

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Newsletter No. 138

Summer 2012

*Chorley and District Natural History Society is a
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COMMITTEE IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION

For all sorts of reasons, the society has lost several long serving committee members in recent years. At present the committee consists of only eight members. Of these, only two are under 60 years of age. Perhaps this age profile reflects accurately that of the society as a whole, but unless new faces are brought in, I would expect 50% of these stalwarts to have left the committee in 5 years or less.

The sad truth of the matter is that the society is in danger of extinction! Not in the next year or two maybe, but the end is inevitable if new faces cannot be found to become involved in the day to day administration of the society.

How much is involved in being on the committee?

Attendance at a 2 hour meeting about 10 times a year. These probably could be shorter, but we are friends and like to chat!

Helping at indoor meetings –although you do not actually need to be on the committee to do this. This might involve taking money at the door, or making tea or helping to set out and tidy up the seating.

That's about all really. Of course it would be wonderful if someone wanted to become Chair, Secretary or Treasurer. Even better if they wanted to organise field trips, or write for the newsletter. We have representatives who attend local Advisory Groups on Yarrow Valley Park and Astley Park – would you be interested in involvement?

None of these roles need specialist skills or knowledge. If I can do it (and I have for over 30 years) then so can you!

By the time you read this, the AGM will have passed and the committee re-elected for 2012-13. This need not deter you from coming forward to offer to help. You will be welcomed. You are needed.

Contact me directly (01257 266783 or secretary@chorleynats.org.uk) or speak to any committee member if you feel you can help out.

Phil Kirk

INSECT REPORT

Despite the dreadful weather of the early summer there have been a few records of interest.

Firstly, the sighting of a male Orange Tip near Spring Wood on 26th March was the earliest ever record for the species in our area. The previous best was 1st April 1999. This was presumably the result of the hot spell we enjoyed during March. Sadly thereafter numbers of the species were low – due to the inclement conditions of April and May when it should be at its peak. March also produced many Small Tortoiseshells (from 16th March), a few Peacocks (from 26th March) and a single Comma (24th March).

Secondly there was a male Black Tailed Skimmer present at Healey Nab on 28th May.



Black Tailed Skimmer

I believe that this is the third site for the species, which was last seen locally in 2009. The pools at Healey Nab are a really good place for Odonata. Good numbers of the “blues” and Large Red Damselflies were seen there. Hic Bibi has also been very productive this year, with Broad Bodied and Four Spotted Chasers, and Emperor Dragonfly all breeding.

Thirdly, and probably best of all, was the Lunar Hornet Moth found in an Adlington garden by our regular moth contributor. It is quite a rarity locally with only two records for South Lancashire prior to this one. Its distribution map shows that it does occur sparsely more or less throughout the country, but, more than other moth species, may be overlooked as it looks so much like a Wasp or Hornet. Like a wasp, it is a day flying, sunshine loving insect. Unlike a wasp its head is relatively small, there is no distinct separation of the abdomen and thorax, it has long, clubbed antennae and doesn't sting. Well spotted Peter, and a great photo too!



Lunar Hornet Moth (P Krischkiw)

Two reports of Brimstone butterflies during May were nice to get. (a male at Birkacre on 21st and 2 females at White Coppice on 25th). Holly Blues were also reported at a few sites in May and June.

By the end of June we were getting a few records of Narrow Bordered Five Spot Burnet Moths. A forum contributor got a remarkable shot of two males waiting for a female to emerge from her pupa. I recommend having a look! <http://forum.chorleynats.org.uk/viewtopic.php?t=10400&highlight=burnet> It was taken at Lower Burgh Meadows which has always been a good site for this moth. It was also seen at Chisnall.

