

**CHORLEY & DISTRICT
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

Chorley & District Natural History Society

is a Registered Charity

Registration Number 513466

ANNUAL REPORT

2015

Editor

N.T.Southworth,
9, Queensgate,
Chorley PR7 2PX
(01257 276065)



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RECORDERS

Flora	David Beattie
Fungi	Joyce Riley
Insects	Phil Kirk
Birds	Neil Southworth
Mammals and Amphibia	David Beattie

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

New Year's Day was extremely mild at 13°C but windy with heavy rain. It was much colder on the 2nd and then a frost of -2°C on the 4th, before mild unsettled weather resumed with a maximum of 12°C on the 9th. **January** continued to be wet and windy but cooler with a thin covering of snow on 14th and a maximum of 3°C. The third week was cold with snow on 20th and frost on four days and a minimum of -3°C. Week four was milder but windy before snow arrived on 28th & 29th. Our first field trip was a visit to Croston Moss where Whooper Swans and Golden Plover could be found. Indoors, Brian Rafferty kicked off the new year with his talk "Right Time, Right Place".

The first two weeks of **February** were cold but mainly dry with frost on the first six days before temperatures increased a notch. The 15th was a glorious sunny day with a maximum of 10°C, followed by a period of unsettled weather with a particularly wet, miserable day on the 19th. The fourth week turned colder with snow on 22nd. Unsettled but milder weather then continued to the end of the month. David Beattie gave us a talk on the Alvor Estuary in Portugal. Outdoors we had a field trip to Longton Brickcroft Nature Reserve, and a Little Egret was again seen on Croston Moss.

March opened with a cold snap and a light covering of snow on the 2nd and a cold wind. It turned milder from the 5th with a warm sunny day on the 7th and a maximum of 14°C and a glorious sunny day on the 10th. The next two weeks were mainly dry with sunny spells, an average maximum of 8°C and just the occasional shower. The last week of the month saw a lot of heavy rain with

strong winds and a particularly 'shocking' day on the 31st. Our field trip was to Marshside for the high tide. Black-tailed Godwits were on Croston Moss and an Osprey was at the E-shaped Pond. Gordon Yates took us in search of Great Northern Diver.

April started as March had finished with a wet and windy day on the 1st. High pressure then became established and dominated for most of the month with some fine sunny days and a maximum of 19°C on 10th, 22nd and 23rd with just a couple of unsettled days around 12th / 13th. It was generally cooler and windier for the last few days with frosts on 26th and 27th. The first Cuckoo was heard at White Coppice on 22nd and the annual Whimbrel passage through the area started on the 18th. The annual Bird Race took place with the winning score exceeding 100 for the first time ever. Our indoor meeting was a well received talk on the plight of hedgehogs.

May in contrast was a very unsettled month with just a handful of sunny days and a high of 17°C on 11th. The month was generally windy and particularly cold, wet and windy from 16th – 21st with just 10°C on 19th and then only 11°C on 31st. A Little Egret was again on Croston Moss, an Osprey passed through White Coppice and a Red Kite was at Eccleston. We had a field trip to Woolston Eyes at Warrington, where Black-necked Grebe was the highlight. Our first evening walk of the summer was along the Yarrow from Eccleston to Croston.

June started with a day of high winds and torrential rain and a high of 10°C. This weather abated gradually over the next few days into a fine sunny day on the 4th with a high of 18°C. The next few days were mainly dry but overcast and often breezy. Warm and sunny weather with a high of 22°C dominated the 10th – 14th, before cooler, unsettled weather returned from 15th – 22nd. The last week of the month was warm and sunny except for the 26th when it rained for most of the day. The 30th was hot and sunny with a high of 27°C. A Red Kite was seen at White Coppice and Quail was heard calling on Mawdesley Moss. The four young Peregrines on Morrison's chimney fledged successfully. Hummingbird Hawk Moth was seen in Euxton and a Black-tailed Skimmer was at Cuerden. Our evening walk took us to Freeman's Pasture at Charnock Richard.

July 1st confirmed the description of an English summer as 2 hot days followed by a thunderstorm when the temperature reached 30°C before a thunderstorm erupted in the evening. The rest of the month was then unsettled with rain on 21 of the 30 days and it was often windy. The best temperature (excluding the 1st) was 24°C on 3rd & 10th with the lowest maximum being a miserable 14°C on 28th. Ringlet butterflies were noted at four sites leading to hopes that the species might colonize the area. Our evening walk was a return visit to Hic Bibi.

The first six days of **August** had rain every day with temperatures to match. The next six days, however, were warm and sunny with a maximum of 22°C. The rest of the month was unsettled with just a few fine days, and frequent wind and rain on 11 days. The best maximum temperature was 24°C on 23rd but 19°C was more typical. A Corncrake was heard at Bretherton and Osprey and Red

Kite passed through Rivington and Anglezarke respectively. Our final summer evening walk was to the Kem Mill end of Cuerden Valley Park.

The unsettled weather continued into **September** but the period from 4th – 11th was warm and sunny. The weather then turned unsettled again with frequent rain before the month ended with 6 fine sunny days. The best temperature was 20°C and the lowest maximum was 13°C. The best bird was a Great White Egret which spent most of the month in the Anglezarke / Upper Rivington area, where it was joined by a Little Egret on 30th. The new indoor season started with John Gardner on the 'Techniques of Bird & Wildlife Photography'.

The fine weather continued into **October** for four days with a maximum of 18°C on the 1st. Wet weather arrived on the 5th until the 7th. The next two weeks were mainly dry but often overcast with a best maximum of 15°C and lowest maximum of 12°C. Rain returned on 21st but then the rest of the month was mainly dry but often breezy. A maximum of 17°C on 30th was exceptional with 11°C being more typical in the period. The Great White Egret left on the 4th but Pink-footed Geese started to arrive in numbers. Alan Fielding gave us an in-depth talk about 'Eagles on Mull'. The Fungal Foray was a return trip to Chorley cemetery.

November was a shocker by any standards. After a deceptively dry beginning, rain arrived on the 3rd followed by a big gale named Abigail by the Met Office! The wet and stormy weather continued for most of the month giving the Met Office the opportunity to add Barney and Clodagh to the list of storms. The only consolation was that temperatures were above average with a maximum of 16°C on the 10th. Three days respite from wind and rain from 21st – 23rd introduced lower temperatures (maximum 4°C minimum -1°C), the first frost and a trace of snow on the hills. A Little Egret was at Eccleston and Red Kite at Belmont. We had a field trip to Brockholes where Black Redstart was the highlight. Indoors, founder member Ken Green shared his knowledge of 'Gardening for Wildlife'.

December was another wet and windy month with three more named storms (Desmond, Eva and Frank) passing through. 70 mm of rain fell in 48 hours around Boxing Day and left the west of the area under water. It was generally mild throughout with a high of 15°C on the 19th. The only frost was -1°C on the 10th and the only dry, sunny day occurred on the 23rd – the lull before the storm! The floods at Bretherton attracted species normally scarce in our area such as Wigeon, Pintail and Golden Plover in good numbers. The Member's Evening on the 17th again produced plenty of excellent contributions from members.

Thanks to all the recorders and others for compiling their contributions to the report, and to all those who submitted records. Please continue to send them in – without them we could not record the area's flora and fauna. Many thanks also to those who have submitted articles for the quarterly Newsletter – please keep them coming! Thanks to all those who have helped out at the indoor meetings. Finally, thanks to Joan Smith for granting us permission to continue to use Colin's photographic images in our publications. Several images – particularly of butterflies and fungi have also been supplied by Phil Kirk.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

One day in 1982 I sat down to write my first Secretary's report for inclusion in the society's 1981 Annual Report. Now in mid-2016 I write my last one, as I do not intend to stand for re-election at the AGM in September. The decision to step down was not taken lightly. I have not fallen out with the society and hope to continue as a member and committee member for years to come. Family responsibilities now require my time to be spent differently.

When I wrote my first report, I commented on a society whose membership had grown quickly during the previous year. Sadly, in recent times, similar increases have not been possible. I think that it is a general trend for small groups to have difficulty in recruiting members. In the 1981 report I bemoaned the lack of records submitted. This is one area where things have improved somewhat – the Forum providing an easy means for members to contribute. The Winter Garden Bird Survey had just started in October 1981 and continues to this day.

The 1981 report was the only edition ever to have included advertising. I had quite forgotten that we tried that as a fund raising idea! Maybe we should resurrect it. One fund raiser that had just begun and continues today is bird food sales. It started as very much a team game, with committee members meeting each month to weigh and bag the peanuts. These days, the task has fallen to our Chairman, Keith Woan, who has selflessly performed this task for several years. We owe him a considerable debt of thanks for this.

I wish nothing but success to my successor and to the society as a whole.

The committee at the end of 2015 comprised:

Chairman	Keith Woan	80, Carleton Road, Chorley Tel 01257 278759
Secretary	Phil Kirk	Mill End, Dawbers Lane, Euxton Tel 01257 266783
Treasurer	Carol Thistlethwaite	63, Earlsway, Euxton Tel 01257 275233
Committee:	David Beattie John Howlett Len Poxon Lydia Rose Neil Southworth Nora West	

Phil Kirk (Secretary)

FLORA REPORT

I keep saying that the flora report tends to be an observation of Climate Change as much as anything else. 2015 was no exception. The year started with very mild weather. It was so mild that there was even Creeping Buttercup in flower on January 8th and Butterbur on January 15th. Nationally records of opened flowers were TEN times more than in the average January. That soon changed by the middle of the month when winter arrived with frost, winds and snow evident until mid-February. You will see below my annual comparison of flowering dates.

Species	2013	2014	2015
Snowdrop	Feb16	Jan 13	Jan 14
Lesser Celandine	Feb 16	Feb 25	Feb 17
Bluebell	May 9	April 4	May 10
Butterbur	Feb 16	Jan 6	Jan20
Primrose	Feb 9	Feb 26	March 5
Ragged Robin	June 12	May 19	June 18

We had a sighting of Pyramidal Orchid in Yarrow Valley Park. This had not been reported anywhere in Chorley for six years, so it was a welcome return. The photo opposite is one of mine (not local) of a pyramidal orchid so if it does appear again we know what to look for. Scarlet Pimpernel which re-appeared for two years must have copied Sir Percy Blakeney and gone into hiding since nobody has submitted a record this year. Autumn crocus made its usual appearance in Chorley Cemetery. Last year (2014) I reported that "Autumn held on for a long time this year with several flowers still in bloom in the middle of December." In 2015, we had an even milder autumn/winter. I even noted Ivy-leaved toadflax in flower in December.

Ash die-back continues its relentless progress across the country and we have had at least one report from the Chorley area.



David Beattie

FUNGI REPORT

The unusual weather conditions of the 'summer' months, when a sunnier than average April was followed by cooler and wetter than average months of May through to August, caused confusion to both wild plants and those cultivated in the garden, resulting in abnormal flowering periods. The weather conditions also affected the fruiting of fungi and there were very few records submitted until September. However, October turned out to be a reasonable month and as the mild weather continued through to December, fungi continued producing fruiting bodies although they were more difficult to find amongst all the fallen leaves.

Species associated with the early months of the year were photographed locally by a member and placed on his Flickr and Picasa Web Albums with links on the society's website forum, from where I extracted the following records, including Velvet Shank on 11th January in Yarrow Valley Park and Scarlet Elf Cup on 22nd February at Withnell Fold Nature Reserve. These were followed by early Common Inkcaps on 24th May in Chorley Cemetery and Chicken of the Woods on 27th June at White Coppice. There was also a photo of Bulbous Bonnet (*Mycena stylobates*) that clearly showed the unusual ring/bulb at the base of the stem of this small white fungus that was taken at Pincock, Euxton on 21st June.

I was delighted when Fly Agarics re-appeared on 29th September in my garden in Chorley under the Silver Birch trees where they had been seen for the first time last year. However, fewer records in general were submitted for this species than the bumper year in 2014. In contrast, Shaggy Inkcaps have been abundant with records widespread throughout the area after a poor year last year! It is interesting to notice how common easily identifiable species vary from year to year, assuming the number of records submitted reflects this variation. So please continue to submit records of all species as they contribute to our understanding of the distribution and variation of fruiting of fungi in our area.

The society's annual fungal foray was held for the third consecutive year in Chorley Cemetery on Sunday, 11th October, which was the official date of UK



Fungus Day. It was very successful with 31 species identified in the field in just two hours and several more species taken home for further examination. These included some of the sites specialities, Copper Spike growing by the species with which it is associated, the Weeping Bolete, Saffron and Bearded Milkcaps, Bloody and Primrose Brittle-gills and Weeping Widow. There were also common species such as

Common and Stump Puffballs, Common, Shaggy and Pleated Inkcaps, The Miller, Poisonpie, etc. plus others associated with Birch including Brown Birch Bolete, Birch Knight, Brown Rollrim and Fly Agaric,

This amazing site continued to provide surprises with 'new' species for the site being discovered on almost every visit, including a group of Blushing Wood Mushroom (*Agaricus silvaticus*) under a pine tree, Fragrant Funnel (*Clitocybe fragrans*) that smells of aniseed and Herald of Winter (*Hygrophorus hypothejus*) all in early November. The latter species had only been recorded locally on one previous occasion – Duxbury Woods in 1988. These were followed by a new species for the Chorley area, Clustered Domecap (*Lyophyllum decates*) when a large group were growing on a recently dug grave on 16th November.

Phil & Joanna Kirk's lawn again had a good display of grassland species including many Earthtongues and around 20 Snowy Waxcaps were counted on 6th November. On 4th November, a member birdwatching on Croston Moss spotted several fungi with yellow caps growing in grassland, which I tentatively identified as Yellow Fieldcap from his excellent description, although positive identification wasn't possible without a specimen. There was also a wonderful display of waxcaps and other grassland fungi on the cricket field in October which continued through November as no frosts.



Unfortunately, the North West Fungus Group didn't have any forays in our area this year as I am no longer fit enough to lead them and Peter Smith from Bolton who has in recent years led forays in Duxbury Woods and Lever Park at Rivington has now 'retired' from an active role with the group. The society's database of local fungi records has been enlarged considerably by all the records I have obtained from NWFG by being a member of the group for over 30 years.

Thanks to the following members for their records and apologies to anyone I may have missed.

Phil Kirk, Leonard Poxon, Joyce Riley, Neil Southworth and Keith Woan. Special thanks to the society's most prolific fungi recorder this year, Len Poxon, who discovered several species in Chorley Cemetery that were not only 'new' species for the site but also for the Chorley area.

Acknowledgement to Mike Valentine for the image of Saffron Milkcap and to Phil Kirk for the Snowy Waxcap.

Joyce Riley

INSECT REPORT

LEPIDOPTERA

Moth Species:

It was quite a good year for the Hummingbird Hawk Moth (*Macroglossum stellatarum*) – in fact the best year since 2006. Several records were received between late June and early October. In fact, at the start of October, a recorder in Withnell reported up to 3 insects feeding in a garden on plants including Verbeena and Sedum.



Also of note was the count of about 12 Emperor Moths (*Saturnia pavonia*) near Winter Hill on May 23rd. Larvae were also found at the same site in August.

2 new species of moths were added to our local list, both from a contributor in Belmont. The Mother Shipton (*Callistege mi*) was found on the 4th June, and the Red Necked Footman (*Atolmis rubricollis*) was found on 30th June. Both species are day fliers, although the latter is also active at night.

Butterfly Species:

Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*)

The high count for the species was at Lead Mines Clough, where an estimated 50 were observed on 15th July. Large numbers were also present at Belmont in August. Overall the flight period was 27th June (Eccleston and Great Knowley) until the 6th September (Belmont).

Large Skipper (*Ochlodes venata*)

Reported in 2015 from 8 sites. It was not quite as numerous at Belmont as in 2014, but counts of 30+ were present in early July. First date was 23rd June (Coppull) and the latest was 23rd August (White Coppice)

Clouded Yellow (*Colias croceus*)

No records for this migrant in 2015.

Brimstone (*Goepteryx rhamni*)

It was again seen ovipositing at Lower Burgh Meadows (13th May) on the Alder Buckthorn planted there especially for that purpose. 9 larvae were found there on 3rd July. The species seems to be doing fairly well locally as there were numerous sightings between early April and late September. An amazing 7 insects were counted at Croston on 6th April.

Large White (*Pieris brassica*)

Another year without any high numbers reported. The maximum was 5-10 at Withnell Fold on 24th August. Overall the flight period was 7th April (Euxton) until 11th October at Rivington.

Small White (*Pieris rapae*)

As with the Large White, no high numbers were reported. The flight period was 2nd April (Rivington) until 1st October (Chorley).

Green Veined White (*Peiris napi*)

The best counts were once again in the Belmont area, where 20 were estimated in mid to late August. 12 were counted at Hic Bibi on 16th May. The flight period was 16th April (Withnell Fold) until 22nd September (Belmont).

