

**CHORLEY & DISTRICT  
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

*Chorley & District Natural History Society*

*is a Registered Charity*

*Registration Number 513466*

**ANNUAL REPORT**

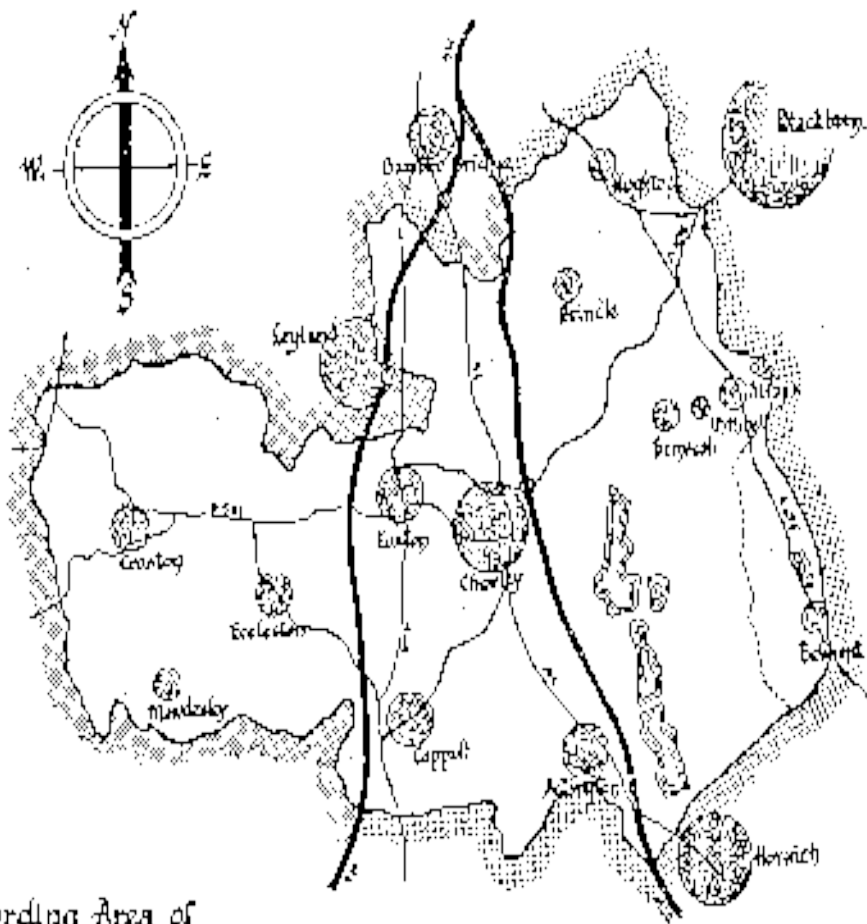
**2017**

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## Recording Area of Chorley & District Natural History Society

The Society's recording area follows the boundary of the Chorley Borough in the north, west and south but extends beyond the boundary in the east to include Belmont reservoir plus the whole of the Roddlesworth reservoir system and Tockholes Plantations.

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## RECORDERS

Flora	David Beattie
Fungi	Leonard Poxon
Insects	Phil Kirk
Birds	Neil Southworth
Mammals	David Beattie

## REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Heavy overnight rain into the new year dampened celebrations and was followed by a short cold snap for the first few days of **January**, including a severe frost of -5°C on the 5<sup>th</sup>. There then followed two weeks of relatively mild weather with a typical maximum of 8°C and plenty of mist and drizzle. It was colder on the 12<sup>th</sup> when there was a thin coating of snow, but which soon cleared. The 20<sup>th</sup> was a glorious sunny day (max 7°C) which led to a spell of colder weather for the next week. Frost occurred on 6 days with a low of -2°C and a high of 7°C. Milder weather returned for the last three days with a maximum of 9°C, but it was wet and windy. There was a good mixture of wildfowl and waders on the floods at Bretherton Eyes and Waxwings were still in town. In the field, we visited Croston Moss at the start of the month, where a good selection of farmland species was seen. We then had a second outing, this time to Bretherton Eyes when a total of 52 were clocked up, including Barnacle Goose and Golden Plover. Indoors species, Rick Parker gave us a talk on the management work carried out at Doffcocker Lodge, Bolton, and the installation of tern rafts at the reserve.

Unsettled weather continued into **February**. The 2<sup>nd</sup> was the warmest day of the year so far with a temperature of 12°C but also gale force winds. The 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> became much colder as a result of strong easterly winds with the odd snow flurry and frost on 2 or 3 days. Temperatures rose from 13<sup>th</sup> as the easterly wind abated. 10° was achieved on 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> and there were one or two sunny days. The 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> saw 11°C before the wind strengthened bringing in heavy rain. Storm Doris blew in on the 23<sup>rd</sup> with torrential rain, gale force winds and a maximum of 6°C. There was then a brief respite until 26<sup>th</sup> when Storm Eva blew in with more gale force winds but a temperature of 11°C. The month ended with

a couple of days of cooler but still unsettled weather. Bretherton Eyes continued to be the main source of birding interest, although elsewhere a Little Egret was at Adlington and a Red Kite was over Yarrow Valley Park. Our Field Trip was to Pennington Flash, where Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, and Little Egret were seen. John Barlow gave us a talk on the 'Birds of Turton and Edgworth'.

The first week of **March** saw spells of rain every day and a maximum of 10°C but no frost. The second week saw temperatures increase to 13°C by the 14<sup>th</sup> as it became generally drier with sunny spells and just a touch of frost on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The 15<sup>th</sup> was a fine sunny day with a maximum of 14°C but then 5 days of very wet and windy weather followed with a best of 11°C. After a thoroughly wet, cold day on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, high pressure took over leading to five days of dry, sunny weather and a maximum of 16°C. The weather turned showery for the last 4 days of the month, but it was still relatively warm with 16°C again on the 30<sup>th</sup>. A pair of Garganey turned up on the Rufford canal mid-month right on our western boundary and a couple of Avocet were at Belmont on the eastern boundary as the first summer migrants started to arrive. Our field trip took us to Marshside at Southport, where Little Egret, Avocet and Mediterranean Gull were amongst the species seen. Indoors, Denis Atherton gave us an insight into 'Raptor Migration in Southern Spain'.

**April** started with a week of unsettled weather and a maximum of 14°C on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. A glorious sunny day with a maximum of 20°C on the 8<sup>th</sup> came from nowhere and disappeared as quickly as it had arrived. The next week through to Easter became increasingly unsettled with the maximum temperature falling to 9°C, a cool wind and a particularly wet day on Easter Sunday. The following week saw an improvement with dry, sunny weather and a maximum of 13°C on 21<sup>st</sup>. A brief spell of rain on 24<sup>th</sup> was followed by dry weather to the end of the month, but with a slight frost on 26<sup>th</sup>, then becoming warmer with 16°C on 30<sup>th</sup> but very windy. Waxwings were still here until the 4<sup>th</sup>. Birds passing through on migration included Osprey and Whimbrel with the first Cuckoo arriving on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A recording weekend was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> / 23<sup>rd</sup> in lieu of the Bird race, which had been losing support. The last indoor meeting of the season was a talk on 'Photographing Butterflies and Moths' by Laura Sivell.

**May** set off with fine, sunny weather which continued for much of the month with just brief spells of rain on 12<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>. Temperatures gradually increased to 18° on 14<sup>th</sup>, 22° on 22<sup>nd</sup> and a hot 27° on 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>. As usual, two hot days were then followed by a thunderstorm and four wet days before fine weather returned on 31<sup>st</sup>. Our first evening walk of the summer season took us to Cuerden Valley Park. Peregrine Falcons bred successfully at St George's church, but sadly Common Terns didn't breed at Yarrow Valley Park.

Although **June** started with a dry, sunny day and a high of 21°C, unsettled weather then set in for the next 10 days, with two very wet days on 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> and gale force winds on the latter. The maximum temperature in the period was 18°C. The following 10 days became drier, then sunny with unbroken sunshine from 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> when a maximum of 28°C was achieved. The last week of the month saw a return to unsettled weather, accompanied by lower temperatures

with a high of 19° on 27<sup>th</sup> and only 12° on 28<sup>th</sup>, which was a particularly wet day. Our summer evening walk took us to Doffcocker Lodge at Bolton, where Rick Parker followed up his talk from January with a tour of the lodge and the rescue of one of the tern chicks which had swum away from the raft. It was successfully returned the following day.

**July** was generally unsettled with rain on 18 days. Highest temperature was 27°C on 18<sup>th</sup> but this was the exception with 19° - 21° being more typical. There were just six sunny days. We had a wander around Lower Burgh Meadows for our evening walk in thankfully sunny weather. A colony of Ringlet butterflies was discovered at Brinscall to confirm the species' expansion into the area. A couple of Black-tailed Skimmers were found in Yarrow Valley Park suggesting it is now becoming established locally. Two or three Quail on Bretherton Moss were the birding highlight of the month.

**August** started with a fine sunny day but quickly reverted to the unsettled pattern set by July with the added element of strong winds for the first week. Rain fell on 21 days. Highest temperature was 23°C on 22<sup>nd</sup> but more typical was 17° - 20°. Just 3 days had full sunshine. Our evening walk was a repeat of the circular from Whins lane, Higher Wheelton, along the canal to Top Lock with Tawny Owl and Pipistrelle bats to greet us on our return. Osprey, Red Kite and Hobby provided the birding excitement during the month.

**September** began with a few days of fine weather with a maximum of 17°C before a spell of unsettled weather, characterized by torrential showers, set in, accompanied by strong winds, culminating in Storm Aileen on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Best temperature in this period was 15°. In fact, the unsettled weather continued for the rest of the month with just 3 dry, sunny days. Temperatures in the second half were marginally higher, typically 18° maximum with a best of 19° on 24<sup>th</sup>. We had a fungal foray in Duxbury Woods on 29<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, the weather was wet and the fungi sparse. The first returning Pink-footed Geese were seen mid-month. The indoor season commenced with a talk on 'Wild Mersey' by Bill Morton, with the AGM following a week later.

The unsettled weather continued for the first two weeks of **October** with spells of rain on most days and highest temperatures around 14°C. The 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> saw a spell of dry weather with higher temperatures and a maximum of 21° on 16<sup>th</sup>, when ex-hurricane Ophelia roared through with 45 mph winds and 70 mph gusts. The rest of the month saw a return to unsettled weather with lower temperatures of typically 13° and a best of 16° (24<sup>th</sup>). Storm Brian passed through on 21<sup>st</sup>. the first (slight) frost was on 27<sup>th</sup> with another on 30<sup>th</sup>. We had a field trip to Knott End on 29<sup>th</sup>. Once again, the flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes proved a magnet for wildfowl as well as a great White Egret which took up residence at the site. Our indoor meeting was a talk by John Miles on Dumfries and Galloway.

The unsettled theme continued for much of **November** until high pressure introduced dry conditions for the last three days. Frost occurred on 7 days with a low of -2° on 30<sup>th</sup>. Maximum temperatures fell throughout the month from 11°

at the beginning to 5° at the end. Best was 14° on 1<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Lowest maximum was 2° on 30<sup>th</sup>. There were just 7 dry days with 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> being particularly wet and windy. There was a light dusting of snow / hail on 25<sup>th</sup>. This was the day we had our field trip to Marton Mere at Blackpool! Croston Moss held large numbers of both Whooper Swan and Pink-footed Goose. Our indoor talk was a video of the Brazilian Pantanal by Ron Jackson.

