake gap in 90 minutes from 7.00am. Later in the day 1000 were on the Leven Estuary and similar numbers were on the Solway.

The first reports of birds feeding were two thousand near Longtown on 27th. Thereafter there seemed to be a lull in reports till 4th October when 3000 passed Allonby. After that there were many reports of birds moving at dawn and dusk out from and back towards the Solway from the area east of Carlisle and south into the Eden Valley presumably looking to feed on stubble. Of note were 1250 north over Wetheral on 11th October and on 14th at least 1200 again in Wetheral area, low down, the first such observation by the observer in 40 years there. Feeding flocks were noted at Linstock (2000 on 27th November) and Longtown (1000 on 28th). Birds remained on the Solway including 2500 at Drumburgh in October. The impression is that more remained in North Cumbria than usual taking advantage of opportunities to feed on stubble. At Walney the first of Autumn were 365 on 10th September, 2175 on 18th, 9100 on 23rd and 1480 on 24th.

Three hundred **Shelduck** were on Cartmel Sands on 25th September and 100 at the extreme west end of Rockliffe Marsh on 21st October. Five were on Bassenthwaite for November's WeBS count.



*Shelduck, Mawbray Banks, Tommy Holden*

## Recent reports

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The only **Garganey** reported was a drake at RSPB Campfield. Thirty **Shoveler** were on Tarns Dub on 16th November. A drake **Gadwall** on pools at Warcop was unusual there. Regular counts at Foulshaw peaked at 43 on 16th November, the highest count ever at this site. In October 30 **Wigeon** were well inland at Warcop on 2nd and 1700 in Moricambe Bay on 18th and in November 264 at Castle Carrock reservoir on 26th. A November WeBS count saw 220 at Holme Dub.



*Wigeon, Mawbray Banks, Tommy Holden*

There were 2875 **Pintail** on the Duddon Estuary on 4th October increasing to 3285 on 4th November. There were 473 at Anthorn on 25th September, 1050 on the WeBS Count on 18th October and 1330 there on 4th November. Other counts included 400 on Skinburness Marsh on 17th October and 220 at Bowness on 14th. Seven were on Bassenthwaite and 13 on Stank's floods for November's WeBS' counts. On 5th September 300 **Teal** were on RSPB Campfield shore pool with 500 there on 7th October and an estimated 900 on 14th. Haverigg shore held 150 on 27th October. November's WeBS saw 290 on Tarns Dub. The only **Pochard** reported were three on Tindale Tarn on 21st September and a single on Derwent Water on 12th November.

Around 5,500 **Eider** were off Foulney on 18th October and 960 on the Duddon Estuary on 4th November. Passage **Common Scoter** included 186 heading north and 1625 south off Tarn Bay in two hours on 8th September. Inland there were 55 on Derwent Water on 9th November. Walney had 1190 on 8th September and 695 on 24th.



*Long-tailed Duck, Longtown, Nick Franklin*

**Long-tailed Ducks** first arrived on Longtown Ponds on 4th November (a female) thereafter numbers increased to six by 15th and seven on 17th and there were still at least two at the end of the month.

Elsewhere a first winter was on Rydal Water on 7th and then two on Walney on 26th and one on 31st.

The first **Goldeneye** at Hodbarrow appeared on 29th September. Hodbarrow held 92 **Red-breasted Mergansers** on 4th October and 68 were off Foulney on 18th October.



*Great Northern Diver, Urswick Tarn, Mark Cookson*

### ***Grouse to Raptors***

Sixteen **Blackcock** in two groups were reported from Stainmore on 3rd September. Both sexes were on Geltsdale along with **Red Grouse** which were also on the Skiddaw range on 27th November. There were several reports of **Grey Partridge** coveys – High Hesket ten on 18th September also in September 18 were near Wray - “the largest covey here over the years”, and on the west coast 12 at Mawbray on 11th October, nine at Oulton on 19th and 19 on stubble on St Bees Head on 11th November. Four **Red-throated Divers** were off Workington on 11th September and on 23rd a juvenile was in the Waver Channel west of Anthorn. Counts on the falling tide off Maryport produced 107 in four hours on 29th September and 425 on 18th October emphasising the importance of the Solway for this species and may be one of the reasons for the extension of the SPA status, A **Great Northern Diver** frequented Urswick Tarn from 14th November with another in Barrow Docks at the same time; a bird was also at the north end of Windermere on 21st.