Orange Tip (*Anthrocharis cardamines*)

Although there were no especially high numbers reported, the insect was seen throughout the area between 7th April (Rivington) and 24th June (Belmont). The highest numbers were at White Coppice and Hic Bibi.

Green Hairstreak (*Callophris rubi*)

Another disappointing year. The days of huge colonies being reported seem to have gone. Only 2 sightings reported. The first was at White Coppice on 15th May and the other was at Belmont when 11 were counted on May 23rd.

Purple Hairstreak (*Quercusia quercus*)

Reported from 2 sites. 20 were counted at Belmont on 6th August. 2 were seen at Roddlesworth on 23rd May which is a new site for the species.

White Letter Hairstreak (*Satyrion w-album*)

One record only in 2015, from a garden in Euxton where a single insect was seen feeding on 13th August.

Small Copper (*Lacaena phlaeas*)

As always there was a distinct gap between generations. The first generation was represented by only 3 records in early June, each for a single insect. The second generation emerged on 16th August and was last seen on 4th October. The vast majority of records for this generation were from the Belmont



area, where high counts were made at the end of August and into early September. The best count was for as many as 34 on 23rd August.

Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)

The dates for the two generations were a little later than in 2014. The flight periods were 3rd June until 4th July (both dates relate to Great Knowley), then from 3rd August (Euxton) until 15th September (Astley Park). No large numbers were reported, but it was a reasonably successful year for the species.

Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*)

After the poor year in 2014, this species was reported frequently between 22nd April (Euxton) and 18th May (Bretherton). The 2nd generation was less frequently recorded, but I received records between 9th August (Belmont) and 29th September (Chorley). Records tended to be of one or two insects only. No high numbers.

Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)

I received no records at all before 10th June, so presumably few if any insects managed to hibernate successfully. The summer generation certainly was successful. Large numbers were counted in a Rivington garden (best was 28 on 19th September. There were 3 records in December, the last of which was for a single insect active in a Chorley garden on December 20th.

Painted Lady (*Cynthia cardui*)

2015 was the best year for the species since 2009. Records were received from 11th June (Belmont) until 2nd November (Withnell). The maximum count was only 3 (Croston on 12th June and Euxton on 6th September), but records were spread all across the recording area.

Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*)

There were no reports of insects disturbed from hibernation in January like in 2014, but the first records were on 10th March (Euxton) followed by many more in April and May. Good numbers were reported in Croston, Withnell and Anglezarke. The summer generation reached its peak in early August with 48 counted near Belmont. The last record for the year was at Withnell on 21st November.

The Peacock (*Inachis io*)

There were 3 early records, presumably relating to insects emerging early from hibernation. Certainly the one seen on 7th January in Euxton was such a record because it was found flying around a member's living room. It was put into a cool dry place to hopefully go back to sleep. More early insects started to appear at the end of February and early March. Thereafter it was frequently recorded in April and May with last present on Croston Moss on 16th April. The summer generation emerged on 3rd July and records were then plentiful until the latest which was seen on 27th November. There were no exceptionally high counts

Comma (*Polygonia c-album*)

This species emerged from hibernation on 7th April when it was reported from 4 different sites. It was seen in flight throughout April. The summer emergence began on the 29th July (Eccleston) and it flew until the 10th November (Coppull), As with the Peacock, there were no high numbers reported.

Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria tircis*)

I probably get more records for this species than for any other. There is no discernable break between generations. The insects flew from 18th April (Cuerden) until the 2nd November (Chorley). The high count was 40 insects at Sheepphouse Lane on 3rd July.

Wall Brown (*Lassiommatata megera*)

After a complete blank in 2014, it was a relief to receive 2 records in 2015. It was present on Croston Moss on 26th August and on Anglezarke Moor on 27th September. Please keep a sharp lookout for this species, as we are in danger of losing it locally.

Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*)

This year the flight period was 2nd July until 7th September. The maximums were in mid August when 170 were estimated near Belmont (12th August).

Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*)

Once again the highest numbers were reported from Belmont (max 80 on 7th August) Overall the flight period was from 13th June (Eccleston) until 15th September (Astley Park).

Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*)

Reported from the East of the are between 9th June (Well Lane, Brinscall) and 16th August (Belmont). This year the highest count was 25 at Belmont on 5th June.

Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

This was a new species to the area in 2014, so I am pleased to report that there were a few more records in 2015. It was found at Birkacre on 12th July; at Riley Green and at Heapey Lodges on 15th July; and on Mawdesley Moss on 25th July. Let's hope for more again next year.

ODONATA

Species recorded this year were:

ZYGOPTERA (Damselflies)

Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*)

The species was reported from 6 sites, with the majority from Cuerden. The maximum count was 12 at Cuerden on 3 occasions in late June. Overall the flight period was 3rd June until 7th August.

Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*)

Nymphs were found at Cuerden on 22nd June, but the adults were in flight between 3rd July and 30th September. In all it was recorded at 6 sites with a maximum count of 88 at Belmont on 16th August.

Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*)

The flight period was 27th April until 16th August. High numbers were seen at Belmont and at Hic Bibi in early July. It was seen at a total of 8 sites.

Blue Tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*)

The highest numbers were seen at Hic Bibi, with estimates of around 20 insects on 8th August. It was also numerous at Cuerden Valley Park. The flight period was from 20th June until 6th September (both dates at Cuerden)

Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*)

This seems to be most numerous of our 3 “blue” damselflies. 140 were estimated at Belmont on 3rd July and Hic Bibi was also a good site for the species. The flight period was 3rd June until 6th September and it was seen at a total of 9 sites.

Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

Not quite so numerous as the previous species, but healthy counts of 40+ were made on a few days at Belmont in July and August. The overall flight period was 7th June until 6th September. Records were received from 11 sites.

ANISOPTERA (Dragonflies)

Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)

2015 was a better year for the species than 2014. It was reported at 5 sites between 24th July and 2nd October. 3 insects was the highest count.

Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*)

As usual, this species was the most often recorded of the Odonata species. It was reported throughout the area with ovipositing observed at a few sites. Earliest date was 10th July and the latest was the 2nd of October. The high count was 6 at Withnell Fold on 13th August.

Common Hawker (*Aeshna juncea*)

This species was seen at a total of 9 sites, with a high count of 9 at Belmont on 17th August. The flight period was 3rd July (White Coppice) until 2nd October (Hic Bibi). Ovipositing was observed at the pool on Healey Nab.

Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*)

Seen at 8 different sites between 7th August and 22nd October. No high numbers or ovipositing were reported.

Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*)

We had an increase in reports in 2015 which was pleasing after a poor year in 2014. It was seen at 8 sites. Ovipositing was observed at Cuerden on 30th June. First date was the 10th of June (Cuerden) and the last was the 19th August (Pond near to Burgh Hall).

Four-spotted Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

An estimated 20 were seen at Cuerden on 23rd June. Overall the flight period was 10th June until 23rd August. It was seen at 8 sites.

Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*)

Seen at 8 sites from 10th June (Cuerden) until the 7th of August (Belmont). No high numbers reported.

Black Tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

2015 produced the first records for the species since 2009. It was seen at Cuerden (23rd and 28th June), at Birkacre (18th July), and on Mawdesley Moss (25th June).



Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*)

The highest counts once more were from Belmont, where 200 were estimated on 6th September. Numbers were lower than usual at Healey Nab. The overall flight period was 22nd June until 17th October. It was seen at a total of 6 sites locally.

Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

The flight period was 11th June until 11th October. The maximum counts were at Hic Bibi and at Belmont (12 in early September). It was seen at most of the sites from which records are sent.

This report was compiled with reference to records received from the following:

I Ball, D Beattie, D Beevers, J Cobham, The Crosbys, D Downing, T Dunn, M Fishwick, J Frankland, P Gravett, L Griffiths, A Hardisty, A Johnson, C Johnson, P Krischkiw, E Langrish, G Lilley, D S Martin, S J Martin, M Nightingale, L Poxon, C Rae, R W Rhodes, J Riley, L Rose, N Root, P Ross, P Rowlands, I Ryding, N Southworth, N West, P West, T West, P Whittaker, I Whittle, K Woan and C Wood.

My apologies to anyone I may have missed.

BIRD REPORT

Introduction

A total of 159 species including escapes was recorded during the year, getting close to the highest recent total of 161 in 2012. Rarities included Quail, Little and Great White Egret, Goshawk, Corncrake, Water Pipit, Hawfinch and Crossbill. Sadly, no record was received of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, and records of Green Woodpecker also continue to be scarce.

Neil Southworth (Records Secretary)

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

Uncommon but increasing breeding bird

Five were on Croston Moss until 2nd January, and may have been the same birds which were on fields at Eccleston on 22nd. A pair was at Lower Healey at the beginning of the month. A single bird was on No.5 lodge at White Coppice on 19th March, and a single bird was on Belmont reservoir on 26th March.

The pair in Yarrow Valley Park had produced 3 cygnets by the 11th, but tragically the adult female was killed by a dog on the 27th. However, the male swan managed to raise the 3 cygnets without any evident problem.

The pair in Astley Park had at least 4 young. Unfortunately, they suffered the same fate as last year's brood. Two succumbed to infection and the remaining two were removed to a swan sanctuary for treatment.

A pair was on the canal at Withnell Fold on 8th August but there was no sign of any young. A young of the year was in the centre of Anglezarke Reservoir on 16th November.

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

Occasional winter visitor

The herd which had been on Croston Moss in December had reduced to 10 by the 1st January and only 4 were left the next day.

In February, a single bird was on Croston Moss (7th), 3 flew low over Eyes Lane, Bretherton (14th) and 5 flew over Yarrow Valley Park (15th). 15 flew over the Yarrow at Eccleston on 14th March. 12 were on Belmont Reservoir on 17th March and 10 flew west over Belmont on 22nd March.

First back in Autumn were 5 over Eccleston on 14th October, followed by 22 over Coppull on 28th October. Two were on Belmont reservoir on 16th October and again on 20th November. Other sightings in November included one over Stronstrey Bank (1st), 20 over Eccleston (6th) and 4 over Coppull (17th). A flock of 28 including 3 juveniles landed briefly on Lower Rivington Reservoir on the 1st to remind us of pre-Martin Mere days. Two flew south over Jepson's Clough, Rivington on 17th, and 5 circled over Belmont on the 24th. Five were feeding on Bretherton Eyes on the 26th.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

Mainly recorded on passage and feeding on the mosslands during the winter months. Some feral birds occur usually with Canada Geese.

Up to 150 were feeding regularly on Croston and Mawdesley Moss during January. Skeins returning from East Anglia during the month included 80 over Heapey lodges (20th) and 250 over Eccleston (27th). Around 150 were still feeding on Croston Moss on 1st February, reducing to 50 by the 14th. Return passage from East Anglia during February was evidenced by flocks of 80 over Eccleston (4th), 20 over Euxton (5th), 200 over Yarrow Valley Park (6th) and 700 over Coppull (9th). Last record for the first winter period was from Croston Moss on 4th March.

First back in Autumn was a skein of 60 birds heading south over Mawdesley Moss on 25th September, followed by a skein of 80 flying east over Eccleston on the 26th., and several skeins over Belmont on the same day.

Skeins continued to pass over during October, with an estimated 200 flying west over Jepson's Clough, Rivington on the 9th. Two skeins of 250 and 150 flew north west over Belmont on the 18th. Large flocks were also feeding on the mosses including 3000 on Mawdesley Moss (10th) and 2000 on Croston Moss (12th). In November, up to 1000 were noted feeding on Bretherton Eyes (8th and 9th). Skeins over Jepsons Clough, Rivington in November were on the 1st 150 flying NW to SE, 200 N to S, and 150 W to E. On 2nd skeins over Jepsons Clough, Rivington were 50 and 80 W to E, on 6th a skein flying low in the same clough of 200 going south. On the 27th 12 were seen going W over Rivington High School

In December a skein of 103 birds flew over Bretherton Eyes on the 6th and 200 were seen feeding on fields across the Douglas on the 20th. December records from Rivington were 180 over the Pike flying west on the 28th, and 6 only on 31st over Higher Derbyshires also going west. At Belmont 50 flew north west on the 28th and 40 flew south east on the 31st.

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

Scarce feral species

20 were on Lower Rivington Reservoir on 8th February. Three pairs were on the lawn at Rivington Hall Barn on 30th March. Eleven were at Belmont reservoir in mid-May including one 'resident' bird.

Three pairs were noted on Upper Rivington Reservoir in June with a total of 12 young. The July moulting flock of 59 on Upper / Lower Rivington Reservoir was an indication of the rapidly increasing population (39 in 2014, 20 in 2013 and 17 in 2012)

A party of 5 was near Croston sewage works on 4th October.

Greater Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Common resident

40 were on Big Lodge in Yarrow Valley Park on 1st February.

Monthly maxima at Belmont Resr. :

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2013	26	36	30	44	32	76	76	92	47	28	24	6
2014	15	17	27	36	34	62	63	55	24	28	18	11
2015	20	36	42	42	23	65	65	30	31	36	25	28

Only 8 pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir and again no young were raised there due to the ongoing control measures which resulted in 51 eggs 'pricked' & 18 adults shot in 2015. The population at Belmont has now been pegged back similar to the level present in the mid 1980's & well below the maximum population of 54 breeding pairs in 2004.

Elsewhere in the West Pennine Moors, continuing licenced control by egg 'pricking' on 25 United Utilities reservoirs/water bodies underlined the ongoing decline in breeding numbers with just 16 nests totalling 83 eggs located (down from 65 nests totalling 344 eggs controlled at the same 25 sites in 2005). The nests of pairs breeding on the moorland plateaux are surprisingly difficult to detect with at least 3 pairs located breeding in deep heather at up to 310m asl on Anglezarke/Withnell Moors. Moorland nesting pairs were thought responsible for the brood of 3 young onto Lower Roddlesworth Reservoir. On 4th June a group of 40 plus a pair with 5 young were on the edge of Anglezarke Reservoir. Possibly the same pair with five young was at the north end of Anglezarke Reservoir on 5th July.

The July moulting flock totals indicated a stabilisation of the declining numbers in the West Pennine Moors:-

Location	2015	2014	2013	2012
Belmont Resr.	65	60	76	148
Anglezarke Resr.	103	88	108	94
Rivington & Yarrow Resrs.	11	34	13	13

A flock of minimum 250 birds was on Bretherton Eyes on 7th September, and a flock of 150 was on Mawdesley Moss on 4th October.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

Rare visitor and feral species

Three were on Croston Twin Lakes from 24th – 27th March. Although associating loosely with Canada Geese, there were no further sightings from the general area after they had left the site.

Four feral birds were at Belmont reservoir from April to June with a single bird present thereafter until the year end.

Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

Regular breeder in the west. Occasional visitor in the east.

Six on Croston Moss on 7th February were the first record for the year, followed by an impressive 52 on Bretherton Eyes on the 18th, and 53 on the 5th march. Three were at a site at Brindle on 1st March. 13 were on Croston Moss on 1st April.

A flock of 39 birds flying north to south over the M61 at Hartwood in July was an unusual sighting.

Numbers on the flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes increased from a single on 4th December to 10 by the 29th.

Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*)

Uncommon feral resident and escapee

One was at a pond at Eccleston on 2nd January. Six were at Arley nature reserve on the 11th. Records were also received from both locations in February.

Pairs were noted on territory in Yarrow Valley Park and at Croston in April. A female with 5 young was at the former site on 24th June, but only 3 young were noted on 7th July. One was on the Yarrow at Croston on 8th September, and 4 were there on 11th October. One was at Arley nature reserve on 6th December.

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Several were heard flying over Heskin on 2nd January. A pair was on Belmont Reservoir from 15th to 20th February. One was on Croston Moss on 31st March.

A pair was on Anglezarke Reservoir on 7th November. 20 were on the flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes on 6th December. A couple were on a pond at Eccleston on 13th December.



Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

Rare visitor

A party of 4 was on Croston Twin Lakes on 2nd January and a pair was there on 23rd February. A pair was on Belmont Reservoir on 7th March, and a pair was on Croston Moss on 15th March. Five were on Belmont reservoir on 16th June.

A male at Yarrow Valley Park on 31st October was a rare record for the site. A pair was at Croston Twin Lakes on 9th November.

Teal (*Anas crecca*)

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Scarce breeder.

In January, 10 were on Croston Twin Lakes (10th) and a similar number were at Arley nature reserve (11th). Best count though was at Belmont Reservoir with 330 there on the 2nd January. These had reduced to 90 by March. 40 were on Withnell Fold Flashes on 6th March, reducing to 18 by the 25th. Five were on a pond in Rivington on 12th March.

One pair bred unsuccessfully at Belmont Reservoir.