High pressure continued for a few days into **December** before Storm Caroline on 6<sup>th</sup> / 7<sup>th</sup> brought in heavy rain with much lower temperatures, which brought snow showers and a light covering from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>. Maximum temperatures in this period fell from 12° on 7<sup>th</sup> to 1° on 10<sup>th</sup>. The severely cold weather continued to 17<sup>th</sup> with frost on 8 days including -6° on 11<sup>th</sup>. The next week saw milder but often foggy, drizzly weather with a maximum of 11° on 24<sup>th</sup> / 25<sup>th</sup>. There was then a short cold snap from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> with frost and hail on 28<sup>th</sup>, before the year ended with milder, wetter conditions and 9° on 31<sup>st</sup>. Otters were seen on a couple of occasions in Cuerden Valley Park. Our final talk of the year was a talk by David Beattie on the Red Squirrel.

Survey work carried out during the year included the monthly wildfowl counts, the rookery census and the winter garden bird survey. Thanks to all who took part. Members have also again assisted Lancashire Wildlife Trust's Biodiverse Society surveys of Biological Heritage Sites in our area and Willow Tit surveys.

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. 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 and Len Poxon.

The committee at the end of 2017 was as follows:-

Chairman	Keith Woan	80, Carleton Road, Chorley Tel 01257 278759
Treasurer	Carol Thistlethwaite	63, Earlsway, Euxton Tel 01257 275233
Committee:	David Beattie Mark Fishwick John Howlett Phil Kirk David Morrison Len Poxon Lydia Rose Neil Southworth Nora West	

## FLORA REPORT

Noxious and invasive species attracted the attention of various agencies during the year. Several stands of Giant Hogweed along the river Yarrow had to be removed by council workers in the interest of public safety. Himalayan Balsam eradication involved a lot of effort with mixed results. Lower Burgh Meadow Conservation Group have achieved a great degree of control of the species in Plock Wood through constant effort. Along the Yarrow some has been eradicated successfully, but there remains much to be done. Elsewhere, sites such as Lower Healey and Withnell Fold nature reserve remain swamped by balsam. Members could consider offering their services at one of the many volunteer days which are advertised throughout the growing season. Japanese Knotweed does not appear to be anything like as widespread as Himalayan Balsam although its eradication poses much more of a problem. At one or two sites it is being controlled by spraying with a degree of success, but it remains to be seen if it returns after a few years.

On the positive side of things, the efforts of a few of our members, most notably Lydia Rose and Peter Ross, continued to generate records for the Society, including from the summer evening walks programme, which also enabled the botanically challenged to increase their knowledge!

In a walk around Cuerden Valley Park in January, John Poland, author of 'The Vegetative Key' was excited to find an uncommon oak tree – *Quercus canariensis* – which is usually found in Portugal and other counties bordering the Mediterranean. Quite how it arrived in Lancashire is not yet known but it is being monitored.

## FUNGI REPORT

In 2017 the spring months were very poor for fungi, possibly due to weather conditions, under-recording or a combination of both. However, the following fungi were recorded in the CDNHS area:-

Scarlet Elfcup (*Sarcoscypha austriaca*), Velvet Shank (*Flammulina velutipes*) and King Alfred's Cakes (*Daldinia concentrica*), seen in the Nature Reserve at Withnell Fold; some small yellowish fungi on the moors between White Coppice and Anglezarke (but a positive identification was not made); a good-sized patch of St. Georges Mushroom (*Calocybe gambosa*) in the woodland at Lower Burgh Meadow and a patch of Egghead Mottlegill (*Panaeolus semiovatus*) on manure in field off Holker Lane, Ulnes Walton.

May and June were a lean time for fungi with only two species noted each month, with a Chicken of the Woods fungi (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) on two trees at the bottom of Stronstrey Bank in White Coppice; Coral Spot fungi (*Nectria cinnabarina*) on a tree trunk off Eyes Lane in Bretherton; a couple of specimens of Slippery Jack (*Suillus luteus*) in Chorley Cemetery and numerous Fairy Inkcap (*Coprinellus disseminatus*) on an old stump at the same venue.

The late summer also started off with very few fungi records, but gradually built up through August into September with an increasing number of species being recorded including the following species:-

The Miller (*Clitopilus prunulus*) seen in Chorley Cemetery in July and August and also seen in a Great Knowley Garden and at White Coppice seemingly had a good season this year. The Blusher (*Amanita rubescens*) was also seen at a number of locations, being recorded in a Chorley town garden, Hic Bibi Nature Reserve, a Great Knowley garden and a number were also seen near to Georges Lane (Belmont Road) at Rivington.

Other fungi noted included Dryad's Saddle (*Polyporus squamosus*) at Withnell Fold; a number of Giant Funnel (*Leucopaxillus giganteus*) were seen in the nature reserve at Hic Bibi, Coppull, where Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), Common Puffball (*Lycoperdon perlatum*), Sheathed Woodtuft (*Kuehneromyces mutabilis*) and Weeping Widow (*Lacrymaria lacrymabunda*) were also noted. A good number of Horse Mushrooms (*Agaricus arvensis*) were noted in a Chorley garden and a number of Brown Rollrim (*Paxillus involutus*) were seen on Euxton Business Park.

The most unusual fungus found in this period was noted in the woodland adjacent Tan House Brook at Great Knowley, when a single specimen of a miniature polypore (*Polyporus leptoccephalus nummularis*) was found on a dead twig. Jelly Ear fungus (*Auricularia auricular-judae*) was seen here on that occasion.



White Coppice also produced a number of fungi species with a dozen or so specimens of (*Xerocomus cisalpinus*) seen. together with Vermillion Waxcap (*Hygrocybe miniata*), Brown Birch Bolete (*Leccinum scabrum*), Amethyst Deceiver (*Laccaria amethystine*), Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), The Deceiver (*Laccaria laccata*), Common Cavalier (*Melanoleuca polioleuca*), Sulphur Tuft (*Hypoholoma fasciculare*) and Purple Brittlegill (*Russula atropurpurea*) in late August.

In Chorley Cemetery a 'ring' of Bruising Webcap (*Cortinarius purpurascens*) was noted around the same Beech tree as last year and Yellowing Knight (*Tricholoma scalpturatum*) was also spotted in August, whilst in September fungi at this location were more numerous and of greater variety with:-

15-20 groups of Clustered Brittlestem (*Psathyrella multipedata*), at least 8 groups of Glistening Inkcup (*Copinellus micaceus*), Larch Bolete (*Suillus grevillei*), Pleated Inkcup (*Parasola plicatis*), Poisonpie (*Hebloma crustuliniforme*), Fly Agariv (*Amanita muscaria*), Brown Rollrim (*paxillus involutus*), Birch Knight (*Tricholoma fulvum*), Brown Birch Bolete (*Leccinum scabrum*), Stinking Dapperling (*Lepiota cristata*), Weepiing Widow (*Lacrymaria lacrymabunda*), Purple Brittlegill (*Russula atropurpurea*) and Shaggy Inkcup (*Coprinus comatus*).

Shaggy Inkcaps were also noted at several other locations in September, including approximately 20 specimens near Bent Row Cottages at Heath Charnock, on a Chorley housing estate road and in Euxton at several locations in the verges of Euxton Lane. Fungi seen at Yarrow Valley Park this month included Peeling Oysterling (*Crepidotus mollis*), White Saddle (*Helvella crispa*), Pestle Puffball (*Lcoperdon excipuliforme*) and whilst not a fungus a Red



Raspberry Slime Mold (*Tubifera ferruginosa*) was also noted on a dead stump. At Rivington in a walk through the terraced gardens on the 17<sup>th</sup>, the following species were noted:- Ochre Brittlegill (*Russula ochroleuca*), Fairy Inkcap (*Coprinellus disseminatus*), The Deceiver (*Laccaria laccata*), Birch Polypore (*Piptoporus betulinus*), Stump Puffball (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*), Brown Birch Bolete (*Leccinum scabrum*) and Bitter Beech Bolete (*Caloboletus calopus*). In Astley Park Woods a member noted Orange Bonnet (*Mycena acicula*), Tar Spot fungi (*Rhytisma acerinum*) and Southern Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*).

The main event in September was the Society's annual fungal foray held in Duxbury Woods on Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup>, unfortunately a very wet day which I am sure contributed to the low turnout of members. At this event the following fungi were recorded:-

Glistening Inkcap (*Coprinellus micaceus*), Tawny Grisette (*Amanita fulva*), Cocconut Milkcap (*Lactarius glycosmus*), Common Earthball (*Scleroderma citrinum*), Stump Puffball (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*), Common Puffball (*Lycoperdon perlatum*), Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*), Candlesnuff fungus (*Xylaria hypoxylon*), Ochre Brittlegill (*Russula ochroleuca*), Common Bonnet (*Mycena galericulata*), Snapping Bonnet (*Mycena vitilis*), Honey Fungus (*Armillaria mellea*), Horsehair Parachute (*Gymnopus androsaceus*), Birch Polypore (*Piptoporus betulinus*), Lumpy Bracket (*Trametes gibbosa*), Southern Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*), Pale Oysterling (*Crepidotus caspari*), Hairy Curtain Crust (*Stereum hirsutum*), Turkeytail (*Trametes versicolor*) and Spotted Toughshank (*Rhodocollybia maculata*). One other fungus found was an open cup shaped fungus which I now believe to be the outer shell of a Common Puffball after it has discharged its spores. On the previous day during a reconnoitre of the site the following fungi were also noted, Porcelain Fungus (*Oudemansiella mucida*), Yellowleg Bonnet (*Mycena epipterygia*) and The Deceiver (*Laccaria laccata*).

The late autumn and early winter months proved to be a better period for fungi than the early autumn, although not as good as last year in terms of numbers or species diversity. The mild spell in November encouraged some second flushes of some species, but frosts in late November and December soon cut the numbers down.

Chorley Cemetery provided the most records, with the following species being noted in October or November:-



Clustered Brittlemat (*Psathyrella multipedata*), Common Funnel (*Clitocybe gibba*), Fragrant Funnel (*Clitocybe fragrans*), Good numbers of Trooping Funnel (*Clitocybe geotropa*) were noted in 5 separate locations, Glistening Inkcap (*Coprinellus micaceus*), Common Inkcap (*Copinopsis atramentaria*), Shaggy Inkcap (*Coprinus*

*comatus*), Honey Fungus (*Armillaria mellea*), Orange Peel Fungus (*Aleuria*

aurantia), Coconut Milkcap (*Lactarius glycosmus*), Orange Milkcap (*Lactarius aurantiacus*), Saffron Milkcap (*Lactarius deliciosus*), Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), The Sickener (*Russula emetica*), Purple Brittlegill (*Russula atropurpurea*), Weeping Widow (*Lacrymaria lacrymabunda*), Birch Knight (*Tricholoma fulvum*), Blushing Wood Mushroom (*Agaricus silvaticus*), The Miller (*Clitopilus prunulus*), Butter Waxcap (*Hygrocybe ceracea*), Snowy Waxcap (*Hygrocybe virinea*) and Heath Waxcap (*Gliophorus laetus*), Small Stagshorn (*Calocera cornea*), Turkeytail (*Trametes versicolor*), Wrinkled Club (*Clavulina rugosa*) and a specimen of Deer Shield (*Pluteus cervinus*) was also noted by a CDNHS member. Second flushes of Brown Birch Bolete (*Leccinum scabrum*), The Blusher (*Amanita rubescens*), Yellowing Knight (*Tricholoma scalpturatum*) Crystal Brain Fungus (*Exida nucleata*), White Saddle (*Helvella crispa*), Shaggy Inkcap (*Coprinus comatus*), Pleated Inkcap (*Parasola plicatilis*), Butter Waxcap (*Hygrocybe ceracea*) and whilst not a fungus some Yellow Tooth Slime Mould (*Phnerochaete chrysorhiza*) was also recorded.