Phil Kirk

BIRD REPORT

April

Summer visitor first arrival dates, including March and May arrivals for completeness, were as follows:-

Swift	28 th April	(24 th April)	<i>Eccleston</i>
Swallow	6 th April	(29 th March)	<i>Gt Knowley/Eccleston</i>
House Martin	13 th April	(9 th April)	<i>Eccleston</i>
Sand Martin	24 th March	(23 rd March)	<i>Eccleston</i>
Wheatear	24 th March	(18 th March)	<i>Withnell Fold</i>
Whinchat	12 th May	(No record)	<i>Rivington</i>
Ring Ouzel	28 th March	(10 th April)	<i>Winter Hill</i>
Chiffchaff	16 th March	(14 th March)	<i>Euxton/Cuerden</i>
Willow Warbler	31 st March	(2 nd April)	<i>White Coppice</i>
Garden Warbler	24 th April	(21 st April)	<i>Croston</i>
Blackcap	1 st April	(28 th March)	<i>Heskin</i>
Wood Warbler	5 th May	(No record)	<i>Heatherlea Woods</i>
Sedge Warbler	22 nd April	(17 th April)	<i>Croston Reed Bed</i>
Reed Warbler	22 nd April	(17 th April)	<i>Croston Reed Bed</i>
Grasshopper Warbler	22 nd April	(10 th April)	<i>Croston Moss</i>
Whitethroat	22 nd April	(15 th April)	<i>Croston Sewage Wks</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	28 th April	(17 th April)	<i>Brindle</i>
Cuckoo	21 st April	(17 th April)	<i>White Coppice</i>
Tree Pipit	17 th April	(18 th April)	<i>Black Coppice</i>
Redstart	21 st April	(10 th April)	<i>Black Coppice</i>
Pied Flycatcher	24 th April	(17 th April)	<i>Rivington</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	12 th May	(1 st May)	<i>White Coppice</i>
Whimbrel	17 th April	(24 th April)	<i>Croston</i>
Common Sandpiper	6 th April	(11 th April)	<i>Anglezarke Res</i>
Little Ringed Plover	6 th April	(3 rd April)	<i>Anglezarke Res</i>
Common Tern	19 th April	(20 th April)	<i>Yarrow Valley Park</i>

Last year's first arrival dates are shown in brackets for comparison.

As well as summer visitors arriving, birds were also passing through. The most notable of these was a White Stork seen in a field near Top Lock on the 14th. This bird had been tracked through Cheshire, Greater Manchester and later in North Lancs. It may well have been part of a small influx of the species into the country, possibly from the French population. Also passing through were two Ospreys – one at Croston on the 5th and another at White Coppice on the 28th. The annual Whimbrel passage began on the 17th with two at Croston, followed by 7 at Eccleston (20th), increasing to 38 (23rd) and 80 (27th) with two main feeding sites involved.



Whimbrel – just passing through

Ring Ouzel passage at White Coppice was excellent with three being seen on the 14th, three (22nd), 8 (26th), and 2 on the 28th. Similarly, Wheatear migration was notable with birds recorded throughout the month at both White Coppice and on the mosslands. One was also recorded at Cuerden Valley Park on the 14th.

While summer visitors were returning and others were just passing through, our resident birds were already reproducing. In the Croston and Eccleston area, Mallard with 3 young on the River Douglas (15th), and 7 on the River Yarrow (16th) were noted. The pair of Great Crested Grebe at Yarrow Valley Park had produced a single young by the 24th – it might not be much, but it's a vast improvement on previous years! A pair of Dippers at the same site were feeding 2 young by the 21st. A Common Tern had returned to the park by the 19th. A juvenile Robin was noted at Clayton on the 17th. Nine singing Reed Bunting were on Lower Burgh Meadow on the 7th.

It was a good month for wader records with no fewer than 11 species being seen. While the Whimbrel were just passing through, and probably also the Ringed Plover at Adlington landfill site, the remainder could well have been breeding in the area. These were Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Curlew, Redshank, Dunlin, Common Sandpiper, Snipe and Woodcock.

Wildfowl records included 20 Shelduck on Croston Moss on the 3rd, and 2 Goosander on Anglezarke Reservoir (7th) and 2 on the Yarrow at Croston (17th). A Little Gull over Anglezarke Moor on the 21st was a good record.

Winter visitors were few and far between, although up to 3 Pink-footed Geese were seen around the mosses until the 16th. A female Goldeneye at Twin Lakes, Croston, was the only record for the month. Fieldfare flocks included 7 at Heskin (1st), 10 at White Coppice (7th) and 20 at Croston (12th). There was no record of Redwing In April.