The first back in Autumn was one on Syd Brook, Eccleston on 30th August. Numbers at Belmont reservoir increased from 36 at the end of August to 256 by December. Elsewhere counts were much more modest with counts of 3 on Syd Brook (10th), 2 in Yarrow Valley Park (13th), 3 on Croston Moss (19th) and 12 on Anglezarke Reservoir (29th). Similar numbers were seen in October and November. 15 were on the flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes on 12th December.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Common winter visitor and breeding resident

A female with 9 young was at a site at Ulnes Walton on 20th March. Another was seen with 9 young on Heapey No.3 lodge on 1st May.

In excess of 70 birds in a field on Croston Moss on 6th September were perhaps shooting releases.

Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Rare winter visitor

One was on Adlington Reservoir on 30th November. Five were on the flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes on 29th December.

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Scarce winter visitor

The female which had been in Yarrow Valley Park in the previous December remained there during January and February.

Seven were on Anglezarke Reservoir on 13th December.

Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

Increasingly scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

The regular single male was at the north end of Anglezarke Reservoir on the 11th January and remained there during February.

Two were on Anglezarke Reservoir on 10th September. Two at Yarrow Valley Park on 2nd November and 3 at High Bullough on the 4th were both unusual records of this increasingly rare species. The regular returning male was at the north end of Anglezarke Reservoir on 4th December and one was at Lower Healey on the 20th.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce breeder.

13 were at Yarrow Valley Park on 1st January, 20 were on Croston Twin Lakes (2nd) and 11 were at Lower Healey on the same day. Numbers at Yarrow Valley Park peaked at 15 on 1st February, whereas those at Croston Twin lakes had reduced to 11 by 15th February.

High Bullough Reservoir was a favoured location throughout the year. A pair was there on the 23rd January and on 27th there were 2 pairs. On 20th April it had risen to 3 pairs with single pairs later but 4 males on 23rd June. In July a single male was always present but by the 30th this had risen to 3 males and a female with 6 small ducklings. These were present throughout August and by 10th September numbers had risen to a group of 8 but also another group of 7, presumably the family group. One pair bred unsuccessfully at Belmont Reservoir. Five at Lower Healey on 4th July in various stages of moult may have been a family group.

August sightings included a single at Lower Healey (22nd), 3 in Yarrow Valley Park (28th) and one on Croston Twin Lakes (30th). Numbers increased in September with 7 on Croston Twin Lakes. Records in October and November were mainly single figure counts from Croston Twin Lakes, High Bullough Reservoir, Lower Healey and Yarrow Valley Park.

Common Scoter (*Melanitta negra*)

Vagrant

A flock of 15 was reported to have dropped in briefly to Belmont Reservoir on 15th August.

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

Declining winter visitor and passage migrant

Goldeneye records in January included 2 at Lower Healey (2nd), 3 at High Bullough (9th), one on Anglezarke Reservoir (13th) and 4 on Heapey Lodges (19th). Birds were again at these sites including 4 at High Bullough Reservoir (11th) in February. A single male was at High Bullough Reservoir on 17th March.

First in autumn was one on Common Bank Lodge on 16th November, followed by one at High Bullough Reservoir (26th) and another at Lower Healey (29th). The

Common Bank bird remained until at least 13th December, and possibly the same bird turned up at Yarrow Valley Park on the 21st. Two were on Anglezarke Reservoir on the 30th.

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*)

Rare winter visitor

Two female / immatures were at Belmont Reservoir on 20th September.

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

Winter visitor in decreasing numbers

No large gatherings were reported in January with 7 at Yarrow Valley Park (13th), 3 on Yarrow Reservoir (11th) and 15 at Lower Healey (25th) the best counts.

Numbers in February on Common Bank Lodge in Yarrow Valley Park peaked at 18 on the 23rd. 17 were on Yarrow reservoir on the 12th and 1 was on Anglezarke Reservoir on the 25th. Ten were on the Douglas at Croston on the 21st.

In March, 16 were on Yarrow reservoir (1st), 18 on Common Bank Lodge (5th), and 10 on Anglezarke Reservoir (8th). Four on the Yarrow at Croston on 3rd March may well have been part of the local breeding population. More unusual was a female on High Bullough reservoir on 17th and a pair there on 6th April.

In April, a pair was on territory in the Croston / Eccleston area, and was seen with 6 young on 7th May. Two were on the Lostock at Croston on 1st September.

November sightings included 14 in Yarrow Valley Park (17th), 7 on the Douglas (20th), 19 on Common Bank Lodge (22nd), and 18 on Yarrow Reservoir on the 29th. In December a single male was on Yarrow reservoir on the 15th.

Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*)

Rare summer visitor

Two calling birds were on Mawdesley Moss on 29th June. They were then heard calling regularly until at least 25th July.

Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)

Scarce resident boosted by birds released for shooting

A small covey of 3 birds was on Croston Moss on 19th January.

Three pairs were on territory around Belmont in the breeding season with one pair breeding unsuccessfully at Belmont Reservoir. 20 were counted on Mawdesley Moss on 10th August, but then a large release took place on 18th August.

A covey of 28 was at Bretherton Eyes on 16th November, and up to 70 were there during December.

Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*)

Resident in small numbers on the moors

A party of 5 was noted on Winter Hill on 20th January.

Five territories were noted on a section of Belmont Moor on 20th April, with broods of 5, 6 and 8 seen in late June. Only 21 birds were seen during a shoot on Belmont Moor on 15th August.

Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*)

Uncommon resident boosted by birds released for shooting

A covey of 8 was at Belmont on 16th January and one of 16 at Hic Bibi on 20th January was a good record.

Four pairs were on territory around Belmont during the breeding season, but no broods were recorded. Releases were responsible for 16 at Belmont reservoir on 23rd August. Three were on Croston Moss on 26th August.

A covey of 12 was on Croston Finney on 21st December. Three were near Belmont in late December.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Common resident boosted by birds released for shooting

One male with a harem of 13 females was at Belmont Reservoir on 22nd March.

A breeding bird survey for United Utilities realized 10 calling males in Roddlesworth Plantations. A BTO Breeding Bird Survey in the Brindle area recorded 26 birds at the end of April.

An adventurous male was attempting to cling onto and feed from a suspended nyger feeder in a Belmont garden on 19th June!

A large release took place on Mawdesley Moss around 18th August. Over 200 were near Belmont Reservoir in September and October.

Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Regular visitor

Birds were recorded regularly on the reservoirs throughout the year, with variable numbers at a local roost site.

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

Rare but increasing visitor

One was seen roaming the ditches on Croston Moss on 1st February and again on 3rd & 13th.

One was again on Croston Moss on 9th May.

One was on Upper Rivington Reservoir with the Great White Egret on 27th & 28th September. Another was seen flying along the Yarrow between Eccleston and Croston on 13th November.

Great White Egret (*Egretta alba*)

Rare vagrant

One was found initially on the 3rd September at the north end of Anglezarke Reservoir. It remained there until at least the 8th when it was relocated at the north end of Upper Rivington Reservoir. It then alternated between the two sites and remained in the area until the 4th October. On 30th September it was keeping company with a Grey Heron and the two flew up into a tree to roost together



Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

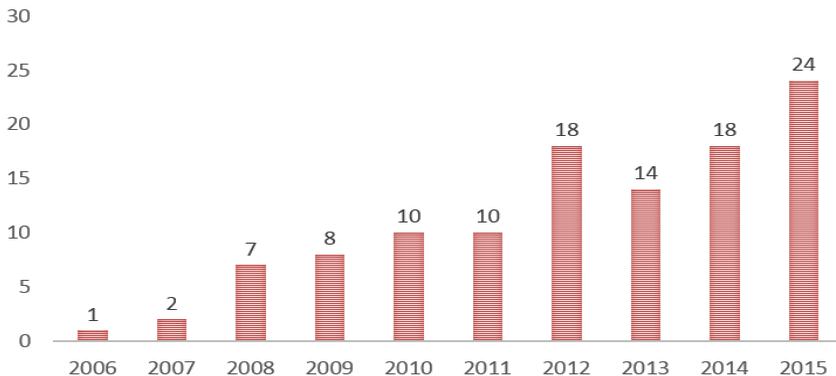
Common visitor and scarce breeder

One was regularly stalking Top Lodge in Yarrow Valley Park during January.

On 5th and 7th February a bird was at a pond at Pall Mall croft, Rivington and then at various sites around. On 20th March a single bird was in a treetop off Sheephouse Lane with 2 others circling overhead.

The 'original' Rivington heronry increased from 18 nests in 2014 to 24 active nests in 2015 but the second Rivington site (colonised in 2011) was again unoccupied in 2015. Bird/s repeatedly present in trees adjacent to the Roddlesworth Reservoirs during the breeding season hint to the possibility of future colonisation.

**BREEDING PAIRS OF HERON
AT RIVINGTON 2006 - 2015**



On 22nd September a young of the year was spotted at the road edge in Rivington village before walking off to Hall Brook. During October, one was seen regularly at the fish pass in Yarrow Valley Park looking for an easy meal.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Uncommon breeding bird

One in Cuerden Vally Park on 10th March was the first record at the site for several years.

The pair in Astley Park made two or three breeding attempts but all ended in failure due to the nest being destroyed in bad weather, the last being in September when the lily pad died back prematurely. A single bird was at Belmont Reservoir on 13th September.

October sightings came from Astley Park (25th) and Yarrow Valley Park (31st). November sightings came from Astley Park (1st), Croston Twin Lakes (8th) and Yarrow Valley Park (12th). Two were on Common Bank Lodge on 29th December.

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

Common breeding bird, less common in winter

The pair on Big Lodge in Yarrow Valley Park made at least 3 attempts to breed, all ending in failure without hatching taking place. The main culprit appeared to be one of the large terrapins which inhabit the lodge. It was frequently seen sunbathing adjacent to the grebes' nest so I don't suppose it thought twice about snacking on the eggs.

There were sightings from Rivington and Anglezarke throughout the year but unfortunately no signs of breeding. On the 11th February a bird was observed catching and swallowing a large fish on Anglezarke Reservoir. In March, a pair was on Anglezarke Reservoir on the 5th, and a pair was on Upper Rivington Reservoir on 17th when the pair was still on Anglezarke. During April the pair was still on Anglezarke Reservoir and was seen again on 17th July, and on various dates in August, September and October when 3 were present on the 3rd. Two pairs were present on Belmont Reservoir with one pair breeding unsuccessfully due to fluctuating water levels.

Five on Croston Twin Lakes on 24th August included one juvenile, which is possibly the only breeding success for the area this year. A juvenile on the E-shaped Pond at Bretherton in September may have been the same bird.

November records included 2 on Croston Twin Lakes (8th) and 3 on Lower Rivington Reservoir (22nd). One was on Anglezarke reservoir on 7th December.

Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*)

Rare passage migrant / visitor from reintroduction schemes.

Records for the year:-

- One was at Belmont on 19th January.
- One was noted over Eccleston on 28th May.
- One was seen at White Coppice on 6th June.
- One was over Anglezarke Moor on 18th August.
- One was reported over Belmont Reservoir on 3rd November.

Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)

Scarce passage migrant

A female/immature was at Belmont on 8th August with another female / immature around Belmont from 16th to 19th September.

Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

Scarce passage migrant. Occasionally lingers in winter

A male was at Belmont on 6th November and 17th December.

Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)

Rare vagrant

One was reported from Eccleston on 28th September.

Another was seen by an experienced birder at Heath Charnock in December.

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Increasingly common resident

Male and female birds visited a garden in Rivington regularly throughout the year often perching up for some time observing potential targets. On 21st April a blue tit was taken and another succumbed on the 21st July.

One was seen taking a Starling at Heath Charnock on 22nd January. In February, birds were recorded at Eccleston, Euxton, Heskin, Hic Bibi and Withnell Fold.

The United Utilities breeding bird survey of Roddlesworth Plantations recorded 4 territories.

Birds with kills were noted in July on Mawdesley Moss (12th), Eccleston (18th) and Croston Moss (21st). On 20th July birds were seen and young heard on the edge of Rivington village. In August, a family group was on Healey Nab on the 16th, when a pair was also noted in Yarrow Valley Park. Singles were at White Coppice (28th) and in a Chorley garden (30th).

Marauding birds in October were seen on Croston Finney (25th), Great Knowley (26th), Chorley (28th) and Whittle-le-Woods (31st). In November, birds with prey were seen at Coppull and along Syd Brook Eccleston (4th), and in December at Coppull (2nd) and Adlington (6th).

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

Fairly common resident

Multiple sightings of Buzzard in February include 3 on Croston Moss (1st) and 4 at Euxton (4th). In March 4 were at Great Knowley (1st) and 4 were over Yarrow valley way on the 5th. Nine were in the air together near Belmont on 8th April

The Roddlesworth breeding bird survey realized 3 pairs with 2 active nests located.

Sightings in July came from across the area with reports of one or two young birds among them. Buzzard sightings continued to increase in Rivington and Anglezarke. These sightings, when analysed, indicated 10 favoured centres with possibly 4 nesting sites.

There were 7 sightings at Withnell Fold on 8th August with 3 feeding on the carcass of a Canada Goose. Five were together over Adlington on 24th August. Eight were noted over Coppull on 22nd September.

On 1st October a bird was watching carefully as a Rivington farmer was turning the cut grass, no doubt looking for an easy meal. Multiple sightings in October included 4 at Croston sewage works (4th), 4 on Croston Moss (19th) and 2 at Withnell Fold (27th). In December sightings came from White Coppice (4th), Eccleston (11th) and Bretherton Eyes (23rd).

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Regular passage migrant

One was reported over the E-shaped pond at Bretherton by visiting birders on 19th March.

In April, passage birds were noted over Eccleston (5th), White Coppice (7th) and Pilling Lane, Chorley (18th). Another was noted over White Coppice on 28th May.

The first returning bird was seen flying south over Upper Rivington Reservoir on 1st August. Another was seen flying south over Lower Rivington Reservoir on 27th September.

Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

One was at the E-shaped pond at Bretherton on 6th February. Another was at Arley nature reserve on 14th March.

One was seen in Yarrow Valley Park on 3rd and 10th October and again on 22nd November. Singles were also seen at the E-shaped Pond on 24th November and at Arley nature reserve on the 30th. Three were noted at the E-shaped pond on 22nd December.

Corncrake (*crex crex*)

Rare passage migrant

A Bretherton resident taking his dog for a late night walk on 2nd August was surprised to hear one calling from a nearby field, but it wasn't heard again on subsequent evenings, so was presumably a bird on return migration.



Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Common resident

12 were at Belmont Reservoir in mid-January. There were sightings throughout Rivington and Anglezarke from quieter water courses and ponds. January saw birds on the Douglas diversion with 2 on the 3rd, 3 on the 7th and 4 on 18th. There were 4 at Heapey embankment on 13th and 2 at White Coppice on the same date. In March, White Coppice had a pair on No. 6 on the 5th and a pair on No. 5 on the 19th whilst the breeding pond at Rivington had a pair on the 17th. All these sites were occupied in April.

A pair with 6 young was noted at Hic Bibi on 10th May. There was a large increase from 6 pairs in 2014 to a record-equalling 11 pairs breeding at Belmont Reservoir, including 5 pairs within the gullery. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 2+ pairs beside the reservoirs.

Young observed in August included 2 on Syd Brook, Eccleston (1st), 4 on the pond in the centre of Eccleston (1st) and one on Common Bank Lodge (2nd). On 23rd September 3 were at Heapey embankment. One by a moorland ditch above Belmont on 9th October was presumably a grounded migrant. At least 7 were at Belmont Reservoir in late October.

Coot (*Fulica atra*)

Common resident

A count of 34 was made at Yarrow Valley Park on 6th February.

It did not seem to be a great breeding season for Coot in the area, although 2 young were at Lower Healey on 4th July and 3 were in Yarrow Valley Park on the 19th. Another brood of 5 chicks was noted in Yarrow Valley Park on 16th August. A brood of 3 in Astley Park on 13th August was the only record received for the site which normally produces several broods.

Common Crane (*grus grus*)

Rare vagrant

One was reported on Birdguides as being seen crossing the M6 at Charnock Richard in a westerly direction on 10th August, but there was no further sighting reported.

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

Increasing passage migrant and summer visitor. Scarce breeder.

First record for the year was one at Belmont on 9th February, followed by 4 at Anglezarke, 2 at Lower Rivington and a single at Bretherton Eyes, all on the 14th February. 15 were on Croston Moss by the 28th. These peaked at 24 by 3rd March, with pairs also being noted at Charnock Richard on 4th March and at Withnell Fold on 6th March. 16 were around Belmont by 27th February increasing to 23 on 6th April.

Five pairs bred at Belmont but whilst 2 or 3 broods were seen later, it was thought that few if any fledged. Pairs were on territory at Anglezarke, Croston Moss and Brindle by the beginning of May. A breeding pair was noted on Yarrow Reservoir on 5th June. Away from the reservoirs on 4th April a pair was on a wall near White Coppice. On 23rd and 27th a pair was noted at a Rivington farm site. A pair again bred in a quarry at Withnell. 12 were together in fields at Chisnall on 28th June.