Compared to previous years at this site Bolete numbers were low with no sign of Weeping or Bovine Bolete or the site speciality Copper Spike; Slippery Jack (*Suillus luteus*), Brown Birch Bolete (*Leccinum scabrum*) and Red Cracking Bolete (*Xerocomellus chrysenteron*) were seen however.

There was a fungal foray at this site by the Chorley U3A group where they recorded good numbers of Parrot Waxcap (*Gliophorus pssitacinus*).

Whilst on the cricket field at White Coppice there were fewer fungi than seen previously, with Golden Waxcap (*Hygrocybe chlorophana*), Crimson Waxcap (*Hygrocybe punicea*), Heath Waxcap (*Hygrocybe laetus*), and Earthy Powdercap (*Cystoderma amianthium*) being noted, along the woods adjacent to the Goit were several common woodland species including Common Earthball (*Scleroderma citrinum*), Common Puffball (*Lycoperdon perlatum*), Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), Ochre Brittlegill (*Russula ochroleuca*), Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fascicularae*), Dead Moll's Fingers (*Xylaria longipes*), Tawny Funnel (*Lepista flaccida*), The Deceiver (*Laccaria laccata*), Birch Polypore (*Piptoporus betulinus*) and Blushing Bracket (*Daedaleopsis confragosa*).



Elsewhere Parrot Waxcap (*Gliophorus pssitacinus*) were seen on a lawn and 2 specimens of Blackening Waxcap (*Hygrocybe conica*) noted in a wooden tub containing a Bay Tree and Birch Polypore (*Piptoporus betulinus*) were seen in a Great Knowley Garden. Seen in the woods at Anglezarke Reservoir were Porcelain Fungus (*Oudemansiella mucida*) and Honey Fungus (*Armillaria mellea*). Dead Moll's Fingers (*Xylaria longipes*) were seen in Plock Wood, Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) was noted near Heapey No. 3 Reservoir and Birch Knight (*Tricholoma fulvum*) and

Clouded Funnel (*Clitocybe nebularis*) were noted on grass verges in Buckshaw Village. A good find was 5 or 6 specimens of Pink Waxcap (*Poropolomopsis calyptriformis*) in Belmont. Also noted was the absence of Collared Earthstars

(*Geastrum triplex*) in the car park at Yarrow Valley Park, where a good number of Conical Brittlestem (*Parasola conopilus*) and White Saddle (*Helvella crispa*) were seen.

In December there were very few fungi records however in Chorley Cemetery Common Funnel (*Clitocybe gibba*) and Fragrant Funnel (*Clitocybe fragrans*) were noted and Jelly Ear Fungus (*Auricularia auricular-judae*) seen on Lower Burgh Meadow.

A fungal survey was also carried on Lower Burgh Meadow and adjacent Woodland on 13.10.17 at the request of the Lower Burgh Meadow Conservation Group. 26 species were found and identified, with a further 6 remaining unidentified as listed as follows:-

Clustered Brittlestem (*Psathyrella multipedata*), Snapping Bonnet (*Mycena vitilis*), The Deceiver (*Laccaria laccata*), Stump Puffball (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*), Puffball (*Lycoperdon perlatum*), Jelly Ear (*Auricularia auricula-judae*), Crystal Brain Fungus (*Exida nucleata*), Hairy Curtain Crust (*Stereum hirsutum*), Southern Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*), Birch Bracket (*Piptoporus betulinus*), Blushing Bracket (*Daedaleopsis*), Lumpy Bracket (*Trametes gibbosa*), White Knight (*Tricholoma album*), Coral Spot (*Nectria cinnabarina*), Dead Man's Fingers (*Xylaria polymorpha*), Wrinkled Club (*Clavulina rugosa*), Lilac Milkcap (*Lactarius lilacaci*), Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*), Snowy Waxcap (*Cuphophyllus vigineus*), Velvet Shank (*Flammulina velutipes*), Honey Fungus (*Armillaria mellea*), (*Entoloma sericatum*) – (no English name for this), Turkey Tail (*Trametes versicolor*).

Throughout the report I have used the officially recognized English names for fungi as recommended by the British Mycological Society.

Thanks to the following members, plus recorders on the forum for their records etc:

Joyce Riley, Tony Dunn, Dave Russell, Peter Krischkiw, Neil Southworth, Phil Kirk, Chris and Tony Johnson, Len Poxon, Peter Ross and Nora West.  
Apologies to anyone I may have missed.

**Leonard Poxon**

# INVERTEBRATE REPORT

## LEPIDOPTERA

### **Moth Species:**

We had only one addition to the local moth list in 2017, but it was a rather stunning addition. A Death's Head Hawk Moth (*Acherontia atropos*) was found at Cuerden Valley Park at the end of June. It is a migrant to the UK and is found most years in the South East of the country, but seldom as far north as Chorley. It feeds on Potato, Deadly Nightshade and other members of the *Solanacea*. It is often found in allotments. It is one of the largest UK moths and a really impressive find.



The new addition is a migrant to the UK as is the Hummingbird Hawk Moth which was recorded at Astley Village in September, and in Chorley itself during October. 2015 was a good year for this species, but we had none in 2016.

### **Butterfly Species:**

#### **Small Skipper** (*Thymelicus sylvestris*)

Highest counts in 2017 were from Great Knowley (15) and at Hic Bibi (10) – both counts being on July 8<sup>th</sup>. Overall the flight period was from 20<sup>th</sup> June (Hic Bibi) until 2<sup>nd</sup> September (Belmont). The majority of the sightings were in the first three weeks of July.

#### **Large Skipper** (*Ochlodes venata*)

This species emerged rather earlier than the previous one. The first was seen at Great Knowley on 4<sup>th</sup> June and the last at Lower Burgh Meadows on 13<sup>th</sup> August. Records were slightly fewer than for the Small Skipper, but the highest count was a respectable 20 seen at Belmont on 5<sup>th</sup> July. Counts of 10 were made at the Withnell disused Railway and at Great Knowley on 8<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **Clouded Yellow** (*Colias croceus*)

No records for this migrant for the third consecutive year.

#### **Brimstone** (*Goepteryx rhamni*)

This species was seen only in singles, excepting that 2 were seen at White Coppice on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. It was fairly frequent between 24<sup>th</sup> March (Adlington) and 25<sup>th</sup> May (Rivington) but then was only seen at Belmont when one turned up on 6<sup>th</sup> July and another on 14<sup>th</sup> September. No reports of ovipositing this year.

#### **Large White** (*Pieris brassica*)

Although it was widely reported throughout the season (25<sup>th</sup> March at Eccleston until 28<sup>th</sup> September at Rivington), there were no really high counts. A maximum of 14 were seen on Lower Burgh Meadows on 13<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Small White** (*Pieris rapae*)

Seen in flight between 9<sup>th</sup> April (Coppull) and 24<sup>th</sup> September). The highest count was 11 at Cuerden Valley Park on 10<sup>th</sup> July. There was no discernable break in records to signify 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations. Records were fairly steady throughout.

### **Green Veined White** (*Peiris napi*)

Belmont once more provided the highest numbers of this species. Counts of 40 on May 14<sup>th</sup> and of 50 on 9<sup>th</sup> August were the best. The first sighting of the year was at Cuerden on 11<sup>th</sup> April. 10 were still around on 27<sup>th</sup> August at Belmont, but the last sighting was at Winter Hill on 1<sup>st</sup> September.

### **Orange Tip** (*Anthrocharis cardamines*)

2 were seen at Cuerden on 8<sup>th</sup> April, which is a fairly early date for the species to emerge. Thereafter it was widely reported until 26<sup>th</sup> May (Belmont), which made 2017 the first year since 2011 that we have not had the species into June. There were several days in April and May when counts of 20+ were made, but 30 was the highest on May 7<sup>th</sup> (Cuerden).

### **Green Hairstreak** (*Callophris rubi*)

4 at White Coppice on 12<sup>th</sup> May was the highest count – a far cry from the large numbers we used to get 1 decade ago. They were seen only at White Coppice and at Belmont. First date was 24<sup>th</sup> April and the last was 26<sup>th</sup> May.

### **Purple Hairstreak** (*Quercusia quercus*)

Sightings received from Cuerden, Common Bank and Belmont. The maximum count was 16 at Belmont on August 10<sup>th</sup>. Overall the flight period was 16<sup>th</sup> June until 15<sup>th</sup> August.

### **White Letter Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium w-album*)

Once again, I am grateful to two enthusiastic recorders who have found eggs and/or larvae of this species at about 20 local sites. It goes to show that if you know what to look for and where to look for it, this species is not as uncommon as we once thought. Adults were recorded in flight at 8 sites between 26<sup>th</sup> June (Chorley) and 17<sup>th</sup> July (Euxton). The maximum count was 5 near Duxbury on 1<sup>st</sup> July.



### **Small Copper** (*Lacaena phlaeas*)

2017 was another poor year for this species. I received records of singles from only 5 locations. The first date was 16<sup>th</sup> July (Euxton) and the last was on the 20<sup>th</sup> September at Great Knowley.

### **Common Blue** (*Polyommatus icarus*)

Thank goodness that 2017 was an improvement on the disastrous previous year for the Common Blue. There were no great numbers seen. The best record was on the 28<sup>th</sup> May at Hic Bibi when 5 males and a female were counted. The

first date for the species was 26<sup>th</sup> May (Euxton) and the last the 26<sup>th</sup> August (a different part of Euxton).

### **Holly Blue** (*Celastrina argiolus*)

Records for this species outnumbered the Common Blue for the second year running. Almost all records were of singles, but pairs were seen on two occasions (Coppull on 7th May and Adlington on 31st July). The species emerged early – 2<sup>nd</sup> April at Adlington and was seen into early September in Euxton.

### **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*)

Unlike the previous year, there was evidence that the species overwinters here – early records from 23<sup>rd</sup> March (Euxton) and 9<sup>th</sup> April (Coppull) would seem to confirm this. Generally the species was frequently seen from mid-May until the last few stragglers in mid-November. The highest numbers were from the Belmont area. A particularly interesting one was for about 40 on 2<sup>nd</sup> September – several of which were eaten by a Hobby. On 28<sup>th</sup> September, a large southwards movement of perhaps 100 insects was observed at Belmont. Let's hope they made it to warmer climes.

### **Painted Lady** (*Cynthia cardui*)

The first migrants to arrive in the area were at Belmont on 31<sup>st</sup> May where 2 were seen. Ones and twos were then seen throughout June with a nice record of 5 at Bretherton on 4<sup>th</sup> June. Singles were reported from many locations through August and September, with the last being seen at Rivington on 26<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*)

Still a common butterfly locally, numbers certainly are not what they once were. For example, my regular contributor from Belmont counted over 400 on his local patch in 2003, this year his maximum count was 3. The maximum for the area as a whole was 12 at Croston on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Insects emerged quite early with one seen in flight at Belmont on 17<sup>th</sup> February and several sightings during March. The latest record was 27<sup>th</sup> October, again at Belmont.

### **The Peacock** (*Inachis io*)

This species certainly overwinters successfully in the area. It emerged in mid-March and was seen regularly through March, April and May. The maximum was 12 at Croston Finney on 8<sup>th</sup> April. The summer generation was flying from 1<sup>st</sup> July and seen last at Belmont on October 27<sup>th</sup>. 38 were counted at Lower Burgh Meadows on 13<sup>th</sup> August and 20 on Mawdesley Moss the same day.

### **Comma** (*Polygonia c-album*)

This species is not generally seen in large numbers, and 2017 was no exception. Ones and Twos were seen from 14<sup>th</sup> March (Rivington) until 9<sup>th</sup> April (Withnell Fold). Then the summer generation was around from June 26<sup>th</sup> until November 4<sup>th</sup>. The maximum count was 4 at Pincock on 8<sup>th</sup> July and the same number at Hic Bibi on 6th October.