Ten **Little Grebe** were on Sunbiggin Tarn on 16th September and two days later nine were at Tarn House reservoir and five on Wyndhammere. On 4th November 22 were on Longtown Ponds and 16 were on Bassenthwaite on 11th. Cumbria's first **Pied-billed Grebe** was found at Walney on 8th November. There were fleeting views of a flying **Bittern** at Foulshaw on 1st and 9th September. Two **Great White Egrets** were at Sunbiggin Tarn on 17th September, and two were at Allithwaite on 19th September and 20th October and the same number on 11th November at Holme Mill where a single bird was seen most days. Single birds were at Foulshaw on 28th September and

## Recent reports

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Humphrey Head on 6th October. In the north of the county a single was at Saltcoates on 21st October and then on Burgh Marsh and at Linstock. On 20th November a bird was found well inland at High Hesket and what may have well been the same bird was seen at Penrith, Little Salkeld, Edenhall and at Kirkby Thore. A Single bird was at Walney on 27th October. The highest numbers of **Little Egret** were in the south of the county – 50 at Ulverston on 6th September, 60 on Cartmel Sands on 25th and 25 on Leven Estuary on 27th. The highest count on the Solway was 15 at RSPB Campfield on 25th October. Seven roosts counted on separate days yielded up to 554 in September and 453 in October.

**Gannet** were reported from the west coast in September – 29 adults passed Workington on 11th and 40 were feeding off Lowca on 29th then 30 from Sellafield on 2nd October. At Walney there were 250 on 3rd September and 102 on 11th and 80 on 19th October.

A late **Osprey** spent time off RSPB Campfield on 16th and 17th October. A **Goshawk** was on a southern moss on 14th September. At least five



*Red Grouse, Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

**Marsh Harriers** were frequently reported from the southern mosses and on the Solway Mosses there was at least one or two birds. **Hen Harriers** showed a similar pattern to Marsh Harriers, a ring tail at Bassenthwaite at the end of October being an exception. Single **Red Kites** were reported from the north Pennines across to the west coast and in the Derwent Valley. A wing-tagged 2015 Cumbrian bird was at Foulshaw Moss on 11th October. Two were over the A590 at Backbarrow in mid-November.

Twenty two **Common Buzzards** passed west over RSPB Geltsdale although a few came back east on 20th September. **Merlin** records came from the south Solway, Foulshaw, a female at Walton on 17th October and one over Bassenthwaite on 29th October. Three **Hobbies** were reported between 8th and 14th September at Whitrigg and Wetheral in the north and one moving south west over M6 at Tebay. A bird at Foulshaw Moss on 14th September was the latest ever seen here. **Peregrine** were reported frequently from the Foulshaw area and from both the Solway and the Duddon; a juvenile was hunting Wood Pigeons spectacularly but without success near Wetheral on 22nd October. **Water Rail** records came from Lorton, Foulshaw, Siddick and Derwent Water.

### **Waders**

A thousand **Oystercatchers** were at Walney on 5th September increasing to 10,000 by 2nd October. There were up to 3,000 **Lapwing** at Old Sandsfield on 2nd September. Other flocks included 300 at Langwathby on plough on 27th September and 700 at RSPB Campfield on 7th October increasing to 860 by 26th. A flooded Holme Dub held 830 for the November WeBS count. A field north of Shap held 500 alongside 250 **Golden Plover** on 27th November.



*Golden Plover, Anthorn, Tommy Holden*

A juvenile **Dotterel** was at Mawbray on 25th September before flying off north west. Inland 200 **Golden Plover** were on plough with Lapwings on 27th September and 700 at Walney a day later; hereafter most reports came from the Wampool Estuary with 400 on 25th September, 1,000 on 6th October and possibly as many as 3,500 in three flocks spread over the estuary on 7th. Numbers had increased to 9,000 on 6th November. Four were on the summit of Raise on 5th November. **Grey Plover** were present from the Solway down to the Leven Estuary in small numbers, but larger numbers were 45 at RSPB Campfield on 17th October and 42 a day later at Foulney. Also at Foulney on the same day were 850 **Curlew**. Mawbray high tide roost held 540 in September with the same number on the Haverigg shore on 21st October.