Oystercatcher sightings in July came from Mawdesley Moss (3rd), Buckshaw (4th), Bretherton Eyes (5th) and Anglezarke Reservoir (3 on 12th). Only one record was received in August of a bird flying over Belmont on the 17th, which suggested an early return to the coast, possibly because of a lack of breeding success.

One at Bretherton Eyes on 12th November was a late record for the area.

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. Has bred

Flocks on Croston Moss in January included 11 on the 17th and 53 on the 20th. A flock of 12 was at the same site on 4th February. Four were back on the moors above Belmont on 15th February.

At least 7 pairs were located on territory in the central West Pennine Moors during the breeding season (although not all regular sites were checked) including a nest located on 23rd May that later had young nearby on 9th June.

A pair flew east over Great Knowley on 1st May. 3 flew over Belmont on 11th October with 2 over on 25th. One was with Lapwing on Bretherton Eyes on 20th December.



Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

Rare vagrant

Three flying over Clayton-le-Woods on 4th October was the only record.

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Common resident and winter visitor

January flocks included 20 on Croston Moss (2nd), 110 on Gale Moss (14th), 50 near Croston Twin Lakes (21st), 21 on Lower Rivington Reservoir (22nd) and 60 at Belmont Reservoir (24th).

Flocks in February included 80 over Euxton (4th), 60 on Croston Moss (4th), 137 on Gale Moss (13th), 200 at Withnell Fold (23rd) and 200 by the Douglas at Croston (24th). The flocks at Withnell Fold and on Croston Moss were still intact by 7th March.

A record 45 territories were around Belmont Reservoir (including 34 territories on just two fields totalling 24 ha) going into the breeding season following extensive mowing of rush-infested pastures creating ideal habitat backed up with withdrawal of stock (cattle) immediately prior to laying, plus active Fox/Crow removal. Unfortunately the weather turned to incessant wet, cold & windy conditions from late April onwards as incubation was well progressed. Whilst the first young were noted on 4th May, it was noted that by mid-May the number of occupied territories was down to 28 as birds lost young and abandoned breeding. Whilst a number of young did eventually fledge, the 2015 breeding season could be considered a mischance despite the record initial numbers.

At the regular Rivington nesting site, an early bird was checking out the territory on 3rd January. In February at this site there were 22 on the 10th, 2 on the 12th, and 84 on the 20th. By March, split between 3 fields, there were 32 on the 7th, 32 on the 12th, and 36 on the 20th. In April numbers fell causing concern with 18 on the 13th and 15 on the 23rd. Concern increased during May with no sign of young or breeding with 4 on the 1st, 10 on the 14th, 5 on the 19th and 1 only on the 27th. The last record for this site was 1 on 5th June. Explanations for this unusual season may lie with the weather conditions or disturbance from work to lay a water main across the main breeding fields, which had been flagged up to the contractor beforehand.

A pair on Croston Finney had two chicks on 26th April. Two pairs were noted with young at a site at Whittle-le-Woods on 27th June. Two young at the same site on 19th July were presumably from a different brood.

Post breeding flocks formed at Belmont Reservoir from 16th June (with 20) onwards increasing to 120 by the month-end with only small numbers of juveniles noted. Monthly maxima at Belmont Reservoir:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2013	36	78	100	77	190	345	130	60	70	156
2014	140	360	150	80	110	200	200	360	280	370
2015	310	350	235	120	180	140	60	300	390*	145

Post-breeding flocks elsewhere in July included 30 at Withnell Fold and a similar number on Mawdesley Moss. A flock of over 100 birds was on the edge of

Lower Rivington Reservoir on 15th August. September flocks included 100 on Mawdesley Moss (9th), and 35 at Lower Rivington (13th).

The flock on Croston Moss built up from 50 on 5th October to 300 by the 25th. Other flocks in October included 200 at Withnell Fold (27th) and 200 at Belmont Reservoir (31st). Flocks in November included 390 at Belmont Reservoir (8th), and 300 on Bretherton Eyes (24th). Largest count in December at Bretherton Eyes was 200 on 21st. Elsewhere in December, 150 were at Withnell Fold (29th) and 110 at Hic Bibi also 29th.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

Uncommon summer visitor

First back was one at Charnock Richard on 11th April, followed by 2 on Bretherton Eyes on the 12th and 2 at Belmont Reservoir on the 15th.

One pair bred at Belmont Reservoir fledging one or two young. One noted at Buckshaw on 5th July was probably breeding judging by its frantic behavior, but generally speaking it was not a good year for records because of adverse water levels across the area.

A maximum of 6 was at Belmont Reservoir on 25th July with the last 2 there on the 27th.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Regular passage migrant

Whimbrel passage commenced with 17 at Bretherton on the 18th April but the main site for stopover birds was Tinklers Lane fields on the Croston / Eccleston border with up to 13 present from 23rd to end of the month. 6 were also noted at Ulnes Walton on the 25th. On 1st May, 4 came up from a site at Rivington in the early morning and flew off calling. Passage continued until 12th May with 4 at Chisnall and a single at Euxton on the 10th, a peak of 15 at Eccleston on the 11th, and a flock of 15 over Roddlesworth on the same day.



A single bird at Euxton on 2nd August was presumably a non-breeding bird on return passage.

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor

One at Euxton on the 4th January was an early record for the area. Another at Eccleston on 10th February was a more usual first date for the species. The first back at Belmont was on 15th February. On 28th February one was back over

Lower Rivington Reservoir and flew towards the moor calling. Birds were noted moving onto breeding territories at Brindle and Eccleston during March and calling birds were back at regular moorland sites at Anglezarke albeit in reduced numbers.

Roost counts at Belmont Reservoir; –

- 24 on 27th February
- 78 on 3rd March
- 117 on 8th March
- 152 on 10th March
- 136 on 15th March
- 70 on 20th March
- 36 on 31st March

In April, pairs were on territory at White Coppice (2nd), Croston (4th) and Charnock Richard (9th). In particular 4 pairs were noted to the east of the Yarrow Valley, Anglezarke. A pair also took up occupancy in a Rivington farm field and was still present on 3rd June. 10 pairs were located around Belmont Reservoir and 3 pairs on Withnell Moor.

Post-breeding roost counts at Belmont Reservoir included 7 on 11th June and 55 on the 15th. Again the only July record was from Belmont Reservoir with 2 on the 14th, which is a bit of a concern in view of the species recent addition to the Red List.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Rare passage migrant and summer visitor

Three were on Croston Moss on 28th March. A small party flew over Great Hanging Bridge at Croston on 26th April.

One was on Bretherton Eyes on 30th November.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Scarce breeder and passage migrant

One was on Croston Moss on 29th March and one was at Belmont Reservoir on 25th April with 2 there on the 28th.

One nest was located in the central West Pennine Moors on 23rd May (with an elaborate distraction display by the incubating female) and birds were on territory at a further one traditional and one occasional breeding site during the breeding season.

One flew over Croston Moss on 6th September.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor; has wintered.

First in Spring was one in Yarrow Valley Park on the 9th April, followed by four in the Belmont area (19th) and one at Eccleston on the 20th. Numbers at Belmont

had increased to 18 by the 25th. In May birds were on Heapey No.3 lodge (1st), Anglezarke Reservoir and Belmont Reservoir (16th). Four pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir plus one pair upstream on a feeder stream. One pair held territory at Wards Reservoir but then moved on. The breeding bird survey for UU at Roddlesworth recorded one successful breeding pair.

One was recorded on Anglezarke Reservoir on 24th July, so may have been a breeding bird. This once common breeding bird of our reservoir system now seems to be in rapid decline, which may be due to the considerable disturbance on the reservoir margins and increased mowing of the embankments.

Two were seen at Croston Twin Lakes on 24th August. The last record was one at Belmont Reservoir on 16th September.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)

Scarce passage migrant. Winters most years.

In January one was seen along Syd Brook, Eccleston on 2nd & 20th, and another was near Croston Twin Lakes on the 18th. Singles were seen again at both sites in February, with possibly a third bird along the Douglas at Croston on the 10th. The Syd Brook bird was seen regularly until at least 22nd March.

In April, birds were noted on the Yarrow both at Croston (6th) and Eccleston (15th). One was at Belmont reservoir on the 26th.

In August, one was seen on Syd Brook on 18th & 28th, and then again on 23rd September. Two were near Belmont on 29th August. Two were on the edge of a pond on Croston Finney on 25th October.

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

Scarce passage migrant

One was at Belmont Reservoir on 28th and 29th April. Three were near Belmont on 26th July.

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

Scarce passage migrant and summer visitor

First record for the year was a pair on the Douglas at Croston on the 6th February. At least one was there on 5th March. The first two were back at Belmont reservoir on 21st March with at least 13 there by 6th April.

4 pairs were on territory around Belmont Reservoir but only one brood was seen later with fledged young on 13th June. There were a further 3 moorland breeding pairs and one pair on in-by fields in the central West Pennine Moors.

The last (2) were at Belmont Reservoir on 14th July.

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

Rare winter visitor

One was near Belmont on 24th January. In February, singles were recorded at the E-shaped pond, Bretherton (6th), Bretherton Eyes (8th) and Tinklers Lane,

Eccleston (9th). One was flushed on Lower Burgh Meadow on 8th March. There was an unusual run of late birds around Belmont with singles on 10th, 16th and 19th April.

Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)

Fairly common resident and winter visitor

At least 10 were flushed out of rhododendrons at Belmont at dusk on 16th January, and 'pheasant beaters' flushed over 18 at Belmont on 31st. One was noted at Chisnall on 18th January. Sightings in March came from Anglezarke, Arley and Eccleston.

The first roding male at Belmont was seen on 16th March. Two or three were seen roding regularly in the White Coppice area in April and May. The breeding bird survey for UU in Roddlesworth plantations found 4/5 'roding' males compared with 10 in 2003.

One was flushed in Heatherlea Woods on 16th August.

Two at Hic Bibi on 13th October, two in Belmont plantations on the 28th and one at Eccleston on the 30th might have been winter visitors. In November, six were seen at dusk over fields at Belmont on the 1st, two were at Eccleston (17th) and one was at the E-shaped Pond, Bretherton (24th). December sightings included one at Withnell Fold nature reserve (6th), 6 at the E-shaped Pond (12th) and one at Hic Bibi (29th). Five on the 6th and 6 on the 28th were reported flushed by 'pheasant beaters' at Belmont.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Fairly common passage / winter visitor; scarce breeder

January sightings included 6 on Croston Moss (2nd) and 2 at Eccleston on the same day. At least 25 were near Belmont (10th) with a further 21 at Belmont Reservoir (17th). Sightings in February included 40 on Croston Moss, 40 at the E-shaped pond, Bretherton and 13 at Croston Twin Lakes, all on the 10th suggesting Spring passage.

Sightings in March included 30 on Mawdesley Moss (23rd). There were 2 near Lower House, Rivington on 21st April.

The strong breeding population in the central West Pennine Moors was maintained in 2015. 10 'pairs' were again recorded on territory around Belmont Reservoir with successful breeding again confirmed with a brood of at least one young (2/3-grown) seen on 18th June. A further 22 'drummers' were recorded on in-bye fields/moorland elsewhere in the central West Pennine Moors at altitudes between 190m & 430m asl.

One was on Croston Moss on 28th August. Three were at Belmont Reservoir on 26th September, and also on that date one was by a pond near Moses Cocker Farm, Rivington. In October, two were at Croston Twin Lakes on the 1st and singles were at Eccleston (11th) and Hic Bibi (13th). An impressive 30 plus were at Belmont on the 4th.

November records included 8 at Great Knowley (2nd), 7 at Adlington (2nd), 35 at Belmont (9th), 13 at Bretherton Eyes (24th), 4 at the E-shaped Pond, Bretherton (24th) and 50 on Croston Moss (28th). One was heard 'drumming' near Belmont on 1st November! In December, 5 were at Eccleston (3rd), 2 were at the E-shaped Pond (12th) and 4 were on Lower Burgh Meadows (13th).

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

Scarce breeding bird and passage migrant

First record for the year was from Stoat Hall fishing pond at Bretherton on 17th April, followed by one at Croston Twin lakes (21st) and 2 at Hic Bibi (24th).

A pair was at Croston Twin Lakes on 1st May. The regular breeding pair was back at Yarrow Valley Park by 2nd May. A single bird was at Bretherton Eyes on 14th May. A single bird flew over Jepsons Clough, Rivington, on 15th May heading towards Lower Rivington Reservoir.

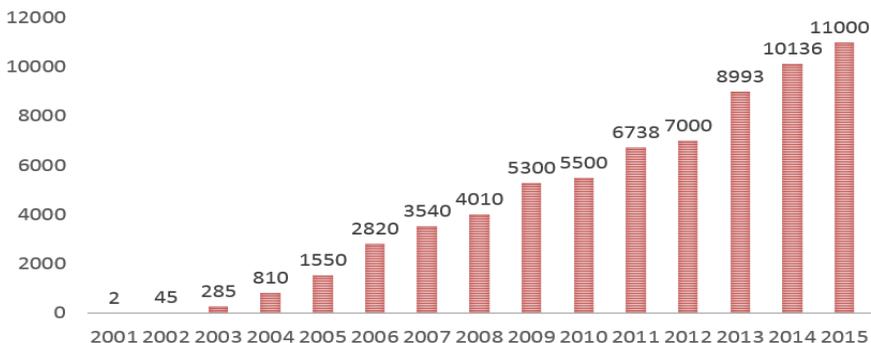
The pair in Yarrow Valley Park had 2 chicks by 7th June, increasing to 3 by the 10th. Only one remained at the site at the beginning of July. It was not known if the other two young had got away. At least one adult / juvenile was around the site for the remainder of the month.

Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

Present in good numbers throughout the year. Now breeds in large numbers

The first birds (1300) returned to the Belmont Reservoir gully on 28th February with pre-breeding numbers building to 8,000 by 7th March, 13,000 on 13th March, 22,000 by 31st March to peak at 24,000 at roost on 2nd April.

**BREEDING PAIRS OF BLACK-HEADED GULL
AT BELMONT RESERVOIR 2001 - 2015**



The gulls' breeding season matched closely the mean dates of previous years but was around a week behind the early 2014 season - the first young were noted on 29th April and the first fledged juvenile seen on 6th June. There was no repeat of the aerial surveys carried out in previous years and therefore

observations on population were restricted to land based counts at distance by telescope. These realised an estimated 11,000 pairs which would relate to the site holding ca.7.9% of the UK breeding population in 2015 and maintains its status as the largest Black-headed Gull colony in the UK. Production in 2015 exceeded even the recent good production levels at Belmont with many pairs noted with two or even three juveniles. Counts of adults with large young/juveniles in attendance on 28th June realised 1.8 young per successful pair from a sample of 751 birds.

Over 1,000 birds were on the floods at Bretherton Eyes on 12th November, and around 500 were there on 4th December. Around 3000 were in the gull roost on Lower Rivington Reservoir on 27th December.

Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

Rare visitor now also breeding

The first birds (2) were back in the Black-headed Gull colony at Belmont Reservoir on 4th March, with pre-breeding numbers rising to 14 by 5th April and on to 42 on 25th April.

The colony held at least 24 active nests when initially censused in late April however several areas of the colony were not visible due to vegetation growth. Further nests were located during visits (under a Schedule 1 Licence) and by evidence of bird/s 'dropping in' to the colony with large young seen later in those areas, leading to an estimated minimum of 33 pairs; although the impaired viewing conditions prevailing must be taken in to account in assessing this estimate.

The 33+ pairs in 2015 would relate to Belmont holding ca.4.1% of the UK population and is considered to be the largest ***inland*** colony of Mediterranean Gulls in the UK and the only 'substantial' colony away from the S and SE coasts of England.

Counts in July of successful pairs realised 30 fledged Mediterranean Gull juveniles with 26 distinct attendant adult/s giving an average for that sample of 1.15 young per successful pair in 2015.

One was noted in a field at Whittle-le-Woods on 27th June.

Two were in the gull roost on Lower Rivington Reservoir on 27th December.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

Common winter visitor

One in the Belmont Reservoir gullery on 15th June was noteworthy.

Small numbers were amongst the gulls on the floods at Bretherton Eyes on 12th November.

Lesser Black-Backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

Common in most months; has bred

A total of 190 birds was at Belmont Reservoir on 28th April.

Two pairs held territory throughout the breeding season at Belmont Reservoir with nest-building and copulation noted in mid-May. However, no incubating birds were observed and it was thought that the arrival of a pair of Herring Gulls were responsible for dislodging the Lesser Black-back pairs from their regular nesting territory & disrupting their breeding cycle. Adults with fledged juveniles present on site from mid-July onwards were considered to have fledged from elsewhere (presumably from the Ribble or Bowland colonies).