### **Speckled Wood** (*Pararge aegeria tircis*)

The Speckled Wood was present in the area from 18<sup>th</sup> April until 27<sup>th</sup> October. The maximum number counted was 20 at Brinscall on 28<sup>th</sup> June. It was also quite numerous at Hic Bibi and Lower Burgh Meadows.

### **Wall Brown** (*Lassiommatata megera*)

I had records from only two site – Buckshaw and Bretherton. The insect seen at Bretherton on 4<sup>th</sup> June was the sole representative of the Spring generation. The summer brood flew from 17<sup>th</sup> July until 20<sup>th</sup> August. This is an increasingly uncommon insect now.

### **Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia tithonus*)

Fewer seen than usual in 2017. The maximum counts were 20 at Belmont on 9<sup>th</sup> August and 10 at Withnell on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. The flight period was 8<sup>th</sup> July (Hic Bibi) until 17<sup>th</sup> August (Chorley).

### **Meadow Brown** (*Maniola jurtina*)

No large numbers were seen in 2017 with 20 at Belmont on 29<sup>th</sup> July being the best count. The insect was in flight from 12<sup>th</sup> June until 6<sup>th</sup> August

### **Small Heath** (*Coenonympha pamphilus*)

The best sighting this year was 25 near Belmont on 19<sup>th</sup> June, which is not a many as the high counts of the last few years, but still quite good. Possibly the most interesting record was a single seen on Croston Moss on 9<sup>th</sup> July. This is the first time we have had the species to the west of the area.

### **Ringlet** (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

A colony was located in the Withnell/ Brinscall area. As many as 26 were counted on 3<sup>rd</sup> July. It was also seen near Rawlinson Lane, Adlington on 24<sup>th</sup> June. This is good news after its absence in 2016.



## **ODONATA**

Species recorded this year were:

### **ZYGOPTERA** (Damselflies)

#### **Banded Demoiselle** (*Calopteryx splendens*)

This species was not seen in any great numbers in 2017. Counts of 14 at Cuerden on two dates in late July were the only decent numbers reported. The flight period was 27<sup>th</sup> May (Birkacre) until 5<sup>th</sup> August (Lower Healey). 5 nymphs were found in the River Lostock on 4<sup>th</sup> September. The river was being surveyed because of concerns about slurry contamination. The presence of the nymphs was a relief.

### **Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*)**

Although not seen in the huge numbers reported there in 2016, the Emerald Damselfly was still a common insect at Belmont. Counts in the 30's were made in June, July and August. It was also seen at Hic Bibi and at Cuerden. I had no records from the pond on Healey Nab. Let's hope it is still present there. The flight period was 18<sup>th</sup> June until 2<sup>nd</sup> September (both records from Belmont).

### **Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrosoma nymphula*)**

As usual this was our earliest Odonata species. It was seen in flight on 23<sup>rd</sup> April at Cuerden. Thereafter it was frequently recorded wherever recorders ventured. The best counts were at Belmont where 20 were seen on 20<sup>th</sup> June. The last record was at Buckshaw on 8<sup>th</sup> September, which is the first September record for the species since 2008.

### **Blue Tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*)**

In flight from 18<sup>th</sup> May (Cuerden) until 13<sup>th</sup> August (Belmont), this species is fairly well spread. It was recorded from 10 sites with a high count of 30 in Yarrow Valley Park on 18<sup>th</sup> July.

### **Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*)**

The highest counts as usual were from Belmont where 80 were estimated on 18<sup>th</sup> June. It is a common local species and was seen at 8 sites between 17<sup>th</sup> May and 20<sup>th</sup> August (both times at Chorley Cemetery).

### **Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)**

The species had a slightly shorter flight period than the Azure. First and last dates were 27<sup>th</sup> May (Withnell Fold) and 13<sup>th</sup> August (Belmont). Large numbers were reported from Yarrow Valley Park in early July, with 100 seen on 8<sup>th</sup> July.

## **ANISOPTERA (Dragonflies)**

### **Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)**

2017 was a better year for this species. It was seen at 8 sites from 6<sup>th</sup> July (Ransnap Wood) until 10<sup>th</sup> October (Cuerden). Usually seen in singles only, there were a few records of 2 insects, although none of those related to mating.

### **Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*)**

Again, this was the most frequently reported dragonfly – presumably in part because it is easy to identify in flight. It can certainly be seen in all parts of the area. A maximum count of 8 was at Withnell Fold on 16<sup>th</sup> September. Overall flight period was 9<sup>th</sup> June (Hic Bibi) until 24<sup>th</sup> September (Yarrow Valley Park).

### **Common Hawker (*Aeshna juncea*)**

This species is not common locally – certainly not to the west of Chorley. Its stronghold is Belmont where as many as 15 were counted on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Apart from Belmont, where it was seen often, the only sites were Great Knowley and Yarrow Valley Park. The flight period was 1<sup>st</sup> July (at Great Knowley) until 28<sup>th</sup> September (at Belmont).



**Migrant Hawker** (*Aeshna mixta*)

Only one sighting of this species in 2017. A single was seen at Cuerden Valley Park on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

**Emperor Dragonfly** (*Anax imperator*)

Seen from 30<sup>th</sup> May (Cuerden) until 16<sup>th</sup> September (Eyes Lane), there were no records related to mating this year. Never seen in numbers greater than two.

**Four-spotted Chaser** (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

The high count of 20 at Cuerden on 4<sup>th</sup> June was the highest for a few years. Decent numbers were reported also from Hic Bibi and Belmont. Overall the flight period was 30<sup>th</sup> May (Cuerden) to 15<sup>th</sup> August (Adlington). It was seen at a total of 6 sites.

**Broad-bodied Chaser** (*Libellula depressa*)

Seen at only 5 sites in 2017. This is rather fewer than usual. The flight period was from 30<sup>th</sup> May (Cuerden) until 2<sup>nd</sup> July (Solomon's Temple on Withnell Moor). The maximum count was 3 at Hic Bibi on June 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Black Tailed Skimmer** (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

This species re-appeared in 2016 after a blank few years. In 2017 there were 2 records. It was seen at Birkacre on 4<sup>th</sup> July and at Cuerden on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Let's hope for more in 2018.



**Ruddy Darter** (*Sympetrum sanguinum*)

No records this year.

**Black Darter** (*Sympetrum danae*)

No records at all in 2017 away from its stronghold at Belmont. There a count of 110 on 2<sup>nd</sup> September was the best. The flight period was 23<sup>rd</sup> August until 28<sup>th</sup> September.

**Common Darter** (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

Our most widespread Darter, it occurs in most suitable parts of the area. No large numbers were reported but the species was recorded from 9 sites between 9<sup>th</sup> June (Hic Bibi) and 28<sup>th</sup> October (Cuerden). The highest count was only 6 at Rawlinson Lane on 30<sup>th</sup> August.

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

I Ball, D Beattie, D Beevers, The Crosbys, B Derbyshire, D Downing, T Dunn, M Fishwick, J Frankland, L Griffiths, K Haydock, P Hodson, R Hoyle, A Johnson, C Johnson, P Krischkiw, E Langrish, G Lilley, D S Martin, S J Martin, J Mills, L Poxon, R W Rhodes, J Riley, N Root, L Rose, P Rowlands, N Southworth, J Sutton, N West, P West, I Whittle and K Woan.

My apologies to anyone I may have missed.

### Flight periods of Butterfly species recorded in area during 2017

	Jan				Feb				Mar				Apr				May				Jun				Jul				Aug				Sep				Oct				Nov				Dec											
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4								
Small Skipper																																																								
Large Skipper																																																								
Brimstone									X	X	X																																													
Large White													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Small White													X	X	X																																									
Green Veined White									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Orange Tip									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Green Hairstreak									X	X	X																																													
Purple Hairstreak													X												X	X	X																													
White-Letter Hairstreak													X	X	X										X	X	X																													
Small Copper																									X	X	X																													
Common Blue													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Holy Blue													X	X	X										X	X	X																													
Red Admiral													X	X	X										X	X	X																													
Painted Lady																	X	X	X						X	X	X																													
Small Tortoiseshell					X																				X	X	X																													
The Peacock									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
The Comma									X	X	X														X	X	X																													
Speckled Wood													X	X	X										X	X	X																													
The Wall													X												X																															
The Catkins																									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X									
Meadow Brown													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
Small Heath													X	X	X										X	X	X																													
Ringlet																									X	X																														

**Flight periods of Dragonfly and Damselfly species recorded in area during 2017**

	Jan				Feb				Mar				Apr				May				Jun				Jul				Aug				Sep				Oct				Nov				Dec							
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4				
<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>																																																				
<i>Letia sponsa</i>																	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																
<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																				
<i>Sichneura elegans</i>													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																				
<i>Coenagrion puella</i>													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																				
<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																				
<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>																													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																
<i>Aeshna grandis</i>																	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																
<i>Aeshna juncea</i>																	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																
<i>Aeshna mixta</i>																																																				
<i>Anas imperator</i>																	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																				
<i>Libellula depressa</i>																	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																				
<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>																	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																				
<i>Orithium cancellatum</i>																	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																				
<i>Sympetrum danae</i>																																																				
<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>													X	X	X	X																	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								

# BIRD REPORT

## Introduction

Apologies, gentle reader, but once again the order has changed. The British Ornithological Union's Records Committee (BOURC) has published version 9 of the British List (December 2017) which is based on the International Ornithological Union's (IOU) IOC World Bird List (Version 7.3). I just hope that's it for a while!

166 species were recorded in 2017, including escapes, which is an increase of 7 species over the past couple of years. The winter floods on Bretherton Eyes and Croston Moss have helped in respect of the number of species of wildfowl and waders recorded in the area. Scarcities such as Garganey, Common Scoter, Quail, Kittiwake, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Waxwing and Hawfinch have also helped boost the total.

**Neil Southworth (Records Secretary)**

## Greater Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

### **Common resident**

Numbers at Belmont Reservoir in 2017 showed a worrying increase despite ongoing control, with the 146 present on 23<sup>rd</sup> August being the highest site count since 2012. A distinct flock of 26 birds at Belmont on 1<sup>st</sup> January contained at least 9 birds with red colour-rings, believed to be birds ringed at Windermere in July 2013.

11 pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir with two pairs fledging Y5 and 2 (from relays following earlier egg-pricking) with control measures at Belmont resulting in 65 eggs 'pricked' and 29 adults shot in 2017.

A pair of Canada Geese at Eccleston had 8 young by the 6<sup>th</sup> May, and a pair at Croft Lodge Brinscall had 6 young.

### **Canada Goose - July moulting flock totals:**

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
Belmont Resr.	86	63	65	60	76	148
Anglezarke Resr.	65	109	103	88	108	94
U/L Rivington/ Yarrow/HB Resrs.	6	14	11	34	13	13

In addition 140 were at Withnell Fold on 30<sup>th</sup> July.

In October, up to 500 were to be found on flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes. 350 were alongside pink-footed geese on Croston Moss on 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

## Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

### **Rare visitor and feral species**

One was with Pink-footed Geese at Eyes Lane, Bretherton on 28<sup>th</sup> January, giving it reasonable credentials to be a genuine wild bird.

In October, 3 were with pinkfeet on flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, with one or two continuing to be found there throughout the month. 2 were with pinkfeet on Croston Moss on 2<sup>nd</sup> November.

Up to 3 feral birds were at Belmont Reservoir throughout the year, occasionally visiting other adjacent waters. One pair was thought to have bred (unsuccessfully) whilst the third bird paired with a Greylag Goose and nested, but nest (C5) was unsuccessful.

### **Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)**

#### ***Scarce feral species***

3 skeins totaling 35 birds flew south west over Belmont on 7<sup>th</sup> January. On 21<sup>st</sup> February 12 were on Lower Rivington Reservoir and on 28<sup>th</sup> a pair were on Hall Barn pond.