**Black-tailed Godwit** used a field flood at Fingland in early September with 16 on 4th and ten on 8th; 26 were on another flood at Allonby on 6th. Around 150 were in the Foulshaw area on 5th October and 58 on Flookburgh East Plain on 20th. There were 87 on Heversham Moss on 25th November. Notable numbers of **Turnstone** were 250 at South Walney on 5th September and 231 at Foulney on 18th October.

Flocks of **Knot** included 800 at South Walney on 5th September increasing to 8,000 by 28th. Subsequently 1,200 were at Foulney on 18th October and in the north of the county 700 were on Dubmill Point on 11th November.

**Ruff** were mainly reported from the north with ten of note on a field flood at Allonby on 6th September; thereafter small numbers at Anthorn and then at end of October and into early November eight were at RSPB Campfield on the new wet meadows. Four were at Thacka Beck in early September.



## Recent reports

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### **Curlew Sandpiper**

continued to be present at Bowness in the first week of September with a maximum of seven juveniles on 6th. An adult and four juveniles were at the same site on 17th. Still in the first week and perhaps less expected were five on a field flood at Eskmeals on 4th and in the south



*Curlew Sandpipers, Bowness Railings, Nick Franklin*

three at Haverigg on 14th and two on the Leven Estuary on 18th. A single bird was present at Anthorn on many days in the first half of October.

Five hundred **Dunlin** were at Bowness Railings on 6th September and 300 at Foulney on 18th October. Juvenile **Little Stint** records came from an Eskmeals flood with two on 4th September and Bowness Railings with a maximum of three on 15th. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** joined the waders in the River Waver channel at Anthorn from 6th October and was last reported on 23rd. A **Long-billed Dowitcher** – presumably the bird previously at Port Carlisle continued to be seen – at Anthorn from 1st September and then on many dates through to the end of November. At the time of very high tides it reappeared at RSPB Campfield where it was seen on the shore pool with Redshanks and also on the wet fields inland.

A **Woodcock** was in Brown Cove on 27th November. **Jack Snipe** were recorded from Geltsdale in mid October then two by the River Eden near Rockliffe. a single at Wedholme on 18th and one on Red Hall farm the next day. On 22nd a restricted site within Carlisle Airport had eight present; thereafter singles were at Cliburn Moss and head of Windermere on 25th and 26th November respectively. Apart from 60 flushed from Juncus at Frizington on 17th October records of **Common Snipe** reflected the dates and sites shown for Jack Snipe; 40 on the River Eden, 38 at Carlisle Airport, 30 on Cliburn Moss and 50 at the head of Windermere.



*Pectoral Sandpiper, Anthorn, Nick Franklin*

**Common Sandpiper** were still present in small numbers at the end of September - one at Crosscanonby on 26th and two by the River Eden at Rockliffe on 28th. A single was on Holme Island in the Kent Estuary on 20th October. At least four on the Ravenglass Esk and three at Muncaster on 3rd November reflect a pattern of wintering birds at the site. **Common Redshank** numbers included 1,500 on Walney on 5th September and 500 at both the Leven Estuary and Foulney in mid September and October respectively. A **Spotted Redshank** was at Port Carlisle on 2nd September.

There were 34 **Greenshank** on South Walney on 5th September and 24 there on 17th. Up to 19 were on the Ravenglass Mite from 6th September to November. Other records were of birds in the south Solway with a maximum of five at Anthorn on 23rd October.

**Green Sandpipers** frequented regular sites on rivers by Kirkbride Bridge, Longtown, Park Broome, Muncaster and Ravenglass but also when water levels were high, on field floods at Longtown (maximum of four on 21st October), Rockliffe (three on 22nd November), Warcop (single on 11th October) and RSPB Campfield on many dates. In addition up to three were at Whasset in September when a single was on Foulshaw Marsh. A bird was at Sunbiggin Tarn on 17th September and three at Saltcoates on 15th November. A bird overwintering on the Lancaster canal was seen most days.