Small numbers were amongst the gulls on the floods at Bretherton Eyes on 12th November.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Common winter visitor and on passage

One pair held territory at Belmont Reservoir from mid-May onwards with nest-building observed from 25th to 28th May. However only a single bird was observed in June and it was considered unlikely that the birds proceeded to the incubation stage. Whilst a pair held territory in 2012, this represents the first probable breeding at Belmont since 2005.

Small numbers were amongst the gulls on the floods at Bretherton Eyes on 12th November.

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

Scarce winter visitor

Following nest-building by a pair at Belmont Reservoir in 2014, a pair of adults were again present from late April to early May but subsequently moved on without any sign of breeding.

One or two were amongst the gulls on the floods at Bretherton Eyes in November.

Gull Roost (*Laridae spp.*)

The gull roost on Lower Rivington reservoir contained around 3000 birds on 27th December, the majority of which were Black-headed Gulls.

Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*)

Common resident

The presence of a breeding pair of Peregrines still does not appear to have diminished the town centre population.

Approximately 3 pairs bred in the church steeple of St Peter's, Belmont and one at a moorland farm (at 300m asl) above Belmont. One associated with Stock Doves at Belmont Reservoir throughout most of the year.

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

Uncommon breeding bird

A flock of around 80 birds was on Croston Moss on 2nd January.

33 were at Belmont Reservoir on 29th June. One on a Belmont bird-table on 19th October was a garden first.

The species was noted at the usual farm sites in Rivington, and also in quarries and tree holes.

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Abundant resident and passage migrant

105 were feeding on clover at Belmont Reservoir on 12th June. 200+ were feeding on bilberries on moors above Belmont on 9th July.

A pair at Euxton was still feeding young on 6th October.

The species continued its unrelenting population increase and climbed to 4th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being recorded in all 23 gardens surveyed. This compares with a position of 15th in 1998 when the current survey started.

Autumn passage south over Belmont was much lower than in previous years with counts in the first hour after sunrise including 145 on 25th October, 127 on 6th November and 197 on 12th November.

Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Common resident

One was on a nest in a Belmont garden on 6th February

The species came 10th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey – a slight improvement on last year – and was recorded in 19 of the 23 gardens. The relative decline in numbers over the past few years is possibly attributable to the increase in Woodpigeon numbers as well as being the frequent victim of Sparrowhawk attacks.

Up to 15 were in a Belmont garden in late October with 12 there in November.

Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant

First back was one at White Coppice on the fairly typical date of 22nd April. On 24th April a bird was noted at Great Heights Wood, Anglezarke and another on the edge of the Terraced Gardens, Rivington. The first at Belmont was a calling male on 27th April. Birds were recorded at White Coppice throughout May with 3 together on the 30th, possibly involving 2 females. Singles were also noted at Dean Wood, Rivington (13th May) and on Withnell Moor (23rd). On 15th May one was at Simms ruin Anglezarke and on 23rd one was again at the Terraced Gardens.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised one calling territorial male with a first-hand report received later of confirmed breeding immediately adjacent to Roddlesworth when a female Cuckoo was observed laying in a Meadow Pipit's nest, watched by a farmer and a

gamekeeper. A check later of the nest revealed a 'well grown' youngster which was thought to have fledged successfully at the end of June.

Birds remained in the White Coppice area until at least 7th June. One was also noted at Great Knowley on 4th and 7th June.

One was heard at White Coppice on 1st July and 2 were in the Eccleston / Mawdesley area on 16th July, presumably birds on passage. An unusual record on 18th July from Jepsons Clough, Rivington was of a bird heard on 3 separate occasions at 2am moving south presumably on migration.

A juvenile was noted at Rivington on 2nd August – an excellent find as records of juveniles tend to be few and far between.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

Uncommon resident - increasing

Hunting birds were noted at Bretherton, Eccleston and Mawdesley during February. March sightings came from Croston, Eccleston, Heskin and Mawdesley in the west, and from Abbey Village and Withnell Fold in the east.

April sightings came from three localities in the west of the area and 3 in the east.

There were 5 occupied territories near Belmont with at least 2 pairs breeding successfully, fledging 4 and at least one young. One pair bred at Roddlesworth successfully fledging 5 young.

One was noted on Mawdesley Moss on June 24th. July sightings came from Great Knowley, Mawdesley Moss and Heskin, and in August from Croston Moss. September sightings came from Mawdesley Moss (7th), Anglezarke (9th) and Great Knowley (27th), with more sightings from Great Knowley and Croston Moss in October. Records came from three regular sites in November and December. At least 4 were seen hunting throughout day in the Belmont area on several dates throughout November and December.

Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)

Fairly common resident

One was seen at a site at Heath Charnock on 4th January, and again on 4th February. Two were on Croston Moss on 6th February. April records came again from Croston Moss and from White Coppice, where a pair was on territory by the beginning of May.

Only one bird was seen near Belmont Reservoir (20th March), compared to at least 3 pairs in recent years.

At least one was noted on Croston Moss in June (12th), and another was at Heskin on 15th July and 8th August. On the 7th September a bird was noted on the wall at Horrobin Lane, Rivington and on 30th one at White Coppice. One was

again seen on Croston Moss on 26th September and again during October when was also noted at Euxton (10th).

November sightings included one on Stronstrey Bank on the 4th and in December at a regular site at Heath Charnock.

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)

Common resident

January records came from Eccleston on the 2nd and Great Knowley on the 14th. In February, calling birds were heard at Eccleston (2nd), Euxton (9th) and possibly 3 in Copperworks Wood, Chorley on the 15th.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 9 territories.

April records came from Clayton-le-Woods, Duxbury Woods and Yarrow Valley Park. Generally, there seemed to be fewer calling birds in the Rivington area. On 21st May a young bird was noted at a regular site and then adults were noted at 5 woodland locations in the rest of the year.

Two young birds were noted at Euxton on 17th June. Three were at Heskin on 8th July and one was at Mawdesley on 23rd July. August records came from Eccleston (5th) and Cuerden Valley Park (18th). September records included 2 on Mawdesley Moss (7th) and singles at Great Knowley (24th) and Eccleston (25th).

One was at Euxton on 10th October, but sadly and ironically one was found dead in Chorley cemetery on 1st October. A couple were noted at Eccleston on 16th November. Four together at Eccleston on 17th December were possibly engaged in a territorial squabble. One was at Great Knowley on 19th December.

Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)

Scarce breeding resident

A roost near Belmont held at least 2 birds in January and February. One pair bred (unsuccessfully) near Belmont.

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

Scarce winter visitor and breeding resident

Two were present near Belmont from 2nd January onwards. One was noted on Anglezarke Moor on 20th March. Birds were also sighted in the Anglezarke / Rivington area on several dates from 14th April.



An excellent breeding season in the West Pennine Moors with at least 4, possibly 5, breeding pairs; including a pair that bred (fledging 2 young) at Belmont Reservoir for the first time since 2007. The last (one) at Belmont was on 16th October.

Swift (*Apus apus*)

Common summer visitor and passage migrant

First back was one seen feeding over Croston sewage works on 25th April. The first (40 were back at Belmont on 10th May. On 12th May 6 were back at the regular site at Jepsons Clough, Rivington and were present feeding over the trees for the rest of the season. In July 22 were there on the 4th and 12 on the 30th. Numbers built up during August with 26 at 8.30am and 50 at 8.30pm on the 3rd, 4 at 9.00pm on the 6th, 26 at 8.00am on the 7th and 3 at 7.00am on the 12th. There was no sign of any on the 13th.

A colony was noted at Croston on 14th June with a minimum of 7 pairs being estimated. A minimum of 165 were seen feeding high over the moors at Belmont on 9th June.

As usual the local Swifts left us in the first week of August with 20 at Eccleston on the 5th presumably on the way south. Single figure sightings, however continued throughout the month with 5 over Gillibrands (12th), 1 at Eccleston (27th), 3 over Chorley (27th) and 2 over Coppull (30th). At Belmont, however, bird(s) were still feeding young in the roof space of a terraced house on 1st September and a bird was seen in flight above the house the next day. Elsewhere, the last was one near Cliffe Farm, White Coppice on 2nd September. Perhaps it had just flown over from Belmont!

Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Fairly common resident

January sightings came from Yarrow Valley Park throughout, Croston Twin Lakes (4th), Arley nature reserve (11th) and Croston Moss (19th).

Records in February came from Croston Moss, Syd Brook at Eccleston, Yarrow Valley Park and the Yarrow at Croston.

One was noted along Syd Brook, Eccleston in April, and again in May. One was also noted on the Yarrow at Croston during May. One pair is believed to have bred successfully in the Belmont area.

June sightings came from Croston, Eccleston and Whittle. July records came from Croston Twin Lakes (11th), Syd Brook, Eccleston (14th) and Duxbury Woods (17th).

Post breeding dispersal was seen at Anglezarke on 17th August and the 22nd and 23rd September. On the 27th a bird was seen to fly from the breeding pond at Rivington across Upper Rivington Reservoir to the river Yarrow. Other August sightings came from Syd Brook, Eccleston (1st), the Goit at White Coppice (2nd), Yarrow Valley Park (22nd) and Croston Twin Lakes (30th). September sightings came from Anglezarke, Astley Park, Eccleston, Heapey Lodges and Yarrow Valley Park. Records in October came from Arley nature reserve (7th), Alance Bridge on Yarrow Reservoir (17th), Heapey Lodges (18th) and Yarrow Valley Park throughout.

In November, birds were seen at Common Bank Lodge (1st), Withnell (4th) and at Yarrow Valley Park throughout. December sightings came from Yarrow Valley Park and Syd Brook, Ecclestone.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)

Uncommon resident, declining

One was at Anglezarke on 14th February. One was on a moorland wall at 340m above sea level above Belmont on 18th April – a mile from the nearest tree!

One pair was on territory at a regular breeding site near Belmont with bird/s present nearby indicating a second territory. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised one pair that bred successfully.

Elsewhere, the first record since February came from Rivington on 15th & 18th August and then from White Coppice on 16th and 21st August. Sightings in September all came from White Coppice on 8th, 20th, 23rd and 29th. Several sightings came from White Coppice again in October, so it was nice to receive a record from a member's garden in the west of the area at Croston on the 19th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus major*)

Common resident

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 17 territories compared with 16 territories in 2003.

There seemed to be fewer records for Rivington and Anglezarke in 2015, although birds were noted in all months of the year in suitable woodlands. At least 14 territories were identified, including some where nests and young were observed. Similarly, although pairs were noted in all Chorley woodlands, the general feeling prevailed that numbers were lower than usual.

A single migrant flew south over Belmont on 11th October.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus minor*)

Uncommon resident

No record was received of this species this year.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Fairly common resident

Six were noted on Croston Moss on 6th February. A pair was noted on territory at Whittle-le-Woods on 5th March.

A pair at White Coppice had 3 young by 31st May. There seemed to be more records of kestrel in Rivington and Anglezarke in 2015. There were 13 general centres of records for the year and when analysed there were possibly 8 breeding territories.

One pair bred successfully at Belmont Reservoir fledging 5 young. One pair bred successfully at a Roddlesworth Farm also fledging 5 young. The breeding

bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 2 breeding pairs with 2 active nests located.

June records included one which took a Blackbird in a member's garden and finished up in the summer house!

Records in July came from 10 locations, many of which were of family groups. 15 were in the Belmont area mid-month. In August, juveniles were recorded at Euxton (2nd), 2 at White Coppice (8th) and 3 near Croston sewage works (15th).

Four were on Croston Moss on 25th October.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

Scarce resident and passage migrant

One was on Croston Moss on 21st January, and again on 1st February. One was on Mawdesley Moss on 15th February. Perhaps heading back to the moors was one at Yarrow Reservoir on 10th February. In March, birds were noted near Croston sewage works (8th) and on Croston Moss (28th).

April sightings came from Belmont (10th) and White Coppice (15th). A territory-holding pair in the West Pennine Moors moved on after a moor-fire swept through their territory in early April. A pair displaying elsewhere in the West Pennine Moors in mid-April was possibly this displaced pair and whilst the birds were not seen subsequently at this site, a male seen occasionally in the wider area thereafter was suggestive.

One noted at Belmont on 23rd July was the only other summer record.

In September singles were noted at Bretheton Eyes (7th) and Hic Bibi (30th).

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

Rare summer visitor

First record for the year came from White Coppice on 7th June, followed by one at Coppull the next day and another at Croston on the 16th.

Sightings in August came from White Coppice (2nd & 23rd), Upper Rivington (9th), Great Knowley (11th) and Belmont (26th).

September records came from Eccleston (4th & 8th) and White Coppice (30th).

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)

Scarce resident and winter visitor. Has bred

In January, birds were noted on Morrison's chimney (2nd) and on Croston Moss (20th).

A pair was back at the chimney by 23rd February and remained around the site through March. They had set about breeding by at least 16th April, and were noted to have 2 young by 28th May and it was eventually established that there were in fact 4 young. The four young prospered with the first flight taking place

around 12th June, ending with a crash landing in a nearby street. Fortunately, it was safely relocated to Morrison's roof. All four young are believed to have fledged successfully. Birds were seen from time to time around the site during August and September.

At least one other pair was known to be breeding in the area with two others probable. The known pair had a single chick.

Regular at Belmont throughout the year from pairs in adjacent territories especially hunting around the gullery during the breeding season...where attempts are largely unsuccessful. 3 were 'resident' at Belmont Reservoir in August.

Two birds were seen at White Coppice on 11th August making a tremendous racket – possibly adult and juvenile with the latter demanding food.

In October, two were back on wintering territory on Croston Moss but one was still in the White Coppice area on the 24th. One was at Croston Twin Lakes on 9th November, whilst at least two were seen around Morrison's chimney throughout the month and into December. Birds were also recorded at Belmont (13th) and Bretherton Eyes (23rd).

Ring-necked Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)

Probable escape

At least two were noted in the Burgh Lane, Chorley area on several dates during April, and again on 20th May. Four were seen together in a garden in the same area on 5th July.

In August, records came from a different part of town – one from the cemetery on the 9th and another from Hartwood on 13th.

Records in September came from even more sites including Astley Village (7th), the cemetery (10th), Moor Road (4 on 17th), Great Knowley (3 over on 22nd) and 5 were seen in a garden in the north of the borough at the end of the month.

In October, 5 turned up in a garden in the Collingwood Road area on several occasions, making short work of the food put out. They continued to be seen around the Collingwood area during November, as well as around the cemetery, which could well have been the same group of birds.

Magpie (*Pica pica*)

Common resident

Gamekeepers at Belmont reported shooting/trapping 58 Magpies in 2015.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 3 pairs, all near habitation. It made 7th position in the Winter Garden Bird survey, being recorded in all of the 23 gardens surveyed,

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Common resident

Very conspicuous as usual in late April, as pre-nuptial groups roamed noisily around the area.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised an estimate of 15 breeding pairs. It made 18th position in the Winter Garden Bird survey, being recorded in 14 out of the 23 gardens surveyed,

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

Common resident; increasing

100 at Belmont on 14th February increasing to 300 on 31st March with 80+ at Belmont Reservoir on 5th March.

Approximately 5 pairs again bred in the church steeple of St Peter's, Belmont and at least two pairs bred in roof-spaces/chimneys elsewhere in the village. Notable was the increasing number of Jackdaws (regularly up to 50) regularly present feeding within the gullery at Belmont Reservoir throughout the breeding season that were largely ignored by the gulls.

50+ were around breeding cliffs in Withnell Quarry in early June with similar numbers at Whittle.

Around 2000 were noted going to roost over Whittle-le-Woods on 2nd November. 150 roosted at Upper Rivington on 7th November.

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Common resident

At least 100 were at Upper Rivington Reservoir on 12th February, and again on 7th November.

The rookery census on 29th March recorded a total of 315 nests, which was a welcome increase for the third consecutive year. Details of the census are tabulated at the end of this report.

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*)

Common resident

Gamekeepers at Belmont reported shooting/trapping 133 Carrion Crows in 2015. 200 roosted at Upper Rivington on 12th February and 400 roosted in Roddlesworth Plantations on 6th February with 150 there on 19th February and 4th March.

It came 19th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey being recorded in 12 of the 23 gardens surveyed. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 6+ pairs nesting mainly on the plantation edge with 50+, presumably failed or non-breeders, still roosting in the plantations in mid-May.

100 roosted at Upper Rivington on 7th November and 300 roosted in Roddlesworth Plantations on 8th December. Up to 2 'white' leucistic birds were

regular on Belmont Moor throughout the year and these were noted roosting in Roddlesworth Plantations in both winter periods.

Raven (*Corvus corax*)

Scarce but increasing resident

Sightings in February came from Healey Nab, Eccleston and Whittle-le-Woods.