7 nests were located on the Anglezarke / Rivington complex. Two pairs bred at Belmont reservoir from which the 8 young fledged were creched to one pair. Another bird bred with a feral barnacle but the nest was unsuccessful..

28 were on Anglezarke Reservoir on 5<sup>th</sup> July with the moulting Canada Goose flock.

In October, up to 100 were to be found on flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes. Perhaps the same flock was on Croston Moss on 2<sup>nd</sup> November. 10 flew north west over Belmont on 18<sup>th</sup> October.

### **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.***

In January a flock of up to 600 birds (15<sup>th</sup>) were resident on the fields between the Douglas and the canal spur at Sollom. Several skeins totaling 410 birds passed over Belmont between 8<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> January. The only February records were of skeins totaling 600 moving west over Bretherton Eyes and 210 moving north west over Belmont on the 5<sup>th</sup>, followed by 80 west over Belmont on the 15<sup>th</sup>. On the 21<sup>st</sup> 300 flew west over Jepsens Clough, Rivington.



The first returning birds in Autumn were two skeins of 25 and 40 birds over Coppull on 14<sup>th</sup> September. 40 flew east over Belmont on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A total of 300 in 3 skeins were then seen flying east over Eccleston on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and 80 were seen over the Gillibrands estate on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 70 flying north over White Coppice. Finally, in September, 50 flew north west over Belmont on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

In October, 350 geese were present on the flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and these increased in number to 3500 by the 13<sup>th</sup>. However, a shoot took place on the night of 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup>, and numbers were drastically reduced after this. Around 1000 birds were feeding on Croston and Mawdesley Moss from 17<sup>th</sup> October. Numbers then increased on Croston Moss to 4000 on 1<sup>st</sup>

November, peaking at 8000 by the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1000 were also on Mawdesley Moss on 19<sup>th</sup> November. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, 200 flew east over Yarrow reservoir.

Numbers were much reduced in December, perhaps having moved on to East Anglia, but there were still 700 on Mawdesley Moss (11<sup>th</sup>) and 2000 on Croston Moss (28<sup>th</sup>).

### **Mute Swan** (*Cygnus olor*)

#### ***Uncommon but increasing breeding bird***

Up to 5 were with the whooper swan flock at Bretherton Eyes in January. Also in January, singles were on Common Bank Lodge (15<sup>th</sup>) and a young bird hung around below Yarrow embankment, Anglezarke reservoir in the first months of the year. A pair was on Heapey Lodges on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Numbers at Bretherton Eyes increased to 13 in February with 8 still there during March.

Breeding success was to the fore in May. The pair of Mute Swan at Yarrow Valley Park had 7 young by the 19<sup>th</sup>, soon reducing to 6. The pair in Astley Park had 2 young by the 25<sup>th</sup>, a pair on the old Rufford canal at Bretherton had 7 young by the 28<sup>th</sup>, and a pair on Heapey No.3 lodge had 2 young by the 31<sup>st</sup>.

In June, the 6 cygnets at Yarrow Valley Park were thriving, but there was only a single survivor in Astley Park and the 3 on Heapey No. 3 lodge had disappeared completely. The adult pair were regularly on No.5 lodge, White Coppice in the second half of the year. The 7 on the old canal at Bretherton were still at the site.

A family of 3 was on the flooded field at Bretherton Eyes during October.

### **Whooper Swan** (*Cygnus cygnus*)

#### ***Regular winter visitor***

A small herd could be found during January on the fields by Eyes Lane / Lock Lane between Bretherton and Sollom. The highest count was of 26 on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The flock remained at the site throughout February and most of March with a peak of 27 on the 4<sup>th</sup> March. Numbers had reduced to 6 by the 20<sup>th</sup> March.

A party of 14 arrived at Bretherton Eyes on the 7<sup>th</sup> October, having been seen earlier flying over Ecclestone. Varying numbers could then be found at the site with a peak count of 28 on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 40 on Croston Moss on 27<sup>th</sup> October had increased to 105 by the 30<sup>th</sup>, then onto 125 on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, peaking at 148 on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 40 were also at Bretherton Eyes on 5<sup>th</sup> November. 3 flew north west over Belmont on 30<sup>th</sup> October.

In December, the wintering flock started the month at Bretherton Eyes where 75 were present on the 3<sup>rd</sup> before apparently moving over to Croston and Mawdesley Mosses with 30 at the former (27<sup>th</sup>) and 100 at the latter (11<sup>th</sup>).

### **Shelduck** (*Tadorna tadorna*)

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

The first of the year were 2 at Bretherton Eyes on New Year's Day, increasing to 5 by the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Numbers increased further in February 15 by the 19<sup>th</sup>, peaking at 16 on 4<sup>th</sup> March. One was also seen at Cuerden Valley Park on the 20<sup>th</sup> February, and the same or another on 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

One was at Withnell Fold on 1<sup>st</sup> May, a site where breeding has taken place in the past.

One was on Croston Moss on 10<sup>th</sup> October. Another was at Belmont reservoir on 28<sup>th</sup> October. Numbers at Bretherton Eyes built up from 2 on 1<sup>st</sup> November to 13 on the 26<sup>th</sup>, with a maximum count of 24 on the 4<sup>th</sup> December and still 23 there on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Mandarin Duck** (*Aix galericulata*)

***Uncommon feral resident and escapee***

During January, birds were recorded at Arley nature reserve, Common Bank lodge, Park Hall lake, Charnock Richard and on Syd Brook, Ecclestone. Two were at Cuerden Valley Park on 27<sup>th</sup> February. Mandarin could also be found on Syd Brook, Ecclestone, with 6 there on the 18<sup>th</sup>

In April, birds were on territory along the Yarrow in Chorley and at Ecclestone. A drake was also seen in Cuerden Valley Park on the 17<sup>th</sup>. In May, breeding included a pair on the Yarrow near Duxbury with 11 young (22<sup>nd</sup>) and a pair on the Yarrow at Ecclestone with 3 young (22<sup>nd</sup>). A male was in the Belmont area from April to June.

16 were on the Yarrow at Ecclestone on 11<sup>th</sup> December.

**Garganey** (*Anas querquedula*)

***Rare passage migrant***

A pair spent a couple of days (15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> March) on the Rufford canal off Lock Lane, between Sollom and Bretherton and just inside the recording area.

**Shoveler** (*Anas clypeata*)

***Scarce winter visitor***

Two were at Cuerden Valley Park on 27<sup>th</sup> February and remained until at least 4<sup>th</sup> March. Four were at Bretherton Eyes on 12<sup>th</sup> March.

A couple were seen on Bretherton Eyes on 21<sup>st</sup> October, and one or two were seen regularly at the site during November.

**Gadwall** (*Anas strepera*)

***Scarce visitor***

A pair was on Anglezarke Reservoir on 2<sup>nd</sup> January and another was at Bretherton Eyes on 20<sup>th</sup> January. A pair was at Cuerden Valley Park (20<sup>th</sup>). A pair was at Bretherton Eyes on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> March.

35 Gadwall on Anglezarke reservoir on 15<sup>th</sup> October was an exceptional record for the site, and 15 were still there on 11<sup>th</sup> November.



**Wigeon** (*Anas penelope*)

***Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor***

One or two were at Bretherton Eyes on 20<sup>th</sup> January and on 19<sup>th</sup> February. One was also at Cuerden Valley Park on the 24<sup>th</sup>. A flock passed over Coppull on 13<sup>th</sup> March. A male was in the Belmont area from January to the end of April, and another was circling Belmont on the unseasonal date of 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

The floods at Bretherton Eyes hosted 30 on 21<sup>st</sup> October and around 100 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Numbers had fallen to just 2 by 2<sup>nd</sup> November. Two were on Anglezarke Reservoir on 15<sup>th</sup> October, and a single on 11<sup>th</sup> November. A male was at Belmont from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> October and 8 were on Belmont Reservoir on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. 20 were at Bretherton Eyes also on 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

**Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

***Common winter visitor and breeding resident***

Maximum counts at Belmont Reservoir were 195 in January and 215 in December.

During the breeding season, some 34 broods totalling 207 young were seen around Belmont (including one brood of 18 young) although nothing like this number actually fledged.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimated 3 breeding females. A pair on Common Bank lodge had 7 young in early June.

Around 50 birds were at Withnell Fold flashes on 5<sup>th</sup> September. 330 were on a large private pond at Belmont on 25<sup>th</sup> October.

**Pintail** (*Anas acuta*)

***Rare winter visitor***

Four were on the flooded fields at Bretherton Eyes on 5<sup>th</sup> February, and 6 were there on 21<sup>st</sup> March.

One or two were seen at Bretherton Eyes floods during October with a peak count of 5 on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Teal** (*Anas crecca*)

***Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Scarce breeder.***

270 were at Belmont Reservoir on 1<sup>st</sup> January. January numbers at Withnell Fold peaked at 40 on the 4<sup>th</sup> and at Bretherton Eyes at 80 on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Numbers increased at both sites in February with 60 at Withnell Fold (4<sup>th</sup>) and 300 at Bretherton Eyes on the same day. 72 were on Yarrow reservoir, also on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and 30 were on the Douglas at Croston (19<sup>th</sup>). On 20<sup>th</sup> 6 were on a pond near Lower House and on 21<sup>st</sup>, 3m and 1f were on the Breeding Pond, both Rivington. 40 Teal were still at Withnell Fold on 7<sup>th</sup> March, with 20 there on 8<sup>th</sup> April.

One pair bred unsuccessfully at Belmont Reservoir

Teal had started to return in August with one on the Douglas at Croston (5<sup>th</sup>) and 10 at Withnell Fold (27<sup>th</sup>). Numbers at Withnell Fold then then increased from 20 on 5<sup>th</sup> September to 50 by the 17<sup>th</sup>. 30 were counted at the site on 1<sup>st</sup> October.



Around 80 were at Bretherton Eyes on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, and 20 remained at Withnell Fold on 30<sup>th</sup> December. Wintering numbers at Belmont Reservoir were disappointing in the second winter period in comparison to recent years with best counts of 110 in September and 140 in December.

**Pochard** (*Aythya ferina*)

***Increasingly scarce winter visitor and passage migrant***

The regular single male was at the north end of Anglezarke Reservoir throughout January and February. It was resident until at least 6<sup>th</sup> March. Presumably the same bird returned to the site from 22<sup>nd</sup> December and remained until at least the end of the year.

**Tufted Duck** (*Aythya fuligula*)

***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce breeder.***

Small rafts were noted at Anglezarke, Croston Twin Lakes, E-shaped Pond, Lower Healey and Yarrow Valley Park during February. 12 were at Lower Healey on 18<sup>th</sup> March. 10 were on High Bullough Reservoir on 8<sup>th</sup> April. On 25<sup>th</sup> May a pair occupied a pond above Moses Cocker Farm Rivington. A pair with 8 young was at High Bullough Reservoir on 21<sup>st</sup> July. 6 adult and 5 young were at the site on 31<sup>st</sup> August. Two pairs bred unsuccessfully at Belmont Reservoir.

**Common Scoter** (*Melanitta negra*)

***Vagrant***

Two drakes dropped into Lower Rivington Reservoir on 18<sup>th</sup> January. Two male and a female were at the same site on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, with a single bird there on the 8<sup>th</sup>. 2 were at Belmont Reservoir on 2<sup>nd</sup> December followed by 7 on Lower Rivington Reservoir (3<sup>rd</sup>).