*Greenshank in Redshank roost,  
Maryport, Tommy Holden*

### ***Gulls to Pigeons***

Counts of the **Kittiwake** roost at Sellafeld peaked at 230 on 22nd September. Two **Little Gulls** were reported, one in the Kittiwake roost on 22nd September and one off Workington on 2nd November. **Mediterranean Gulls** continued to be present in the north west of the county with eight on a field flood at Allonby on 6th September, 66 at the Flimby roost on 17th, thereafter smaller numbers at Workington Dock and still seven at Flimby on 13th November. Forty-one **Sandwich Terns** passed Walney on 3rd September and a single bird was off Workington on 11th.

Probably as result of same weather conditions a single **Guillemot** was found grounded in the Irthing Valley and reports of others in "The Borders" as well as a number of auks found wrecked on the west coast. Lowca Beach had seven dead **Razorbills** and two Guillemots in 1km of beach. An **Arctic Skua** was off Maryport on 2nd October. Around 1500 **Woodpigeon** were in Nether Wasdale on 9th November.

## Recent reports

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### **Owls to Buntings**

A **Tawny Owl** was found roosting in a self-seeded Sitka on Combe Craggs, Thirlmere in otherwise open fell at 600m. There were three reports of **Short-eared Owl** in October – at Seascale on 18th and Flookburgh on 25th and Walney on 30th and in November a bird on Aughtree on 13th.



*Kingfisher, River Ellen, Tommy Holden*

The last reports of **Common Swift** were two at High Hesket on 8th September and a single at Holmrook on 10th. **Kingfisher** were widely reported but also a pair frequented the saltmarsh pools at Campfield using the predator fence poles as a perch while feeding. A **Green Woodpecker** was on Dent Fell on 21st November.

A **hybrid Hooded/Carrion Crow** frequented Port Carlisle in early October. On the west coast **Raven** were at Drigg on 10th September and St Bees Head (3) on 20th, on the Solway Plain at Wigton on 12th November and in the Eden Valley at High Hesket (2) on 18th September and Wetheral on 10th November. Colour ringed **Willow Tits** were reported several times from the south Solway Mosses.



*Great Spotted Woodpecker digging a roost hole in a telegraph pole?, Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

The largest counts of **Skylark** came from Walney – 1,260 on 15th September and 280 on 27th and in October 470 on 8th. In the north of the county there were 180 at Mawbray on 25th September and 100 at Langwathby two days later and in October 50 near Fingland, 300 at Grune moving north east and 60 on Burgh Marsh also moving east on the same day. In November there were 20 on St Bees Head. Where detail was provided birds were all feeding on stubble.

In the Eden Valley late broods of **House Martins** had only just fledged by the end of September at High Hesket where there had been 15 birds on 18th. Two at Talkin Tarn on 25th October were from a local late brood. **Swallows** passed through Walney in September – 2,050 on 15th, 1,060 on 16th, 1,050 on 18th and 27 on 27th. An estimated 100 feeding over sileage crop on 17th September at High Hesket with smaller well spread numbers subsequently





*Fieldfare, Geltsdale, Adam Moan.*

*Redwing & Song Thrush, Keswick, Tony Marsh*

including 22 at Silloth on 25th. Twelve were near Kings Meaburn on 17th October, five at Thacka Beck on 24th and the last reported were two at Arnside on 29th October.

A **Cetti's Warbler**, the first of a number, was at Walney on 29th September with a bird still present on 11th October. Up to three appeared for the second winter at Watchtree NR in October and November and another was in the south of the county at Baycliffe on 1st November. The last **Willow Warblers** were from Brampton in the north and Sedgewick in the south on 11th and 14th September respectively. A total of four **Yellow-browed Warblers** were recorded at Walney. Single **Blackcap** were reported in the north of the county in September and November with a pair coming to a Whitehaven garden at the end of November. A **Melodious Warbler** was ringed at Walney on 21st September. Three **Goldcrest** passed through Sandale on 24th September with a tit flock, part of a "significant movement".

Single **Spotted Flycatchers** were at Brampton and Portinscale in mid September and at Walney on 26th. Single **Nuthatches** at Whitehaven on 12th September and Frizington a day later were unusual at the sites. Five **Treecreepers** were in Carlisle Cemetery on 28th November. A single **Great Grey Shrike** was at Brownrigg Silloth and near Abbeytown on 17th October and another/same reported from Oldside Workington a day later.