Other noteworthy sightings included Merlin on the mosses (7th and 12th), Short-eared Owl on Anglezarke Moor (21st) and Croston Moss (27th), Twite at White Coppice (22nd) and a flock of 32 Lesser Redpoll also at White Coppice (17th). Tree Pipits were seen at Black Coppice (17th) and near Heatherlea Woods (24th). A Garden Warbler was at Croston (24th) and a Lesser Whitethroat was at Brindle (28th). First Cuckoo was at White Coppice on the 21st followed by a pair (28th). One was also reported from Cuerden Valley Park on the 26th.



Twite at White Coppice 22nd April

May

A female Goosander with 7 young on the Yarrow at Croston was an excellent breeding record for the area. It's probably not the first as the species has bred in recent years on the River Darwen at Hoghton on the northern edge of the recording area. Other wildfowl breeding was a pair of Shelduck with 6 young along the Douglas at Croston (6th). A pair was also on North Park at Croston throughout the month. The resident Mute Swans at Yarrow Valley Park had 4 cygnets by the 9th, but sadly the pair at Lower Healey failed. A pair of Moorhen had two young on Croston Finney (7th) and a pair of Coot also had two young at Yarrow Valley Park (8th).



Little Egret at Anglezarke on 14th May

A Little Egret circling over the north end of Anglezarke Reservoir on the 14th was a nice surprise for one of our contributors. Whimbrel passage continued in the Eccleston / Croston area until the 9th with 40 counted on the 2nd, 30 on the 6th and 13 on the 9th. Away from here a flock of 20 was noted at Hoghton on the 3rd. Six Lapwing with 2 young were noted at Buckshaw on the 2nd. A Little Ringed Plover was again at Charnock Richard. Three Redshank were on Anglezarke Reservoir on the 5th and one was along the Douglas at Croston on the 6th. Common Sandpiper sightings included one along the Douglas (6th), 2 on Lower Roddlesworth Reservoir (10th) and one on Anglezarke Reservoir (13th). Finally with waders, roding Woodcock were noted at Roddlesworth (10th) and in the White Coppice area where at least three were seen on the 28th.

Raptors on passage included a female Hen Harrier over Croston Moss on the 1st and yet another Osprey, this time over Anglezarke Reservoir on the 4th. Sad news regarding the Peregrines at St George's where it is believed that newly hatched chicks perished in atrocious weather on the 4th. Barn Owl sightings came from Great Knowley (6th) and from Mawdesley Moss (8th) and (30th) when two were seen. A Little Owl was noted on Croston Finney on the 7th. A Tawny Owl chick was seen at Heskin on the 16th, and on the same day adult birds were also recorded at Eccleston and Ulnes Walton.



Common Tern

The Common Tern at Yarrow Valley Park finally became a pair on the 10th, and settled down to breeding. Single birds were also seen at Twin Lakes, Croston (12th) and at the E-shaped pond, Bretherton (23rd). Cuckoo sightings included 3 at White Coppice (3rd), one in Heatherlea Woods (7th), one on Healey Nab (7th), and away from the moorlands, one at Heskin on the 13th. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at Withnell Fold cricket field lodge on the 19th was another tantalising sighting of a species which continues to turn up spasmodically in all parts of our recording area, but with very few repeat sightings. The only records in the 2011 Lancashire Bird Report came from the Chorley recording area, along with a note that the species is now on the county rarities list, and that a full description is now required. So Brian, any chance of you sending a description to Steve White!?

Ring Ouzel passage continued at White Coppice until 6th May. Four birds were also seen at George's Lane, Rivington on the 5th with still at least two there the following day. Wheatears also continued to pass through White Coppice in the first week of the month, but the largest passage was at George's Lane, Rivington where up to 30 birds passed through on the 6th. Migration on the mosses continued until at least the 20th with 20 on the 11th and 29 on the 14th, both on Mawdesley Moss. A single bird was at Buckshaw on the 20th. The only Whinchat recorded were a male and female along George's Lane, Rivington on the 12th.