**Goldeneye** (*Bucephala clangula*)

***Declining winter visitor and passage migrant***

The only records in January were of a single bird on Yarrow Reservoir (2<sup>nd</sup>) and two seen on several dates on High Bullough Reservoir. In February, Goldeneye on High Bullough Reservoir peaked at 5 on the 5<sup>th</sup> with a single bird on Heapey No.3 lodge being the only other record. In March, the only record received was of a single bird on Yarrow reservoir on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The first back in Autumn was a single bird on High Bullough Reservoir on 4<sup>th</sup> November, followed by 3 on Anglezarke reservoir on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A single bird in the second winter period was the only record at Belmont. On 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2 male birds were at High Bullough reservoir, Anglezarke.

**Smew (*Mergus albellus*)**

***Rare winter visitor***

A moribund bird of unknown origin was on Cuerden Valley Park lake on 18<sup>th</sup> October.

**Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)**

***Winter visitor in decreasing numbers***

The species was widespread across the recording area during January, usually in single figures, but with a best count of 28 on Yarrow Reservoir on the 30<sup>th</sup>. In February, birds were again seen across the area with the peak count being 43, again from Yarrow Reservoir (18<sup>th</sup>). In March, 49 were present on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 20 were still present on 20<sup>th</sup>.

In April, pairs were on territory on the Yarrow at Croston and on the Douglas at Bretherton. A pair at Eccleston had 10 young by the 6<sup>th</sup> and a pair on the Darwen at Hoghton had 3 by the 28<sup>th</sup>. In June, pairs on the Yarrow and Douglas had 7 and 5 young respectively (4<sup>th</sup>).

In the second winter period numbers roosting on Yarrow Reservoir increased from 20 on 24<sup>th</sup> October to 33 on 14<sup>th</sup> December.

**Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*)**

***Resident in small numbers on the moors***

Two were noted on Wheelton Moor on 28<sup>th</sup> January.

A pair was territorial next to the A675 (at just 300m/985ft asl) north of Belmont Reservoir for the first time since the large wildfire of 2011. 4 were off the moors on in-bye fields above Belmont on 25<sup>th</sup> August. 54 were reported during a shoot on Belmont Moor on 19<sup>th</sup> August and 55 likewise on 14<sup>th</sup> October.

One was seen with 4 young on Winter Hill on 6<sup>th</sup> August. Three were seen on Anglezarke Moor on 4<sup>th</sup> November.



**Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)**

***Scarce resident boosted by birds released for shooting***

A covey of 40 on Bretherton Eyes on 28<sup>th</sup> January had evidently survived the Christmas shoots. 15 were on Tincklers Lane fields, Eccleston on 6<sup>th</sup> February. One pair was territorial on moorland edge near Belmont in the breeding season. Ones and twos were seen on Croston and Mawdesley Moss in early July. 4 adults and a juvenile were at Withnell Fold on 20<sup>th</sup> August.

A pair was near Belmont on 19<sup>th</sup> September. A covey of 7 birds was on Bretherton Eyes on 20<sup>th</sup> October. 6 were on Mawdesley Moss on 24<sup>th</sup> November.

**Grey Partridge** (*Perdix perdix*)

***Uncommon resident boosted by birds released for shooting***

Two pairs were territorial on the moorland edge near Belmont in the breeding season

Four were noted on Mawdesley Moss on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July with a similar number on Croston Moss on the 6<sup>th</sup>. A covey of 15 was at Belmont Reservoir on 27<sup>th</sup> August and 10<sup>th</sup> September. A covey of 5 was on Croston Moss on 29<sup>th</sup> October, and 7 were there on 26<sup>th</sup> November. A male was calling near Belmont on 2<sup>nd</sup> November.

**Quail** (*Cotumix cotumix*)

***Rare summer visitor***

One was heard calling in wheat fields at Bretherton Moss on 9<sup>th</sup> July, quickly followed by a second bird, with three located on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. At least one was still singing on 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

**Pheasant** (*Phasianus colchicus*)

***Common resident boosted by birds released for shooting***

At least 20 were counted on Bretherton Eyes on 28<sup>th</sup> January. At least 15 were on the island at Belmont Reservoir on 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimated 4 territorial males. A nest with 16 eggs was noted near Belmont on 18<sup>th</sup> April and the Belmont gamekeeper reported some 10 broods of small young in the area in early June. A female with 3 young was noted on Mawdesley Moss on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July so they're not all releases!

Up to 50 were counted on Bretherton Eyes on 20<sup>th</sup> October. Over 400 were near Belmont on 29<sup>th</sup> October.

**Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

***Uncommon breeding bird***

In January, birds were recorded at Croston Twin Lakes, Yarrow Valley Park and Common Bank Lodge where 3 were present on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Apart from a single record of one in a ditch on Croston Finney (1<sup>st</sup>), February records were confined to Astley Park, Common Bank Lodge and Yarrow Valley Park. In April, one was heard calling at Ulnes Walton brick pits (Wymott ponds) on 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> April. Birds were present at Belmont Reservoir from April until October with one pair probably breeding for the first time.

One was at High Bullough Reservoir on 31<sup>st</sup> August. A pair at Common Bank Lodge had 3 juveniles in tow on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Four birds were still present at the site in October and a single bird was on High Bullough Reservoir on the 8<sup>th</sup>. One was on the lake in Cuerden Valley Park on 14<sup>th</sup> November.

**Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)**  
**Common breeding bird, less common in winter**

As usual in January, Great Crested Grebes were scarce with records coming from just Yarrow Valley Park, Cuerden Valley Park and Croston Twin Lakes where 5 were present on the 7<sup>th</sup>. These increased to 12 by 25<sup>th</sup> February. Up to 8 birds (14<sup>th</sup> May) were present at Belmont Reservoir in the breeding season with a record 3 pairs nesting and 2 young fledged.

Great Crested Grebe at Croston Twin Lakes had at least one young by the 31<sup>st</sup> May. In June pairs had two young at Belmont Reservoir (5<sup>th</sup>), 2 at Heapey Lodges (7<sup>th</sup>), one at Croston Twin Lakes (11<sup>th</sup>), 1 at Yarrow Valley Park (22<sup>nd</sup>) and one on Anglezarke Reservoir (25<sup>th</sup>). A pair on the lake in Cuerden Valley Park failed to breed.

The single young bird in Yarrow Valley Park survived into August, and at Croston Twin Lakes there were 4 adults and 3 young.

**Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*)**  
**Rare winter visitor**

One was seen briefly at Arley nature reserve on 21<sup>st</sup> January.

**Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)**  
**Common visitor and scarce breeder**

Two pairs bred in Cuerden Valley Park, fledging one and two young respectively. The Rivington heronry continued to increase to 27 active nests in 2017, whilst no activity was noted at the second Rivington site (unoccupied since 2013).

**BREEDING PAIRS OF HERON  
AT RIVINGTON 2006 - 2017**



In July, birds were seen at all the regular locations including 3 on Croston Moss (4<sup>th</sup>) and 2 at Belmont (9<sup>th</sup>). 8 were on fields at Belmont on 25<sup>th</sup> August. Individuals were seen regularly at most water bodies throughout the year. Up to 4 were prospecting in the ditches on Bretherton Eyes during October and November. Two were at Withnell Fold flashes on 1<sup>st</sup> October. One was often seen on the fish ladder in Yarrow Valley Park during October, looking for an easy meal. Four flying high over Belmont on 30<sup>th</sup> September were considered to be birds on passage.

**Great White Egret** (*Egretta alba*)  
***Rare vagrant***

One was at Anglezarke Reservoir, briefly, on 1<sup>st</sup> September. One was then seen in Yarrow Valley Park on 21<sup>st</sup> October, and possibly the same bird turned up on Bretherton Eyes on the same day. It then remained at the site until the end of year. One on Mawdesley Moss on the 24<sup>th</sup> November fuelled speculation that there were 2 in the area, which seemed to be confirmed when 2 separate individuals were seen on the canal near Sollom on the 27<sup>th</sup>. One was seen again at Bretherton Eyes up to mid-December, but then mainly on Croston Moss thereafter. It was attacked by a Peregrine on the 16<sup>th</sup> but seemed to be unfazed by it and easily survived the unwelcome attention.

**Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*)  
***Rare but increasing visitor***

Two were at Bretherton Eyes on 21<sup>st</sup> January. What were possibly the same birds were seen regularly throughout January near Croston Sewage Works. One was reported near the canal at Wheelton on 30<sup>th</sup> January. Two were seen in the Douglas valley at Anderton on 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> February. One was on Syd Brook, Ecclestone on 7<sup>th</sup> February and a couple were on Mawdesley Moss on 19<sup>th</sup> February. One was at Withnell Fold flashes on 7<sup>th</sup> March. In May, one was on Croston Moss on the 13<sup>th</sup> and another was at Ecclestone on the 27<sup>th</sup>. One flew over Great Knowley on 28<sup>th</sup> July. One was seen flying near the M65 at Brindle on 12<sup>th</sup> August. Two were on Bretherton Eyes on 12<sup>th</sup> November. Sightings in December came from Bretherton Eyes (2<sup>nd</sup>), Ecclestone (11<sup>th</sup>), Mawdesley Moss (11<sup>th</sup>) and Croston Moss from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)  
***Regular visitor***

Birds were recorded regularly on most waters in the recording area throughout the year. 20 were in trees at Lodge Bank, Brinscall on 4<sup>th</sup> January. The winter roost at Upper Rivington reservoir peaked at a site record of 111 on 27<sup>th</sup> February. In the second winter period, numbers peaked at 53 on 14<sup>th</sup> December.

**Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*)  
**Regular passage migrant**

First through on passage was one at Belmont on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, with another over Mawdesley Moss on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Sightings in May came from Yarrow Valley Park (6<sup>th</sup>) and White Coppice (8<sup>th</sup>).

First on return passage was a juvenile which spent several hours fishing at Belmont reservoir on 8<sup>th</sup> August with another over Anglezarke Reservoir on 27<sup>th</sup> August. One flew south over Belmont on 6<sup>th</sup> October.

**Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter nisus*)  
**Increasingly common resident**

Records were received from just 2 sites in January plus 5 from garden bird survey returns. Records came from 3 sites in February, and 4 in April and May. Breeding records of Sparrowhawk tend to be few and far between but one pair bred in Cuerden Valley Park and hunting birds were recorded at Mawdesley, Adlington, Croston, Withnell Fold and in Chorley during July. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised one territory.

A report was received in August of breeding at Shaw Hill where adults were noted feeding recently fledged young. Several records were received of often juvenile birds prospecting at garden feeding stations during August. In September, hunting Sparrowhawks were seen at Adlington (2<sup>nd</sup>), Withnell Fold (5<sup>th</sup>), Coppull (14<sup>th</sup>) and Euxton (29<sup>th</sup>). One was seen hunting on Croston Moss on 9<sup>th</sup> October, and at Bretherton Eyes, Coppull and Chorley during November.

**Goshawk** (*Accipiter gentilis*)  
**Rare visitor / escapee**

A male was in a moorland plantation on 4<sup>th</sup> January with a further brief sighting at the same site on 21<sup>st</sup> February considered probable.

A large hawk flying west over Yarrow Valley Way in Chorley on 18<sup>th</sup> June was probably a Goshawk in the opinion of the observer.

One of unknown origin was reported at Adlington on 5<sup>th</sup> November and again in early December.

**Marsh Harrier** (*Circus aeruginosus*)  
**Scarce passage migrant**

A female was noted over Bretherton Eyes on 21<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March.

An adult female was around Belmont from 11<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> September, the females / immatures were at Belmont on 21<sup>st</sup> September and 25<sup>th</sup> October. A female / immature was noted over Bretherton Eyes on 25<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> October, and one was over Croston Moss on 30<sup>th</sup> November.

**Hen Harrier** (*Circus cyaneus*)

**Scarce passage migrant. Occasionally lingers in winter**

A ring-tail was noted at Bretherton Eyes on 28<sup>th</sup> October, and another over George's Lane, Rivington on 11<sup>th</sup> December.