When walking in Rivington and Anglezarke it is no longer unusual to see and hear Ravens overhead even over a Rivington garden. The species appears to be roaming widely in small numbers and increasing.

Two sites were occupied in the central West Pennine Moors during the breeding season. A party of 4 at White Coppice on 29th July was possibly a family group.

One flew over Eccleston on 3rd November. Birds were displaying near Belmont by 20th November. A party of 4 was at White Coppice on 4th December.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

Scarce breeding bird. Common passage migrant and winter visitor in variable numbers

In January the species was observed along the Dean Wood, Rivington footpath on 22nd with 2 on the 26th.

February records came from Chorley, Croston, Eccleston, Euxton, Rivington and Yarrow Valley Park. 30+ were in Roddlesworth Plantations on 14th February.

In March birds were again at Rivington even occupying a member's garden throughout the breeding season and into October.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised an estimate of 30 breeding pairs. A pair was seen feeding young at Eccleston on 11th June. A pair with 2 young was noted in Yarrow Valley Park on 24th July. One pair bred (thought successfully) in an ornamental conifer in a Belmont garden.

On 7th September 2 were in a moorland plantation at Anglezarke. There were plenty of Goldcrest around in October including 2 at Euxton on the 7th, 15 south over Belmont on the 10th, 7 ringed at Clayton-le-Woods on the 24th, 5 on Healey Nab (25th), 2 in Astley Park on the same day and one singing in a Chorley garden on the 29th.

Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

Abundant resident

Came equal first in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being recorded in all 23 gardens surveyed.

At least 12 were in a Belmont garden in August with still 8 there in December.

Great Tit (*Parus major*)

Very common resident

The species dropped to 6th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, but was nevertheless recorded in all 23 of the gardens surveyed.

Thirteen flew south over Belmont on 26th September.

Coal Tit (*Periparus ater*)

Common resident and winter visitor

The species was 11th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being recorded in 20 of the 23 gardens. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised an estimate of 50 breeding pairs.



Birds per hour South over Belmont (recorded in the first hour after sunrise) during Autumn included typical counts of 11 and 12 between 26th September and 10th October.

Willow Tit (*Poecile montana*)

Scarce resident

One was on Croston Moss on 2nd January, and again in February. One was also in a member's garden at Hartwood during February.

One was noted in a Great Knowley garden on 27th July, and again on several dates in August.

October sightings included one in Old Bagganley Lane (3rd) and another on the edge of Lower Burgh Meadow (5th). One was at Great Knowley on 23rd November. The species was recorded at three sites in December – 2 at Arley nature reserve (6th), one at Great Knowley (6th) and 2 in a Hartwood garden (19th).

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Common resident and summer visitor

A flock of 150 was on Bretherton Eyes on 4th January and a flock of 100 was on Croston Moss (19th), and again on 2nd February. At least 4 were in song on moors above Belmont by 15th February.

A breeding pair was noted at Great Knowley on 14th July. Other singing birds were noted on the moors and mosses during the breeding season.

At least 20 were at Belmont on 15th August and one was still on the moors above Belmont at the end of the year.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

First back in Spring were 3 over Adlington Reservoir on 14th March.

Unusually, small numbers of birds (up to 5) were regularly present feeding over Belmont Reservoir (plus other smaller waterbodies nearby) throughout the breeding season; perhaps indicating breeding thereabouts. However, no breeding site could be located.

The colony at a quarry at Adlington is believed to have been active again although no firm information was received.

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

Common summer visitor and passage migrant

First back was one over Croston Moss on 5th April. At least 5 were back at farms at Belmont on 9th April. One was back at Wilcocks Farm Rivington on 16th April with 3 at the Yew Tree, Anglezarke the following day.

On two BBS squares in the Brindle area, 30 and 16 were recorded respectively.

Swallows were noted still feeding young at Heskin on the 8th August but 40 at Eccleston on the same day were preparing to head south. Also in August, a number of records from Rivington indicated birds moving south. 20 were feeding under trees in the Yarrow fields on 15th, with 20 again feeding under trees at the top of Sheephouse Lane, on the 26th. The 27th and 28th saw a constant passage of birds moving south down Jepsons Clough, Rivington. On the 29th birds were feeding around Morris Barn and Alance bridge, Rivington.

Good numbers passed through the White Coppice area during September, and what was described as thousands passed over Whittle-le-Woods on the 12th. In Rivington, birds were still around in small numbers being seen on the 7th and 9th on Sheephouse Lane, Rivington. 50 were over Upper Rivington Reservoir on 27th. On the 30th, 10 were with House Martins at White Coppice.

A remarkable nest (that fledged 4 young on 30th September) at Belmont Reservoir was in an open-fronted nest box meant for Grey/Pied Wagtail! 90+ were at Belmont Reservoir on 16th August, with 200 on wires (with 400 House Martins) near Belmont at 8.00 am on 5th September. All of the House Martins had gone by 8.45am but most of the Swallows remained. c20/hour flew south over Belmont on the morning of 6th September increasing to c100/hour south in the afternoon. 40 were on wires at Belmont on 27th September.

October sightings included 4 over Lower Burgh Meadow on the 6th, 5 over Great Knowley on the 8th, and the last being 14 over Belmont on the 11th.

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)

Common summer visitor and passage migrant

First back was one at Cuerden Valley Park on 11th April, with the first at Belmont village on 19th April.

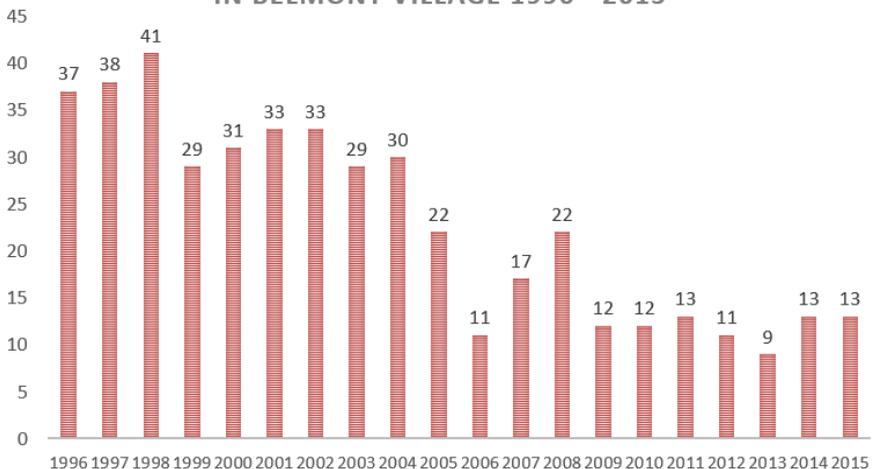
Around 20 were feeding at White Coppice on 3rd July with another 7 at Heapey Lodges on the 5th. Two pairs were still feeding young at Gillibrands on 12th August, whilst on the same date around 20 at Great Knowley were on the move, and 102 were on wires at Belmont. The 27th and 28th August saw a constant passage of birds moving south down Jepsons Clough, Rivington.

400+ were on wires (with 200 Swallows) near Belmont at 8.00 am on 5th September; but all of the House Martins had gone by 8.45am. There was also a large passage of House Martin through White Coppice during September including 140 (2nd), 200 (8th), over 100 (9th) and at least 100 still on the 30th. This seems to be something of an annual event at the site.

Three young fledged at Heapey on 4th October with the last sighting being a single over Great Knowley on the 17th.

A full survey of Belmont Village located 13 active nests, with the last brood of 4 young not fledging until 9th September. At least 12 active nests were on one row of terraced houses in Abbey Village.

BREEDING PAIRS OF HOUSE MARTIN IN BELMONT VILLAGE 1996 - 2015



Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

Common resident; increasing

The species is vulnerable to severe winter conditions, but seems to have benefitted from generally milder conditions and adaptability to garden feeding.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised an estimate of 20+ breeding pairs

Post-breeding flocks were noted at Eccleston, Heapey lodges and in a Chorley garden at the beginning of July. In July a family group were at Jepsons Clough, Rivington on the 2nd, and another at the breeding pond, Rivington on the 7th. From August to the year end flocks were widespread in Rivington and Anglezarke.

Elsewhere, flocks in October included 16 at Coppull (2nd), 22 at Great Knowley (3rd), 17 at Eccleston (11th) and 12 through a Chorley garden (15th).

50+ were in 4 flocks near Belmont at the year-end (29th – 31st December).

It came 14th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being recorded in 20 of the 23 gardens surveyed.

Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant

First back was one at Anglezarke on the relatively early date of 20th April followed by one in Heatherlea Woods on 26th April. May was a good month for the species by recent standards with a total of six singing males at Anglezarke, Heatherlea Woods, Rivington and Roddlesworth Woods.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 2 singing males (one paired) compared with 7 singing males in 2003.

In June a bird was at Rivington on the 21st, with another at Anglezarke on 27th and finally a bird at the unusual location of the Bomber Memorial, Lead Mines Clough on the 29th.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

Common summer visitor and occasional winter visitor

Three wintering birds were noted at Croston sewage works on 4th January including one of the Siberian race *tristis*. Five were recorded at the site in February including at least one *tristis* bird. One singing in Arley nature reserve on 14th March may well have been an incoming summer migrant. First (1) back near Belmont was on 5th April.

5/6 singing males were in the Belmont area during the breeding season – however, Chiffchaffs are notably scarcer around Belmont than in the adjacent areas. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 8 singing males. At least 5 singing birds were recorded in each of two squares in a BTO breeding bird survey in the Brindle area.

Rivington saw a first at Pall Mall Croft on 1st April, with birds appearing at many more sites through the month. This species is becoming increasingly common in the area, with birds present throughout the breeding season with at least 12 sites. A late bird was at Jepsons Clough, Rivington on the 29th and 30th September.

Also in September birds were still singing at several sites including Croston (12th), White Coppice (20th) and Great Knowley (26th). Birds were also seen at Croston sewage works, the E-shaped Pond and at Euxton. 14 passed through Belmont in September with a further 14 recorded in October with the last single on 16th October. In fact, birds were singing at a minimum of seven sites in October and one at Croston Twin Lakes was still singing on 1st November. A wintering bird was at Croston sewage works on 24th November.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Common summer visitor

The first returning bird was at White Coppice on 7th April, with one at Belmont on the 9th. The first noted at Rivington was at the breeding pond also on 9th April, 2 were at Jepsons Clough, Rivington on the 12th, and birds were singing widely on the 11th. 10 singing males were noted around Belmont Reservoir during the breeding season.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 28 singing males. Birds were also commonly heard and seen from Rivington to White Coppice throughout May, June and July with numbers falling in August; the last at Rivington being noted mid month. The last at White Coppice was on 26th September and may have been a bird on passage. The last at Belmont was on 2nd October.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

Summer and winter visitor

Wintering birds took a liking to a Chorley garden in January with a male there on 3rd & 13th and a female on the 18th. A female was at Eccleston on 2nd February, and again in March.

The first singing bird in Spring was one at Eccleston on 10th April, followed by one at Belmont on 17th April. The first noted at Rivington was at Pall Mall Croft on 19th April, with birds at a further 3 sites by the month end. During May and June singing birds appeared at numerous locations with at least 17 territories identified. A family group was seen on 26th July and a young bird was released unharmed from a Rivington garden fruit cage on 12th August. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 22 singing males compared with 12 singing males in 2003.

One was at Euxton on 28th September, another at Belmont on 2nd October and one was in a Clayton-le-Woods garden on 4th October. A male was in a Chorley garden on 27th December feeding on Mahonia.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant

The first returning bird was one in Yarrow Valley Park on 18th April. Another was at White Coppice on 2nd May and one was on Syd Brook, Eccleston (10th May). Only one territory was located near Belmont during the breeding season.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 4 singing males compared with 7 singing males in 2003.

On May 13th at least 3 were singing along the Anglezarke woodland trail and one was still around on the 17th July.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant

First back was one at Eccleston on 22nd April. May sightings included birds at Hic Bibi (3rd), Eccleston (7th), Bretherton (14th) and Brindle (25th).

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)

Common summer visitor

First back was one at Hic Bibi on 13th April. The first at Belmont was on 2nd May. Up to 7 singing males were present around Belmont during the 2015 breeding season, albeit some appeared transient and moved on.

A family group of 5 was on Lower Burgh Meadow on 9th July. One was at Croston Twin Lakes on 31st August and 6 were on Croston Moss on the same day. The last at Belmont was on 7th September.

Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*)

Scarce passage migrant and summer visitor

First back was one on Rivington Moor on 16th April with 1 near Lower House, Rivington on the 21st and 2 more further on to the moor. The first at Belmont was on 18th April. In May, reeling birds were heard at Belmont (3rd) and White Coppice (13th).

In the Belmont area, 17 territories were identified from 'reeling' birds (16 in 2014, 14 in 2013, 11 in 2012 & 27 in 2011) including 6 around Belmont Reservoir (6 in 2014, 4 in 2013, 4 in 2012 & 6 in 2011). The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 2 'reeling' males.

Birds were still reeling in July at Hic Bibi and Great Knowley (12th), and a bird was noted again at Hic Bibi on 13th September. 2 birds were still reeling near Higher House corner, Rivington on 8th August, and 2 were still reeling at Belmont on 16th August. The last noted at Belmont was on 13th September.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Fairly common summer visitor to the limited suitable habitat

First back was one at the E-shaped pond at Bretherton on 18th April. Two singing males were on Lower Burgh Meadow in Yarrow Valley Park on 4th May with another on Syd Brook, Eccleston on the 9th. One (unpaired) singing male moved around Belmont Reservoir during the breeding season.

Birds were still singing in July at Bretherton Eyes (4th), Lower Burgh Meadow (ringed bird on 9th) and 2 at Withnell Fold (10th).

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

Scarce summer visitor

First back was one at White Coppice on 13th April. Another was at Yarrow Valley Park on 7th May.

Birds were still singing in July at Bretherton Eyes (5th), Burgh Hall (5th) and Yarrow Valley Park (11th).

Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)

Fairly common resident; increasing

The species is present in all woodlands throughout the area. In Rivington and Anglezarke the species continues to increase with birds seen in every suitable woodland, including the moorland cloughs. It is especially noticeable how widespread these are due to their singing early in the season. The colonisation of the Belmont area is still considered incomplete; whilst pairs are now regular in some recently unoccupied woodlands, some (considered suitable) sites are still unoccupied.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 39 territories compared with 13 territories in 2003.

A family party was at White Coppice on 12th June. Another was at White Coppice on 25th August.

It came 16th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey being recorded in 12 of the 23 gardens surveyed.

Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*)

Fairly common resident in the area's woodlands

This species is possibly under recorded because of its secretive and quiet nature. However, it continues to turn up in roughly the same areas of woodland throughout the area and throughout the year. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised an estimate of 25 breeding pairs

During December a bird was present most days in a Rivington garden finding food in the crevices of a holly tree.

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Abundant resident

The species came 15th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being recorded in 20 of the 23 gardens surveyed.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Abundant resident and winter visitor

200 were at Rivington on 1st February and 200 were at Withnell Fold on 23rd. During February and March an estimated 100 birds were in a mixed flock feeding in fields at the top of Sheephouse Lane, Rivington. 150 were near Belmont on 26th March.

The first juveniles in Chorley and Euxton appeared around 15th May, whereas those at Belmont were first seen on the 21st.

500+ were on Croston Moss on 6th September. Larger flocks in October included 1000 on Croston Moss (22nd) and 400 at Withnell Fold (27th).

A flock of 250 was at Belmont on 15th November and one of around 400 birds was on Bretherton Eyes on 16th November and a similar number was there on 6th December. Elsewhere in December, 250 were at White Coppice (4th), 1250 at Adlington (5th), 100 at Withnell (5th) and 500 at Eccleston (11th). On 14th December 150 were in Moses Cocker Farm fields, on 20th 550 were at Belmont Reservoir, on 23rd a 'huge' flock was off Nickleton Brow, Heath Charnock and on 29th 200 were in fields off Sheepphouse Lane, Rivington.

Dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*)

Fairly common resident on the faster flowing rivers of the area

One on Syd Brook at Eccleston on 18th January was an uncommon sighting at the site.

February sightings included 3 on the Yarrow in Duxbury Wood (8th), and two pairs in Yarrow Valley Park – at Birkacre and Common Bank. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised just a single bird on a single date (19th March) compared with one breeding pair in 2003.

In April, breeding pairs were noted in Astley Park, at Duxbury, at Euxton, at White Coppice and in Yarrow Valley Park.

In June, breeding records came from both White Coppice and Yarrow Valley Park and probably related to second broods with records also from the Yarrow in Duxbury Woods in July.



One was singing on the Chor near Common Bank Lodge on 2nd August, and two were in the same locality on 15th November. Birds continued to be seen at White Coppice during September to December. In December, birds were noted on the Yarrow at Euxton (13th) and on the Chor in Astley Park (28th).

Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*)

Scarce passage migrant

First on Spring passage was at Hordern Stoops on Anglezarke Moor on 7th April, followed by birds at Rivington (10th), 3 in Georges Lane (16th), Belmont (19th and 22nd) and birds on most days at White Coppice from 10th to the month's end.

A pair at White Coppice on 17th June was an intriguing record.

One was at Belmont on 1st October with 2 there on the 3rd. The last for the year was on Winter Hill on 17th October.

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

Remained in first position in the Winter Garden Bird Survey.

15+ in a Belmont garden on 12/2 & 21/2/15.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised an estimated 45 breeding pairs. 29 and 17 respectively, were recorded in two BBS squares in the Brindle area.

Small numbers (<4) presumed migrants along moor edge at Belmont throughout the autumn passage period with undoubted migrants in with Redwings high S over Belmont on 4th and 16th October. A flock of 40 at Belmont Reservoir on 22nd November were presumably also migrants.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

Winter visitor, often in large numbers

Flocks in January included 250 on fields off Tinklers Lane, Eccleston (4th) and 300 on Blainscough fields, Coppull (20th). In February, 100 were on Croston Moss (3rd), 40 were along the Yarrow at Eccleston (22nd) and 200 were at Withnell Fold (27th). During February and March an estimated 100 birds were in a mixed flock feeding in fields at the top of Sheephouse Lane, Rivington. On the 30th March this had risen to 170 birds. Elsewhere in March, 50 were at Withnell Fold (6th), and 60 at Yarrow Reservoir (8th).

Flocks of 60 at Eccleston and 30 on Croston Moss were noted on 1st April with 8 still at Eccleston on 5th April. The last record was a single at Belmont in the company of a Ting Ouzel on 19th April.

October records included one over Belmont and 20 in Lead Mines Clough (14th), 50 at Great Knowley (17th), 60 over Eccleston (24th) and c250 in Lead Mines Clough (31st). Passage over Belmont saw 650 south in 16 flocks between 29th and 31st. In November, 150 were near Belmont and 20 were at Heskin Hall (1st), 200 at Eccleston (3rd) and 60 at White Coppice (4th). December flocks included ca 50 at Withnell Fold (6th), 40 at Eccleston (11th), a small flock at Withnell (24th), 7 flocks totaling 370 at Belmont between 24th and 29th, and finally 50 at Anglezarke (29th).

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

Fairly common resident;

The species seemed to be holding its own in Rivington and Anglezarke, being noted at all the regular sites.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 40 territories compared with 26 territories in 2003.

In the Winter Garden Bird Survey it came equal 20th, being recorded in 14 of the 23 gardens surveyed.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

Winter visitor, often in large numbers.

A group of 30 birds were near Alance bridge, Rivington on 4th January, with an estimated 100 off Sheepphouse Lane, Rivington on the 7th, and 60 in Dryfield, Rivington on 16th. In February and March an estimated 100 birds were in a mixed flock feeding in fields at the top of Sheepphouse Lane, Rivington, but on 20th February at least 200 birds were very vocal in treetops there.

Elsewhere, a flock of 110 was in Tinklers Lane Eccleston on 22nd January. In February, 100 were at Euxton (4th), 50 were in Roddlesworth Plantations (6th) and 200 were at Eccleston (8th). March sightings included 80 at Eccleston on the 4th, 30 at Yarrow Reservoir (8th) and 10 at Eccleston on the 20th. The only April sighting was one by Syd Brook, Eccleston on 5th April.

First back in autumn were 5 over Belmont on 4th October followed by 7 at Eccleston on the 8th October. 1331 were counted over Belmont during the first hour after sunrise on the 15th. 60 were in Lead Mines Clough on the 16th, a continuous passage of at least 500 over Clayton-le-Woods on the 24th and finally 300 in three flocks over Brinscall on the 31st. In November, 20 were at Adlington (2nd), 50 at Eccleston (3rd), 50 over Chorley (5th) and 10 at Makinson's Farm, Rivington (11th). December flocks included 6 at Eccleston (11th), 50 at Heskin (20th) and 50 roosting at Belmont (26th).

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)

Fairly Common resident

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised an estimated 10 breeding pairs.

The species was not as common in Rivington and Anglezarke as in earlier years but pairs were still noted in the breeding season. Records came from Lead Mines Clough, White Coppice, Dean Wood, Jepsons Clough, Rivington and High Bullough. 13 were at Belmont on 18th August. The 19th August and 24th September saw a group of 12 birds at the regular site at Moses Cocker Farm, Rivington feeding on rowan berries. 33 were at Belmont on 10th October.

One was in full song at Eccleston on 3rd December.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant

First back was one at White Coppice on 10th May, with another at Anglezarke on the same day. On 15th May, one was at Sparks Bridge, Rivington and another near Simms on Anglezarke moor. One was in Roddlesworth Plantations on 16th May. One was in Heatherlea Woods on 25th May.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 3/4 territories compared with 3 territories in 2003.

On 5th June a bird was on the edge of the Terraced Gardens, Rivington. One in a Belmont garden on 9th June was perhaps breeding locally. Birds also remained on territory at both Anglezarke and in Heatherlea Woods throughout June.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

Abundant resident

Came fifth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, but was nevertheless recorded in all gardens surveyed.

In two BBS squares in the Brindle area, 15 and 31 were recorded respectively.

Pied Flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant

Two males were back singing at the regular Belmont breeding site from 18th April onwards with one pair noted feeding young there on 24th May. A male bird was at a regular Rivington site on the 22nd April with another singing very loudly at another on the 23rd. Neither was located again. A further site saw another male on 27th May which was again an isolated record. One was at Roddlesworth on 15th May. One was also noted at Anglezarke but may also have been on passage as it was never relocated.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 2 singing males (one paired & breeding confirmed) compared with one singing male in 2003.

A bird on passage was noted in George's Lane, Rivington on 13th August.

Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)

Rare visitor

One was on Winter Hill on 21st April, with a possibility at White Coppice on 18th April.

One was again on Winter Hill on 7th & 20th September and again on 10th and 31st October.

Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

Fairly common summer visitor in the east of the area

First back was one at White Coppice on 19th April and on the 22nd two separate birds were singing at sites in Rivington. Two were back at Belmont on 24th April. In May, singing birds were noted at Anglezarke, Belmont, Duxbury Woods, Lead Mines Clough and Roddlesworth., and remained on territory into June.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 4 singing males (3 paired) compared with 3 singing males in 2003.

A family party of 3 was at White Coppice on 21st August. Passage birds were at Belmont on 3rd and 31st August.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant

First back was one at Eccleston on 24th April, followed by birds at White Coppice (28th) and Croston Moss (29th). A pair was at White Coppice on 1st May, when 3 were also on Croston Moss.

2 pairs bred successfully near Belmont (fledging 2 and 3 young).

An outstanding Autumn passage took place at Belmont with 32 birds recorded passing through between mid-August to late September, including 5 on 23rd August and 7 on 5th September with the last single on 27th September.

Two were at White Coppice on 7th & 8th September.

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*)

Scarce resident

Sightings in January came from four sites across the area – 4 on Croston Finney (4th), one at White Coppice (19th), 3 on Great Hill (19th) and one at Hic Bibi (20th).

In February, 4 were still on Croston Finney and another was at a moorland site. A male bird was near Hemphshaws, Anglezarke moor on 18th March, and a pair was on the edge of Lower House, Rivington on 21st April. A male bird was seen during April and May at another site on, Anglezarke moor.

A pair was at White Coppice on 2nd May and remained on territory into June. At least 9 territories were located in the West Pennine Moors around Belmont. A juvenile was noted at Rivington on 13th July. Individuals were noted at White Coppice on 8th and 21st August. At least 15 were around Belmont in August and September.

Sightings in September came from Eccleston, Rivington, White Coppice and Winter Hill. A party of 4 was at White Coppice on 12th October. In November a pair was at Belmont Reservoir on the 22nd and singles were on Croston Finney (22nd) and at Bretherton Eyes (30th). At least 2 were still at altitude (over 320 m asl) on Belmont moor at the year end.



Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Fairly common passage migrant and scarce summer visitor

First back in Spring were 2 at Belmont on 15th March, followed by 2 on Withnell Moor on 19th March., and further sightings in April on Croston Moss, Eccleston, Lower Burgh Meadow and White Coppice. On 7th April, 5 were at Jepsons Gate and 2 at Peewit Hall, Anglezarke, and following this influx birds were seen at sites in Rivington, Anglezarke and White Coppice at the month end. Spring passage at Belmont saw 73 birds recorded with a fall of 17 on 21st April.

Passage continued during May with birds recorded at Belmont, Bretherton, Croston Moss, Ulnes Walton and White Coppice.

At least 3 pairs were recorded on territory around Belmont during the breeding season.

In August returning birds were noted in George's Lane, Rivington (2 on 13th) and Croston Moss (31st). Six were on Winter Hill on 27th September. 47 were recorded passing through Belmont from August to 17th October. Three late birds were on Withnell Moor on 4th November.

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

Abundant resident

Came 3rd in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being noted in all of the gardens surveyed. This is its highest ever position.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Abundant resident

Came 8th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being recorded in 21 of the 23 gardens surveyed, although numerically it still vied for first place with Starling.

At least 20 were regular visitors to a Belmont garden from January to July, increasing to 25 for the rest of the year

Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

Fairly common resident

A flock of 20 was on Croston Moss on 19th January.

One was in a Belmont garden from 13th to 21st March.

Flocks of up to 55 birds were noted on Croston Moss on 13th and 28th August. A flock of 30 was on Mawdesley Moss on 22nd December.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava flavissima*)

Scarce passage migrant

One was at Belmont Reservoir on 20th September.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

Common resident by the rivers and reservoirs of the area

One was on Syd Brook at Eccleston 18th January. On 10th March a pair was at Alance bridge, Anglezarke and were present in the general area throughout the breeding season.

Breeding pairs in April were noted at Croston, Kem Mill Whittle, White Coppice and Yarrow Valley Park. At least 6 pairs were noted in the Belmont area. A pair with young was on Syd Brook Eccleston on 14th May. Pairs with young in June were recorded at Croston (19th) and in Yarrow Valley Park (27th). The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 4 territories compared with 3 territories in 2003.

Family parties in July were recorded in Yarrow Valley Park, at Heapey Lodges, Anglezarke Reservoir, White Coppice, Syd Brook Ecclestone and in Duxbury Woods, suggesting a good breeding season for the species. Birds were present at White Coppice until the year end. A more unusual record was of 2 young birds visiting a Rivington garden on 23rd September. On 20th November a bird was at Heapey embankment, Anglezarke.

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)

Common resident

Flocks in January included 13 at Lower Healey (11th) and 14 on fields at Ecclestone (14th). 60 were at Croston sewage works on 14th February.

Nine pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir, one more than in 2014. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 4 pairs

20 were at Belmont Reservoir on 6th September. 30 were at Croston sewage works on 15th September, with at least 20 there on 1st October. Around 50 were in a field at Whittle-le-Woods on 15th November. 20 were in a field at Ecclestone on 20th December.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*)

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in Spring

Four were on Croston Moss on 14th May. Two were there on 4th October.

Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*)

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant

Two were back at Belmont on 20th April with one on 21st. First back at White Coppice was one on 23rd April, and at least one bird was singing there throughout May, and remained on territory throughout June.

Notable was a group of 11 feeding in a clearing in Roddlesworth Plantations on 1st May with an overflying bird noted there on 8th May. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 2 singing males (both paired) compared with 14 singing males in 2003.

Singles were noted at/over Belmont on 30th August, 4th and 6th September with a late bird on 27th September.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

Common resident and passage migrant; scarcer in winter

40 were back at Belmont on 25th January, with an estimated 30 breeding territories around Belmont Reservoir. Still present in large numbers on the moors during the breeding season, and probably the main host species for the local cuckoos.

Autumn flocks at Belmont Reservoir included 70 on 23rd August, 120 on 6th September, 150 on 13th September and 195 on 27th September.

Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*)

Rare winter visitor

One was with Pied Wagtails at Belmont on the 29th December – only the second record for the area, with the previous record also coming from Belmont in 1995.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Winter visitor in variable numbers

205 roosted in rhododendrons at Belmont on 3rd January. A few were in a Chaffinch flock at Rivington on 4th January. On 10th February a male and female were with a small chaffinch flock off Sheephouse Lane, Rivington. Three were also at High Bullough in February. 30 were in a Belmont garden on 14th February with 10 still there on 3rd April and a single bird until 7th May.

First record in autumn was of 3 over Belmont on 10th October, followed by one at Clayton-le-Woods on 13th October. In December, singles were in gardens at Great Knowley (13th) and Adlington (14th) and at least 3 were in a Belmont garden throughout the month.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Common resident and winter visitor

An albino bird was seen along the Yarrow near Croston for the second year.

15 and 18 respectively were recorded in two BBS squares in the Brindle area. It came 9th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey being recorded in 21 of the 23 gardens surveyed.

Autumn passage over Belmont was noted between 26th September and 22nd November with a peak count of 103 in the first hour after sunrise on 10th October.

A flock of 100 was on Croston Moss on 28th November.

Hawfinch (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*)

Rare visitor

One was seen flying into Heatherlea Woods from alongside the Goit on 5th June.



Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Fairly common resident

Records in February came from Croston Moss, Eccleston, Euxton, Gale Moss, Rivington and Ulnes Walton. The species occupied the usual regular sites in Rivington and Anglezarke throughout the year, often coming to seed when provided and favouring heather seed at the relevant time of year. At least 7 centres of records were noted.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised an estimated 5 pairs.

A pair with 2 young was at Great Knowley on 11th June. 4 were in a Belmont garden on 10th August. A party of 6 was in Lead Mines Clough on 3rd October.

It came equal 20th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being recorded in 14 of the 23 gardens surveyed.

Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*)

Common resident

The species fell to 17th place in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, compared to its best position of 9th in 2003. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised only one pair compared with 3 pairs in 2003.

A family group was in a Rivington garden on 26th July, but the species is no longer seen in the wider countryside around Rivington and Anglezarke.

A flock of 15 was regular in a Belmont garden between 13th September and 15th October. A flock of 12 at Great Knowley in December was good by today's standards.

Linnet (*Linaria cannabina*)

Fairly common resident

A flock estimated at 300 birds was on Croston Moss on 19th January, but was down to 100 by 7th February. 20 were at Belmont Reservoir on 21st February, and 3 pairs held territories at the site.

A flock of 30 Linnets was on Mawdesley Moss on 22nd June.

A flock of around 50 birds was on Croston Moss on 25th August. 30 were there on 6th September, but these had increased to 200 by 4th October. 30 were around Belmont in late September.

Twite (*Linaria flavirostris*)

Very scarce resident

A pair was near Belmont on 22nd March with the male noted in brief song. Two were at Belmont Reservoir on 27th September.

Lesser Redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*)

Common winter visitor; uncommon resident

A party of 13 was at Great Knowley on 4th January. Another 4 were regular visitors to a garden feeding station in Adlington during February.

On 22nd April birds were displaying around the top of Lead Mines Clough. Pairs were resident at White Coppice during the breeding season. On 3rd August, one was at the top of Shaws Clough Rivington. The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 5 pairs with an additional 2/3 pairs adjacent. Two family groups totaling 11 birds were in a Belmont garden between 4th and 15th July.

In October, small parties were in the plantations on Anglezarke Moor and a dozen were on Healey Nab (25th). On 27th November a flock of 15 was near the Castle in Rivington. However, in contrast to Siskin, only small numbers were noted in December including 3 at Great Knowley (1st). 10 at Belmont (21st) and 3 at Adlington (28th).

Common Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)

Scarce visitor

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised a single sighting of a group of 5 birds on 11th June – most likely a post-breeding family group from elsewhere. A small flock (<5) was in Belmont Plantations on 11th July. A flock of 11 was near Belmont on 7th June.

There was a notable autumn passage south over Belmont with the following counted in the first hour after sunrise:-

3/10	9/10	15/10	23/10	6/11	12/11	22/11
5	23	2	5	13	12	5

Good numbers of Crossbills were noted in the plantations on Anglezarke Moor in October. First of all a flock of 30 was seen at Holts Flat on the 10th and up to 40 there on the 11th. Smaller flocks of up to 10 birds were then seen at the top end of Lead Mines Clough on the 23rd and 25th.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Common resident

In February, flocks recorded included 45 at Euxton (15th), 20 at Makinson's Farm, Rivington (21st) and 40 at Withnell Fold (27th). 50 were at Belmont reservoir on 22nd March.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Roddlesworth Plantations realised 3/4 pairs.