Wood Warblers recorded included a singing male in Heatherlea Woods (5th & 9th) and two birds in Nab Wood on the 29th. Singing Pied Flycatchers were recorded in the Rivington area (5th & 11th), but there is no evidence that they stayed to breed.



Spotted Flycatcher

Spotted Flycatchers on the other hand were recorded at traditional breeding sites including White Coppice (12th), Withnell Fold (12th), Heatherlea Woods (25th) and Anglezarke (27th). At least 4 singing Redstarts were recorded between Black Coppice and Heatherlea Woods, plus at least two in Lead Mines Clough. More unusually one was at Pet's Corner in Astley Park on the 5th. Lesser Whitethroat sightings came from Hic Bibi, where there was a pair on the 4th, Eccleston (6th) and the E-shaped Pond (12th). Garden Warblers were singing at Lower Burgh Meadow (2nd), Hic Bibi (4th), Croston 4th, White Coppice and Healey Nab (29th). A Grasshopper Warbler was reeling at Black Coppice on the 2nd, a Reed Warbler was back at Yarrow Valley Park (5th) and a Sedge Warbler was a good find at Eccleston on the 6th. There was a noticeable influx of Swifts around the 10th. A pair of Sand Martins was visiting a regular breeding site in Yarrow Valley Park on the 29th.



Siskin

Siskins are normally regarded as winter visitors, although a few pairs probably breed in moorland plantations, so birds in gardens at Euxton (3rd) and Chorley (5th) were something of a surprise. Even more of a surprise was a Cuckoo in an Euxton garden on the 31st.

June

Several records of Shelduck were received including a pair at Brindle (2nd), Charnock Richard (7th), North Park, Croston (10th) and a pair with 4 young on Mawdesley Moss (16th). The Goosander family at Croston was sadly down to four young by the 5th. Also sad was the failure by the new pair of Mute Swans on Astley Park lake. Presumably the eggs were infertile, as one of the pair is still immature. Having more success was the pair of Great Crested Grebes at Yarrow Valley Park, which hatched a second brood of 4 chicks by the 10th. A pair with a well grown young was noted at Croston Twin Lakes on the 23rd. A pair of Canada Geese on Anglezarke reservoir had managed to evade controls and had 4 goslings on the 17th. A pair of Moorhen at Anderton had 3 young on the 10th.

Amongst the waders, a Lapwing with young was near Park Hall (7th), and 3 young were at a site at Eccleston on the 10th. A pair of Oystercatcher with a single young were on Mawdesley Moss (24th), and the pair of Little Ringed Plover at Charnock Richard were surely up to something.



Little Ringed Plover

Visits to Mawdesley Moss to find Quail finally produced the goods on the 24th, and the bird was heard again on the 29th. However, that was the end of it, so it seems that it was possibly just passing through, with no repeat of last year's influx. The first Hobby of the summer was seen at Eccleston on the 30th, drawn to the observer's attention by the usual cacophony of hirundine alarm calls as it swept through. Better news on the Peregrine front came with the fledging of 3 young at a site at Whittle. A family party of 5 Kestrels was noted at Eccleston on the 17th, and an adult and 2 young were at Croston on the 23rd. Barn Owl sightings came from Great Knowley (4th), Mawdesley moss (2 on the 9th), Croston Moss (26th) and Croston Finney (28th). Pairs were feeding young at at least two sites and possibly three in the east of the area. Family

parties of four Little Owl were seen at Heskin (4th) and on Croston Moss (26th). A Tawny Owl was found dead at Croston on the 10th, victim of an RTA, but more happily two young were seen at Eccleston on the 30th.

The pair of Common Tern hatched three young from the 10th. The possibility of a second pair breeding on the new raft fizzled out – hopefully next year! A single bird was also seen at Withnell Fold cricket field lodge (26th).



Cuckoo

Cuckoo sightings came from Healey Nab where two were seen on the 4th, and another was at White Coppice on the same day, whilst one was near Heatherlea Woods on the 7th. Another sighting of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker this month came from Eccleston when a pair was seen along the Yarrow on the 18th. A Great Spotted Woodpecker with young was at Roddlesworth on the 19th, and a family party was at Eccleston on the 27th.