A male was around Belmont from 29<sup>th</sup> November onwards into 2018. On 10<sup>th</sup> December it was observed hunting Snipe, in company with a female Merlin, during a snowstorm at Belmont Reservoir. A female/immature was at Belmont on 27<sup>th</sup> December.

**Red Kite** (*Milvus milvus*)

**Rare passage migrant / visitor from reintroduction schemes.**

Two records were received on 25<sup>th</sup> February, possibly of the same bird, from Yarrow Valley Park and then Bretherton Eyes. One was at Belmont Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup> March and again on 24<sup>th</sup> March.

Two records were received on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April and again they could have related to the same bird, the first being over Stronstrey Bank at 15.45 pm and the other at Lower Healey at 16.20 pm – less than a mile between them as the kite flies.

June sightings came from Chorley (1<sup>st</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>) and Withnell Fold (13<sup>th</sup>).

Records in August came from Winter Hill (7<sup>th</sup>) and White Coppice (28<sup>th</sup>).

One was over Euxton on 6<sup>th</sup> November.

**Buzzard** (*Buteo buteo*)

**Fairly common resident**

Birds were recorded throughout the area in January, including 4 at Eccleston on the 21<sup>st</sup>. February records came from 8 sites including one of 5 birds at Whittle-le-Woods on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

In April, birds were noted on territory at 15 sites, including 4 together at Ulles Walton (2<sup>nd</sup>) and a similar number at Cuerden Valley Park (4<sup>th</sup>). In May, birds were noted at 7 sites, including one with a juvenile in tow at Withnell Fold on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised one territory with an active nest located plus one territory adjacent.

Birds were noted at the usual sites in Rivington and Anglezarke in all months of the year.

June sightings came from Belmont Reservoir, Bretherton Eyes, Croston Moss, Euxton, Great Knowley, Hartwood, Hic Bibi, Jack Green, Mawdesley Moss, White Coppice and Withnell Fold.

July records came from across the area, including Croston Moss, Bretherton Moss, Bretherton Eyes, Withnell Moor, Mawdesley Moss, Yarrow Valley Park and Withnell Fold, where two adults and 2 juveniles were seen together on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

August sightings came from the same sites as in July including 5 at Withnell Fold (6<sup>th</sup>) and 6 over Croston Moss (13<sup>th</sup>). 11 in 3 groups were seen between Withnell Fold and Botany on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Sightings in September were mainly adults with a dependent juvenile or two, looking to be fed or perhaps being trained to look for their own food. 4 were on Croston Moss on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. One was seen to predate a Kestrel at Belmont on 5<sup>th</sup> October. November and December records

came from Bretherton Eyes, Croston Moss, Hic Bibi, Withnell Fold and Yarrow Valley Park.

**Water Rail** (*Rallus aquaticus*)

***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant***

One was at the E-shaped Pond, Bretherton on 7<sup>th</sup> January. Another was at Withnell Fold nature reserve on 11<sup>th</sup> March. One was at the E-shaped pond, Bretherton on 7<sup>th</sup> April.

Amazingly, a skull was found in a fresh Barn Owl pellet at a site near Belmont on 30<sup>th</sup> June, suggesting the presence of the species locally in the breeding season. One was back at Yarrow Valley Park on 26<sup>th</sup> October and was seen regularly throughout November and December. One was at Withnell Fold flashes on 11<sup>th</sup> November and another was near Belmont on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

**Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*)

***Common resident***

Eight were on Belmont reservoir island on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. On 14<sup>th</sup>, a bird was feeding on bird seed on Alance Bridge wall, Yarrow reservoir.

Pairs of Moorhen on the tern rafts in Yarrow Valley Park had 4 and 3 young respectively by the 1<sup>st</sup> and a pair at White Coppice had 3 young on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. 13 pairs bred at Belmont reservoir benefitting from the high water levels.

**Coot** (*Fulica atra*)

***Common resident***

Birds were on No.5 Lodge, White Coppice in March, nest building on 6<sup>th</sup> April and had 4 young by 6<sup>th</sup> July.

A pair with 2 young was on Common Bank lodge in early June. Due to high water levels, up to 2 birds were present at Belmont Reservoir throughout the breeding season albeit no confirmation of nesting was obtained.

**Oystercatcher** (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

***Increasing passage migrant and summer visitor. Scarce breeder.***

First back from the coast was at Belmont Reservoir on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, then one at Withnell Fold on 4<sup>th</sup> February, followed by one at Bretherton Eyes on 5<sup>th</sup> February. One was at Buckshaw on 17<sup>th</sup> February and 2 were at Ulnes Walton on the same date. Numbers at Belmont increased to 14 on 26<sup>th</sup> February and 27 by 1<sup>st</sup> March. Birds occupied the Rivington reservoir system from early March.

Records came from several sites in March but the most popular was Holker Lane, Ulnes Walton, where 38 were recorded on the 19<sup>th</sup> with 30 still there on 15<sup>th</sup> April. A pair was on Mawdesley Moss on 1<sup>st</sup> May. In June, 3 were at Roddlesworth (26<sup>th</sup>), 2 were at Buckshaw Village (12<sup>th</sup>) and 2 were at Eccleston (17<sup>th</sup>), indicating widespread distribution during the breeding season. One pair bred in the (active) Withnell Quarry successfully fledging 2 young. 5 pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir but only 2 young were fledged by 2 successful pairs. The poor production at this site is almost certainly linked to the gull colony (as most



of the pairs nest within the colony) albeit no hint of predation has ever been witnessed here and Oystercatchers would appear more than capable of defending their clutches/broods against Black-headed Gulls.

July records came from Bretherton Eyes (2 on 1<sup>st</sup>), Upper Rivington Reservoir (5<sup>th</sup>), and Withnell Fold (2 on 9<sup>th</sup>). 14 were still in the Belmont area on 27<sup>th</sup> July with the last there on 20<sup>th</sup> August

**Avocet** (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)  
**Rare passage migrant**

Two were at Belmont Reservoir on the 12<sup>th</sup> March and roosted there overnight.

**Lapwing** (*Vanellus vanellus*)  
**Common resident and winter visitor**



A flock of up to 150 birds was at Bretherton Eyes throughout January, and then peaked at 200 on 5<sup>th</sup> February. On 29<sup>th</sup> January over 50 birds were feeding in Sheep grazed fields in early morning sun off Sheephouse Lane Rivington and were regularly in that area during February. The regular breeding site from earlier years in Rivington was occupied by a small number of birds in the first half of the year but there was no sign of breeding, probably due to the continuing change of farming practice. A wintering flock of up to 400 birds was recorded on fields between Brindle and Withnell Fold on 4<sup>th</sup> January. This had increased to over 600 by 17<sup>th</sup> February. A flock of 80 was at Buckshaw Village on 10<sup>th</sup> February. 360 were at Belmont Reservoir in January increasing to 470 on 16<sup>th</sup> February; the largest site count since 1982.

Flock sizes started to reduce in March, but there were still 95 on Bretherton Eyes (4<sup>th</sup>), 75 on Croston Moss (6<sup>th</sup>) and 110 at Withnell Fold (11<sup>th</sup>).

In April, up to 30 pairs were on territory in the Brindle / Withnell Fold area. Nesting pairs were also seen at Whittle-le-Woods and pairs with chicks were seen at Bretherton Eyes and Eccleston by the end of the month. In May, breeding success included pairs with 2 chicks on Mawdesley Moss (1<sup>st</sup>), and 4 chicks by the Yarrow at Eccleston (4<sup>th</sup>).

32 territories were recorded around Belmont Reservoir in 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. Success was exceptional with the first young noted on 29<sup>th</sup> April and the best count being a minimum of 22 broods totalling 33 young on 8<sup>th</sup> June with the majority going on to fledge in the absence of foxes. On 18<sup>th</sup> May a pair with young was noted on Anglezarke moor.

In June, post-breeding flocks had begun to form including 75 at Belmont reservoir, 25 on Croston Moss (3<sup>rd</sup>) and 20 at Withnell Fold (11<sup>th</sup>). These increased in size in July including 137 at Lower Rivington Reservoir (8<sup>th</sup>), 50 on Croston Moss (23<sup>rd</sup>) and 60 at Withnell Fold (30<sup>th</sup>).

A flock of around 100 birds were on the edge of Lower Rivington Reservoir on 12<sup>th</sup> August. The flock at Withnell Fold had increased to 140 by the 27<sup>th</sup> August

to 215 by 24<sup>th</sup> September and 250 by 8<sup>th</sup> October. A flock of 24 was on Anglezarke Reservoir on 1<sup>st</sup> September.

A mobile flock on Bretherton Eyes numbered 150 on 20<sup>th</sup> October. A flock on Croston Moss increased from 50 on 2<sup>nd</sup> October to 200 by the 17<sup>th</sup>. No doubt many of these birds moved between Bretherton and Croston.

November flocks included 126 at Bretherton Eyes (4<sup>th</sup>), 140 at Belmont Reservoir, 180 at Withnell Fold (11<sup>th</sup>) and 400 on Croston Moss (18<sup>th</sup>). December flocks included 260 at Bretherton Eyes (3<sup>rd</sup>), 100 on Croston Moss (10<sup>th</sup>) and 400 at Withnell Fold (30<sup>th</sup>).

**Golden Plover** (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

***Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. Has bred***

A flock of 20 was with lapwings at Bretherton Eyes on 28<sup>th</sup> January, and 18 were there on 28<sup>th</sup> March. One was over Winter Hill on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

Two were back on the moors above Belmont on 15<sup>th</sup> February, with 7 territories being located during the breeding season and at least three pairs seen with young later.

One was over Belmont on 2<sup>nd</sup> September and one was on the moors above Belmont on 15<sup>th</sup> November. A flock of 13 was at Bretherton Eyes on 6<sup>th</sup> December.

**Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

***Regular passage migrant***

A party of 6 was at Bretherton Eyes on 12<sup>th</sup> April. A pair was territorial at Belmont Reservoir from 9<sup>th</sup> May onwards with display and nest-scrape formation noted until following heavy rain, rising water levels covered the nest site/territory on 6<sup>th</sup> June and the birds departed.

One was on Anglezarke Reservoir on 1<sup>st</sup> September.

**Little Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius dubius*)

***Uncommon summer visitor***

First back was one at Cuerden Hall flash on 30<sup>th</sup> March. In April, birds were noted at Belmont (4 on 5<sup>th</sup>), Withnell Fold (11<sup>th</sup>), Bretherton Eyes (12<sup>th</sup>) and Buckshaw Village (23<sup>rd</sup>).

Up to 5 were present at Belmont Reservoir from April to June with at least one pair breeding that had its nest site covered by rising water levels in early June. On 8<sup>th</sup> June, only one pair was remaining that had relocated to an adjacent area of bare ground but these had departed by mid-June.

Two pairs in Buckshaw Village were predated at egg and chick stage respectively. Water levels in most reservoirs remained too high to permit breeding this year.

Two were at Anglezarke Reservoir on 30<sup>th</sup> August, presumably on passage.

**Whimbrel** (*Numenius phaeopus*)

***Regular passage migrant***

Annual Whimbrel passage began on the 12<sup>th</sup> April with 4 over Charnock Richard on the 12<sup>th</sup>, then single figure flocks in the Bretherton and Euxton areas, the exception being a flock of 37 feeding in fields on the edge of Bretherton Moss on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 4 were at Belmont reservoir on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Elsewhere, a flock of 24 was in fields off Jolly Tar Lane, Coppull on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

In May, passage continued until the 10<sup>th</sup>, with the largest gathering being 50 birds in the fields off Jolly Tar Lane, Coppull on the 1<sup>st</sup>, reducing to 10 by the 10<sup>th</sup>. 5 were at Belmont Reservoir on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Most other sightings were single figure parties from the Tinklers Lane fields area of Eccleston.