Six **Ring Ouzel** were at RSPB Geltsdale with a large **Mistle Thrush** flock. One Ouzel was on Whitbarrow on 2nd September and two were feeding with Redwing in Low Wood, Wasdale on 16th October. The first **Fieldfare** reported was a single bird at Ainstable on 20th September but it wasn't until the third week of October that birds started to arrive in numbers – 120 at Orton (Tebay) on 13th and a day later 2,700 moved north east into a head wind at

## Recent reports

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Grune with 200 at Old Sandsfield on the same morning. On the same day, presumably part of the same movement, 700 moved north during the morning at Frizington. On 17th 600 were on Walton Moss and two days later c300 at Banks not far away. After that only large flocks reported were 150 at Campfield on 26th October, 200 at Easton on 4th November, 300 at Holmesmill Lane on 6th and then 100 at Ainstable on 27th. **Redwings** displayed a similar pattern to Fieldfares with three early birds on Penrith Beacon on 24th September and then 300 north into a north east wind at Grune on 14th October and 150 further east at Old Sandsfield. By far the highest count were 1,460 going to roost near Castle Carrock on 21st. Notable reports of **Mistle Thrush** were 47 at Longtown Ponds on 21st September and 20 at RSPB Geltsdale the next day.



*Wheatear, Bowness, Tony Marsh*

A **Whinchat** was on Binsey on 7th September. Fourteen **Stonechats** were in a loose group at Geltsdale on 20th September and in early October a total of at least 70 individuals were identified over a period of about a week based on colour ringing. At Walney 15 were present on 4th November. Passage **Robins** were 23 at Walney on 20th September and 16 on 27th. A late **Redstart** was at Walney on 19th September. Reports of **Wheatear** came mainly from the west coast; ten were at Walney on 20th September and there were five including a Greenland sub species at Mawbray on 25th. Three Greenland types were also at Heversham Moss on 6th October, the last Wheatear was seen here on 11th.

A **White Wagtail** was at Bowness Railings on 18th September and six at Sandgate on 18th September and six at Sandgate the next day. A juvenile was in Geltsdale on 21st. Around 100 **Pied Wagtails** were in fields at Lorton on 16th September. A single **Yellow Wagtail** went through Walney on 19th September. Mid September saw large numbers of **Meadow Pipits** on the west coast including “hundreds” on the beach at Allonby on 17th. Good numbers had been recorded at Walney with 2,400 on 16th, 12,800 on 18th and 3,000 on 24th being the highest daily counts. In October Walney had 4000 moved through on 2nd. **Rock Pipits** were regular at Workington Harbour and Maryport Harbour where at least four fed together on 26th November. A **Water pipit** was at Biggar at the end of November. On 14th October, as part of a wider movement 1000 **Starlings** passed north east at Grune with 600 to the east at Old Sandsfield vigorously stripping elderberries from bushes whilst thrushes were taking hawthorn berries.

Only reports of **Brambling** were two over Anthorn on 7th October, one at Foulshaw on 9th, a bird in a garden at Frizington on 14th and one in Geltsdale on 7th November. A flock of 40 **Twite** were at Anthorn on 15th October and 50 on the Duddon on 13th November. The largest flock of **Linnets** were 155 at RSPB Campfield on the arable field there. Seventy **Goldfinch** were near Shap on 4th September and at least 100 at Portinscale on 7th. Knapweed attracted around 180



*Brambling, Geltsdale, Adam Moan*

to Salterhall Quarry on 8th.



*Goldfinch, Portinscale, Tony Marsh*

There were a number of **Common Crossbill** records including seven at Cliburn Moss on 12th October, 30 on Glenridding Dodd on 18th, 16 at Jockey Shield on 26th, four at Foulshaw on 28th, 40 at Helsington Barrows on 27th November (still present at the end of the month) and eight at Warcop on 28th.

Single **Snow Buntings** were at Walney on 4th November, Workington from 31st October and also on the fells at four sites. There were 15 on the Fairfield plateau on 28th November.

*As ever, we are indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list. Feel free to send records by e-mail to: [rjgreenacres72@gmail.com](mailto:rjgreenacres72@gmail.com)*

**NB** *It is important that observers also submit records to the appropriate Regional Recorder at the end of the year. Please see either the latest edition of *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria* or the Cumbria Bird Club website [www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk](http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk) for details of how to do so.*

*Bob Jones and Dave Piercy*

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The deadline for copy for the next issue is March 1st 2021

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<http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk>

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