A Dipper was seen feeding a newly fledged young at Yarrow Valley Park on the 10th and three young were seen the next day – presumably a second brood. Dippers were also feeding young at White Coppice. Grey Wagtail with young was at Anglezarke Reservoir on the 4th. A pair of Wheatear on the moors on the 6th were hopefully a breeding pair.

Other records related to breeding success of the more common species. Great tits with young were noted at Eccleston, Coppull and Euxton with Blue Tits also recorded at the same locations. Nuthatch families were seen at two locations in Eccleston. It would be interesting to know how many of the young made it to adulthood in this wretched summer. Singing Goldcrests were noted during the month at Croston (94th), Chorley (18th) and Duxbury (30th). A family party of 6 ravens was seen at Whittle on the 28th.

Up to 50 Swift were feeding over Croston sewage works on the 23rd. Post-breeding flocks of 100 Starling were at Eccleston (23rd) and 150 were at Withnell Fold on the 24th.. A flock of 60 Linnet was on Mawdesley Moss also on the 24th.



Linnet

Many thanks to the following for submitting records:-

I.Ball, D.Banks, D.Barker, I&D.Barnett, D.Beattie, D.Beevers, J.Bolton, J.Catt, P.Catterall, J.Cobham, B.Derbyshire, J.Dermott, D.Downing, T.Dunn, J.Edwards, K.Haydock, P.Hodkinson, D.Holland, D.Holding, R.Hoyle, C&T.Johnson, P.King, P.Kirk, P.Krischkiw, E.Langrish, A.Leach, G.Lilley, I.Lynas, A.Makin, B.Makinson, T.Morton, L.Poxon, C.Rae, P.Rhodes, J.Riley, P.Ross, A.Ryding, N.Southworth, R.Spencer, , C.Thistlethwaite, B.Thomas, M.Thornhill, R.Todd, N.&T.West, P.West, T.Westhead, P.Whittaker, I.Whittle, C.Winder, K.Woan, I.Woosey.

Please continue to send your records to the forum or the editor.

Neil Southworth



PERSEPHONE

... and as the earth prepares
to watch her journey,
it lines her route with gifts:
plump seeds, golden leaves,
agile paws and fanning wings,
and as she passes by, trees sigh
and are finally let loose
from the effort of upholding
the beauty her presence demands

Carol Thistlethwaite

WHITTLE PEREGRINES



I do not know how long Whittle has had Peregrines, but I only discovered them in 2009. After having seen a family of Ravens flying around Whittle Quarries and finding their old nest in there in 2008, I went looking for them early in 2009. After watching the Ravens for a few weeks I heard a strange call up on the quarry face. At first I thought it was a gull. Then to my amazement I saw a Peregrine. Not long after this I could see that there were a pair of birds and as I continued to regularly watch them I caught them mating. Unfortunately they did not produce any eggs; someone told me that they were probably first calendar year birds and not mature enough. However Whittle Quarry was their home and they would try again the following year.

However 2010 was not a good year either. Although the birds returned and hatched out at least three chicks they all disappeared one Sunday night. Everybody who had been watching them was devastated. We thought that the chicks had been stolen but later it seemed more likely that they had been predated by the Ravens taking advantage of two inexperienced parents; the nest was pretty inaccessible and there were no signs of anyone scaling the cliff face.

It was third time lucky in 2011. The birds probably produced four eggs and three hatched out as fluffy white chicks to everyone's delight. This time they all survived to be ringed and fledge. I had great fun watching them at close quarters, but the parents were not impressed. By a coincidence the little male's ring was CR. It would be nice if he turns up again locally.



Me with CR



2012 was another successful year with three more chicks fledged. However, with the quarry made more secure, it was not so easy to monitor them. Ironically, the best place was from the quarry gates because the nest site was on the cliff face directly opposite them. A few locals took advantage of this and enjoyed their special residents as

much as the birdwatchers. The quarry owners are supposed to begin quarrying again sometime soon but just like at other working quarries in our area I trust that the peregrines will tolerate the human activity and vice versa.

Chris Rae