As usual charms were attracted by thistle seed heads in Rivington and Anglezarke with 15 near Lower House, Rivington on 13th August and a remarkable 120 off Sheephouse Lane, Rivington on 26th with 30 off the Anglezarke woodland trail on 3rd September. Elsewhere in September, charms reported included 50's at Coppull, Great Knowley and White Coppice, 70 at the E-shaped Pond, Bretherton and 100 on Croston Moss, the latter being noted again on 4th October. 12 flocks were noted around Belmont in late September / early October, totaling 650 birds. Another flock of 40 was at Eccleston on 7th October. In November a flock of 50 was at the cemetery (22nd) and 20 were on Croston Moss (21st). Typical charm size in December was 30 with flocks of that size being recorded at Croston (1st), Eccleston (11th), Coppull (14th) and Mawdesley (25th).

The species came 11th in the Winter Garden Bird Survey being recorded in 20 of the 23 gardens surveyed.

Siskin (*Spinus spinus*)

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce resident

There were few records for the first winter period except for 50 around Belmont in mid-January.

On 29th June a family group were in an Anglezarke moor plantation. Four pairs bred at Belmont with broods of 2,1,2 and 5 recently fledged juveniles seen from 30th June. Other early records came from Lower Burgh Way on 14th July and White Coppice on 29th July where there were two or three mobile flocks. Numbers continued to increase during August with parties of 8 at both White Coppice and Duxbury golf course (11th) and 4 in George's Lane, Rivington (17th).

In September, flocks of 6 were at the Anglezarke woodland trail (3rd), and all around the top of Lead Mines Clough (7th). 30 were recorded at White Coppice (8th) and 10 at Syd Brook, Eccleston (25th). They were much in evidence again in October including flocks of 30 on the edge of Lower Burgh Meadow (5th), 30 over Belmont (16th), 60 at Eccleston (17th), another 20 in Yarrow Valley Park (18th) and parties around the plantations on Anglezarke Moor on the 23rd. It was very much a Siskin winter with December flocks including 6 at Eccleston (3rd), 15 at High Bullough (4th), 25 at Euxton (13th), 20 in Yarrow Valley Park (21st), 14 at Great Knowley (28th) and 30 at Anglezarke (29th).

Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)

Rare winter visitor

Three flew over Winter Hill on 21st November.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)

Fairly common resident; declining

A flock of 10 was noted on Croston Moss on 18th January.

Still good numbers singing in the Bretherton, Croston, Eccleston and Mawdesley areas during the breeding season.

One at Belmont on 8th October was a rare sighting. A flock of 10 was on Croston Moss on 28th November.

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

Fairly common resident

January sightings included 18 at Croston sewage works (25th). A total of 95 in 5 flocks wintered around Belmont, including 41 in a Belmont garden on 20th January, with 21 there on 21st February, 15 on 3rd March and 7 still on 27th April.

Birds were present in the usual small numbers in suitable habitats on Anglezarke moor, in March, April and May. Similarly, small numbers held territories in suitable habitat on the mosses, at Bretherton, in Yarrow Valley Park, and at Withnell Fold. 14 pairs bred around Belmont reservoir.

Birds still singing in July included 3 at Withnell Fold (10th) and 6 on Mawdesley Moss (12th).

30 at Belmont Reservoir on 15th December. At least 7 were at the 'baited site' on Belmont Moor (at 330m asl) in late-December

Corn Bunting (*Emberiza calandra*)

Scarce resident; confined to the mosslands

30 were on Croston Moss on 25th January.

10 singing males were counted on a section of Mawdesley Moss on 24th June, and there were 12 singing amongst 20 counted there on 25th July.

A flock of 12 was on Croston Moss on 7th November, and a flock of 30 was on Mawdesley Moss on 29th December.

ESCAPES

Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*)

One was at the north end of Anglezarke Reservoir for most of the year, and similarly two were at Belmont.

Blue and Yellow Macaw

One was in Belmont Village on 1st September

Budgerigar

One was at Belmont Reservoir on 13th September.

Goldfinch x 'Red Factor' Canary hybrid / mule

One was singing in a Belmont garden from 11th to 23rd April.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS FOR BIRD REPORT

Thanks to the following for submitting records for possible inclusion in this report:-

D.Allen, I.Ball, D.Beattie, D.Beevers, J.Bolton, S.Bottomley, I.Cameron, J.Catt, J.Cobham, B.Derbyshire, D.Downing, S.Driver, A.Dunn, J.Edwards, P.Farnworth, S.Field, M.Fishwick, J.Frankland, M.Greenhalgh, N.Hancock, R.Hargreaves, I.M.Harper, L.Harrison, M.Hilton, P.Hodson, D.Holland, J.Howlett, R.E.Hoyle, A.Johnson, C.Johnson, P.King, P.Kirk, P.Krischkiw, E.Langrish, A.Leach, G.Lilley, J.Love, I.Lynas, A.Makin, B.Makinson, S.J.Martin, D.S.Martin, T.Morton, M.Nightingale, L.Poxon, C.Rae, P.Rhodes, R.W.Rhodes, J.Riley, N.Root, L.Rose, P.Ross, P.Rowlands, A.Ryding, J.Smith, N.T.Southworth, R.Spencer, C.Stanley, M.Stuart, J.Sutton, D.Tennant, C.Thistlethwaite, M.Thornhill, J.Waidson, T.West, N.West, P.West, T.Westhead, P.Whittaker, I.Whittle, K.Woan, and all those who submitted Garden Bird Survey Forms.

Apologies to anyone I may have omitted.

ROOKERY CENSUS

Site	2015	2014	2010	2004	1999
Astley Park	3	0	0	0	0
A49 Euxton	41	36	50	40	56
Howard Arms, Whittle Springs	28	35	25	49	30
Rawlinson La, Heath Charnock	0	0	15	14	18
Railway Road, Adlington	41	41	30	24	24
Prospect House, Wheelton	56	45	32	81	101
Lower Wheelton	6	8	10	16	20
Red Cat, Wheelton	1	1	10	N/C	N/C
St Chad's Wheelton	8	8	6	N/C	N/C
Croston Bowling Green	86	88	80	135	130
Croston Town Road	7	5	0	0	0
Croston Westhead Road	5	5	0	0	0
Wild Bottoms Wood, Hoghton	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Town House Farm, Brindle	32	27	40	22	18
Brindle Village	0	3	11	N/C	N/C
Buckshaw Village	1	4	21	N/C	N/C
Totals	315	306	330	381	397

WATERFOWL COUNTS

The mid-month waterfowl counts covered the Anglezarke/Rivington Reservoirs together with Heapey and Birkacre Lodges.

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Little Grebe	1	1				1	
Great Crested Grebe	6	3	9	5	2	2	4
Cormorant	12	11	26	14	2	10	6
Mute Swan	3	3	3	4	6	5	6
Canada Goose	48	30	16		3	10	
Hybrid Goose	2	3	2	3	3		1
Greylag Goose		9					
Wigeon							
Teal				2	9		
Mallard	239	186	96	199	181	122	108
Shoveler	1	1					7
Pochard	1	1					
Tufted Duck	12	9	8	11	1	6	17
Goldeneye	3	1	5				
Goosander	8		12			2	7
Moorhen	16	17	16	17	16	10	13
Coot	37	32	21	22	30	37	33

RINGING REPORT

Introduction

2015 was yet another year of very mixed weather conditions. January and February were at times far too windy for mist netting. During March and early April very little ringing was done. This time the weather wasn't the problem, but an injury to my right knee which gave me the mobility of a three-legged rocking horse, so ringing sessions were restricted to the garden.

Mid-April through to early June the ringing was mostly concentrated on pullus both from open nests found and from the annual nest box checks at a number of sites. Unfortunately, some of the young went unringed due to the foul weather (wind / rain / cold) during early June. July proved to be a very unpredictable month with glorious sunshine on several days, fine and dry weather on a number of days, but nearly always with a strong wind giving it an autumnal feel at times. August and September were months when no ringing took place due to an excessive workload.

October and November were fairly reasonable weatherwise, but December can be summed up in five words:- Desmond, Eva, Frank, Wet and Windy!

2015 Ringing Yearly Summary

During the first quarter, only five ringing sessions took place at just one site – the garden – catching and ringing a total of just 48 birds.

During the second quarter, ringing took place at numerous sites where the emphasis was predominantly on pullus ringing either at open nests or at nest boxes, with a total of 254 passerine pulli ringed. Also this year, the weather gods looked down and smiled and allowed Captain Steve jolly and cabin Boy Leach to set sail in the Birkacre bathtub to tern island, where three Common Tern chicks were ringed on 17th June, bringing the half year total to 303.

During the third quarter, ringing took place on 7 occasions at just one site – the garden – with mostly titmice caught, and most of these were post-fledging juveniles, bringing the total for the year so far to a rather poor 409 birds.



The final quarter of the year saw ringing take place on 10 occasions at two sites – the garden and Arley nature reserve. In late October, both sites held good numbers of Goldcrest. Having noted a good influx of Goldcrest at a number of sites locally, I decided to try for them in the garden as they often go under-recorded. So on the 23rd October I put up a net and played the ‘CD call’ of Goldcrest and in 1.5 hours from first light caught and ringed 11 Goldcrest in our very small garden. The remainder of the quarter was taken up ringing much commoner garden birds including Bullfinch, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Blackbird, Jay, Collared Dove and Woodpigeon, bringing the final quarter’s total to 105 and the year’s not so grand total to 535 birds. Of these 221 were caught and ringed in the garden.

Species Totals 2015				
Species	F/G	Pulli	retraps	Total
Lapwing		1		1
Common Tern		3		3
Wren	8		2	10
Dunnock	4			4
Robin	16	4	2	22
Blackbird	15	13		28
Song Thrush		15		15
Blackcap	2			2
Chiffchaff	2			2
Goldcrest	11			11
Long-tailed Tit	14			14
Coal tit	17		4	21
Blue Tit	59	96	7	162
Great Tit	27	103	7	137
Nuthatch	7	19	2	28
Chaffinch	6		2	8
Goldfinch	29			29
Greenfinch	2			2
Bullfinch	28		4	32
Reed Bunting		4		4
Totals	247	258	30	535

Garden Ringing

This year, with the exception of the nest box surveys and autumnal ringing on Arley reserve, the vast majority of ringing was done in the garden. The year, however, was well below average for the totals ringed, but nonetheless always very enjoyable. Unfortunately, no Siskins whatsoever put in an appearance. However, good numbers of titmice, mostly juveniles, were ringed as well as Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Bullfinch, Goldcrest and a single Chiffchaff in October.

Nest Recording

This year Michelle and I submitted 103 nest record cards to the BTO's Nest Recording Scheme. A good number of these were from checking nest boxes at the numerous sites we visit and also a number of open nests we managed to find.

<u>Nest recording</u>				
Species	No. cards	Eggs laid	Eggs hatched	Young fledged
Robin	1	4	4	4
Blackbird	4	17	13	13
Song-Thrush	5	18	18	8
Long-tailed Tit	2	10	0	Predated
Blue Tit	35			
Great Tit	44			
Nuthatch	4	19	19	15
Grey Heron	2	4	4	3
Buzzard	1	3	2	2
Reed Bunting	1	4	4	4
Blackcap	2	8	6	6
Chiffchaff	1	4	4	3

Acknowledgements

Once again, many thanks to all landowners and local farmers who granted Michelle and me permission to access their land to carry out ringing, including Ian Harper (United Utilities), senior ranger John Bolton and ranger Steve jolly (Yarrow Valley Park), Andrew Greenwood (LCC ranger) for access to Withnell Fold nature reserve, Alan Silcock of Wood Lane Farm, Mawdesley Moss and Chris Kearton of Midge Hall Farm, Croston Moss. Biggest thank you goes to wife, Michelle - bird bag carrier, biometric recorder, nest finder, scribe, brew maker and one hell of a good ringing companion, although she's still not cracked the 3.00 am starts!. Finally, thanks to my trainers past and present, Ian Spence and Dave Fletcher, without whose assistance this report would not be possible.

Andrew Leach

MAMMAL REPORT

Western Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

Seen from February to November but mostly in small numbers. Maximum were 3 at Belmont.

Northern Mole (*Talpa europaea*)

The largest number of reports were again from Belmont. As in most years, their diggings were abundant, although not many animals were seen.

Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentoni*)

I took part in the National Bat Monitoring Programme, surveying for Daubentons near Hoghton Tower. I recorded 8 individuals. The Biodiverse Society conducted a survey in Yarrow Valley Park and recorded just two.

Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) 45kHz

Records were received from Cuerden Valley Park, Wheelton and Belmont. The survey in Yarrow Valley Park recorded 50+

Soprano or Pygmy Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)

None reported this year.

Noctule Bat (*Nyctalus noctula*)

As last year it was noted at several locations but not many individuals were recorded. Sites included Cuerden Valley Park, Clayton Brook, Yarrow Valley Park and Euxton.

Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*)

There is still the roost of "regional significance" in the Stable Block of the Sue Ryder home at Cuerden, as well as the hibernaculum near Cinder Path. Very few were recorded this year

Whiskered/Brandt's Bat (*Myotis mystacinus* / *M. brandtii*).

Still present in a private house bordering Cuerden Valley Park.

Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*)

We received a few records from Belmont

Brown Hare (*Lepus europaeus*)

Sightings were reported throughout the year from all over the recording area. Maximum reported were 3 near Mawdesley

Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

Away from Belmont this remains a very unreported species. A few seen at Cuerden Valley Park and some seen on various roundabouts in our area! Also recorded regularly in BBS surveys in the Brindle area.



Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*).

Another unrecorded animal away from Belmont, where they are still managed. I am just as guilty as everyone for not sending in several sightings from Cuerden Valley Park.

Common throughout Yarrow Valley Park and surrounding woodlands.

Bank Vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*).

Just a single report of 3 from Cuerden Valley Park during a survey we conducted there

Field Vole (*Microtus agrestis*)

Abundant in the Belmont area noted both visually and from counting the number of runs/holes

Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)

Another species that is managed at Belmont. Cuerden Valley Park and Yarrow Valley Park reported one each

Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*)

As in previous years only a few sightings were reported from Cuerden Valley Park, Yarrow Valley Park and White Coppice

Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

One was seen and photographed in Big Lodge, Yarrow Valley Park on 10th January

Stoat (*Mustela ermine*)

Several sightings from throughout our area, with the maximum recorded being 3 in Cuerden Valley Park.

Weasel (*Mustela nivalis*)

Apart from Belmont, the only other record of note was 6 from various recorders around White Coppice

American Mink (*Mustela vison*)

Several reports are still being received of this invasive species.

Badger (*Meles meles*.)

This lovely animal is present in reasonable numbers in suitable habitat. Lancashire Badger Group have the locations but they remain confidential.

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

As I write the report, strangely our new Environment Secretary is proposing to bring back hunting with hounds. I mentioned the same last year with regards to David Cameron. Having written to our MP, I can confirm that he has said he cannot see any reason for its re-introduction. Records were received from all parts of our recording area. This species is managed at Belmont.



Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*)

A group was seen from time to time in the Euxton area. This group still has a white individual with them.

Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*)

Small numbers were noted in all parts of our area throughout the year. Though previously a regular sight in Cuerden Valley Park, the species is becoming more elusive here. The highest count was 12 near Belmont.

Common Shrew. (*Sorex araneus*)

One individual was caught in a mammal survey carried out in Cuerden Valley Park.

AMPHIBIA

Smooth Newt (*Triturus vulgaris*)

One was at Belmont on 1st April

Palmate Newt (*Triturus helveticus*)

Common in ponds/reservoirs around Belmont but no surveys carried out in 2015. Maximum of 3 Palmate Newts in Roddlesworth Plantations in the spring.

Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)

4 seen mating in Yarrow Valley Park on 4th April with at least two other individuals present. The species was also recorded at Hic Bibi in July.

Toad (*Bufo bufo*)

50+ were in breeding ponds at Belmont on 5th April. Pairs seen mating with spawn present in Lower Burgh Meadow pond on 7th April.

Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*)

Frogs were first seen in members' garden ponds during the last week of February with spawn appearing from 1st March. A similar timetable applied to the 'mill race' in Yarrow Valley Park.

First (2) seen at Belmont on 26th January and 90+ were in garden ponds at Belmont by 7th March. 700+ were in a ditch near Belmont on 8th March & 500+ in just one pond at Belmont Reservoir on 17th March. Due to the mild second winter period, one was seen in a Belmont pond on 10th December and another was seen in a member's garden in Eccleston on 16th December!

REPTILES

Common Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*)

Singles were seen near Belmont on 25th March with two seen there on both 1st & 11th July. Three singles were seen in the White Coppice area around 20th April, with another in Lead Mines Clough on 26th April.



Conclusion

May I remind members again of the website : <http://projectsplatter.co.uk/>

If you see any animal killed on the roads anywhere in the country, could you report them on that website, please?

My thanks to all those people who continue to report all their sightings. Acknowledgements to Peter Krischkiw for the image of Common Lizard, photographed in Lead Mines Clough.

David Beattie