Presumably a returning non-breeding bird was at Eccleston on 18<sup>th</sup> July.

**Curlew** (*Numenius arquata*)

***Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor***

The first records for the year were of 2 at Belmont Reservoir on 15<sup>th</sup> February, followed by a flock of 13 at Withnell Fold flashes and one at Bretherton Eyes on 17<sup>th</sup> February. 4 were in fields off Holker Lane, Ulnes Walton on 27<sup>th</sup> February.

Roost counts at Belmont Reservoir:-

- 19 on 23/2
- 47 on 24/2
- 55 on 26/2
- 72 on 28/2
- 118 on 4/3
- 120 on 6/3
- 96 on 10/3
- 95 on 12/3
- 37 on 22/3

Other pre-nuptial gatherings in March included 60 at Withnell Fold (7<sup>th</sup>), 12 at Yarrow reservoir (12<sup>th</sup>) and 32 at Eccleston (30<sup>th</sup>). From mid-March pairs were observed, displaying widely over Anglezarke moor with at least 6 pairs indicated, in addition pairs were observed feeding in adjacent fields.

A gathering of 46 was by the Yarrow at Eccleston on the 8<sup>th</sup> April, but the species had also begun to disperse to breeding territories with birds seen at Bretherton Eyes (1<sup>st</sup>), Charnock Richard (1<sup>st</sup>), Hic Bibi (2<sup>nd</sup>), Wheelton (3<sup>rd</sup>), Anglezarke Moor (4<sup>th</sup>) and Withnell Fold (8<sup>th</sup>).

Survey work across the West Pennine Moors realised 7 pairs in 2 km<sup>2</sup> of Anglezarke Moor and 10 pairs in 3km<sup>2</sup> of Withnell Moor. It was noted that some areas of in-bye were visited by a constant succession of birds that were commuting from their breeding territories on the main areas of moorland to feed. Breeding success appeared good with many broods seen between 18<sup>th</sup> June and 20<sup>th</sup> August (2 broods totalling Y3 at Belmont).

5 were at Hic Bibi on 1<sup>st</sup> May. In June, 2 were at Withnell Fold (11<sup>th</sup>), one at Ulnes Walton (13<sup>th</sup>) and 3 at Eccleston (30<sup>th</sup>). July records came from Withnell Moor (2<sup>nd</sup>), Eccleston (2 on 19<sup>th</sup>) and Withnell Fold (23<sup>rd</sup>).

The last one present at Belmont was on 25 August with the last one over west on 27<sup>th</sup> August.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*)  
**Rare passage migrant**

One was at Belmont Reservoir on 10<sup>th</sup> September.

**Black-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa limosa*)  
**Rare passage migrant and summer visitor**

A flock of 18 dropped onto Bretherton Eyes on 17<sup>th</sup> February. One was at Bretherton Eyes on 7<sup>th</sup> April. There was an extended passage at Belmont Reservoir during the last week of April and the first week of May:-

- on 22/4
- 3\* on 23/4
- 20\* on 24/4
- 20\* on 25/4
- 21\* on 26/4
- 26\* on 27/4
- 21\* on 28/4
- 13 on 29/4
- 1 on 30/4
- 1 on 1/5
- 1 on 2/5

\* - including a colour-ringed bird present for 6 days that had been ringed as an adult on The Wash on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1998 (making it now at least 21 years old) with many subsequent sightings from E/SE England, one from Lothian and one (on presumably its breeding grounds) from E Iceland on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2002. Two were at Bretherton Eyes on 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

**Ruff** (*Calidris pugnax*)  
**Rare visitor**

A party of 5 was at Withnell Fold flashes on 10<sup>th</sup> September, increasing to 7 by the 16<sup>th</sup>, with a single bird still there on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. A party of 7 was seen flying over Croston Moss on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

One was at Withnell Fold flashes on 6<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> October. A party of 9 was at Bretherton Eyes on 29<sup>th</sup> October. Birds were then seen in good numbers in November



including 50 on Croston Moss (11<sup>th</sup>), 10 at Bretherton Eyes (18<sup>th</sup>) and 20 on Mawdesley Moss on the same day. 65 were at Bretherton Eyes on 3<sup>rd</sup> December and a single bird was on Mawdesley Moss on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Dunlin** (*Calidris alpina*)

**Scarce breeder and passage migrant**

A single bird was at Bretherton Eyes on 21<sup>st</sup> January, another was there on 25<sup>th</sup> February and again on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March. Two were at Bretherton Eyes on 12<sup>th</sup> April.

Singles were at Belmont Reservoir on 4<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> April. Up to 8 were then present daily from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> May with display and copulation noted, thought to be linked to birds breeding on adjacent moorland. One was singing high over Belmont village at night on 21<sup>st</sup> May. Two pairs, one probably with young, were territorial on the moors in June.

Three were at Bretherton Eyes on 9<sup>th</sup> November.

**Woodcock** (*Scolopax rusticola*)

**Fairly common resident and winter visitor**

Birds were seen regularly along Syd Brook, Eccleston during January and February. One was also noted at Croston Twin Lakes in March. Pheasant beaters reported flushing over 16 at Belmont on 7<sup>th</sup> January and an estimated 35 during shoots on 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> January.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 2 'roding' males. Birds were roding at Belmont from 11<sup>th</sup> March onwards, albeit only from one site.

Probable winter visitors were noted at Belmont, Heskin, Hic Bibi, Eccleston and Yarrow Valley Park in November. There were multiple December sightings from Whittle-le-Woods, White Coppice, Hic Bibi, Eccleston and Whittle Bottoms. 8 were flushed by Pheasant beaters at Belmont on 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> December.

**Jack Snipe** (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

**Rare winter visitor**

Three were on Belmont moor on 4<sup>th</sup> January. One was flushed occasionally during January, February and March near a pond in Tincklers Lane fields, Eccleston. Singles were at Belmont on 30<sup>th</sup> January and 17<sup>th</sup> April.

One was noted on Croston Moss on 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September. Another was at Bretherton Eyes on 11<sup>th</sup> October. Two were on Anglezarke Moor on 14<sup>th</sup> October. In November, birds were noted on Croston Moss (7<sup>th</sup>), Belmont (11<sup>th</sup>) and Mawdesley Moss (19<sup>th</sup>), and in December at Eccleston and again on Croston Moss.

**Snipe** (*Gallinago gallinago*)

**Fairly common passage migrant / winter visitor; scarce breeder**

Four birds were flushed at Bretherton Eyes on 28<sup>th</sup> January. Birds were also seen regularly throughout January and February along Syd Brook or at ponds in Tincklers Lane fields, Eccleston. Birds were also recorded on Withnell Moor and at the E-shaped pond, Bretherton during January. Over 20 were seen on fields near Belmont during January and 33 were on Belmont Moor on 4<sup>th</sup> February. 8 were seen in Buckshaw Village on 10<sup>th</sup> February and at least one was at Withnell

Fold flashes on 17<sup>th</sup> February. March sightings came from Bretherton Eyes, Eccleston and Withnell Fold. April sightings came from Winter Hill (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Eccleston (12<sup>th</sup>).

In the breeding season 9 'territories' were recorded around Belmont Reservoir with successful breeding again confirmed with young seen on 25<sup>th</sup> May. During survey work on Anglezarke moor birds were recorded displaying at 5 sites.

Return passage in August was evidenced by increasing numbers at Withnell Fold, from 3 on the 20<sup>th</sup> to 20 by the 27<sup>th</sup>. These increased to 30 by 5<sup>th</sup> September up to 70 on the 21<sup>st</sup>. 5 were on Bretherton Eyes (9<sup>th</sup>) and 6 were on Croston Moss (18<sup>th</sup>). Over 30 were above Belmont on 19<sup>th</sup> August. Over 40 were on Belmont Moor on 30<sup>th</sup> September increasing to a massive 270+ there on 14<sup>th</sup> October. Snipe were again seen regularly on Bretherton Eyes during October. 15 were on Croston Moss on 10<sup>th</sup> October. Highest count at Withnell Fold in October was of 27 on the 6<sup>th</sup>. In November, birds were recorded at Bretherton Eyes (11<sup>th</sup>) and Croston Moss where 15 were seen on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Birds were also seen regularly in December at sites at Eccleston and Croston Moss.

### **Common Sandpiper** (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

***Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor; has wintered.***

First back was one at Belmont Reservoir on 1<sup>st</sup> April, followed by one at Croston Twin Lakes (4<sup>th</sup>), a couple on the Douglas at Bretherton (13<sup>th</sup>) and one at Anglezarke Reservoir (29<sup>th</sup>). Numbers at Belmont had increased to 14 by 28<sup>th</sup> April.

In May, birds were noted on Common Bank Lodge (1<sup>st</sup>), 2 on the Douglas at Bretherton (1<sup>st</sup>) and 3 at Belmont Reservoir (14<sup>th</sup>). 3 were at Roddlesworth on 26<sup>th</sup> June. In July, birds were located at Lower Rivington (8<sup>th</sup>), Belmont (9<sup>th</sup>) and Anglezarke (28<sup>th</sup>). One was at Anglezarke on 30<sup>th</sup> August and again on 1<sup>st</sup> September.

4 or 5 pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir with 2 broods seen later.

### **Green Sandpiper** (*Tringa ochropus*)

***Scarce passage migrant. Winters most years.***

At least 2 were seen along Syd Brook or at ponds in Tincklers Lane fields, Eccleston during January and February.

In April, the over-wintering bird was seen on several dates along Syd Brook during the month, and another was on Croston Moss (8<sup>th</sup>).

A returning bird was seen on several dates on Syd Brook at Eccleston in August. Up to 3 were at Withnell Fold flashes between 16<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September. One was again seen at Withnell Fold flashes on 1<sup>st</sup> October. Two were at Bretherton Eyes on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, and singles were on the adjacent Douglas on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November. One was in a ditch by Croston Twin Lakes on 28<sup>th</sup> December.

**Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)**  
***Scarce passage migrant and summer visitor***

First record for the year was one at Bretherton Eyes on 13<sup>th</sup> February, with 2 there on the 15<sup>th</sup>. These had increased to 6 on 25<sup>th</sup> March, and 3 were there on 5<sup>th</sup> April. Two were back at Belmont Reservoir by 4<sup>th</sup> March. 2 Redshank were at Withnell Fold on 9<sup>th</sup> April and another was at Buckshaw on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Four pairs bred at Belmont Reservoir with two broods present in June. Two were at Anglezarke Reservoir on 30<sup>th</sup> August. Another two were on Bretherton Eyes on 21<sup>st</sup> October, with a single there on 11<sup>th</sup> November and 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

**Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)**  
***Scarce passage migrant***

One was on Withnell Fold Flash on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, and one was on Upper Rivington Reservoir on the same day. One was at Bretherton Eyes on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

**Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*)**  
***Rare vagrant***

Two were at Belmont Reservoir on 16<sup>th</sup> October (the day of storm 'Ophelia')

**Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)**  
***Present in good numbers throughout the year. Now breeds in large numbers***

500 were on fields at Ulnes Walton on 20<sup>th</sup> February. Management of the Belmont Reservoir colony site was carried out by UU in early February to ensure the vegetation height was suitable for breeding gulls. The first birds (2000) subsequently returned to the gully on 21<sup>st</sup> February with pre-breeding numbers building to 5,500 by 4<sup>th</sup> March, 10,000 on 8<sup>th</sup> March, 17,000 by 14<sup>th</sup> March to peak at 20,000+ at roost on 19<sup>th</sup> March. The timing of the gulls' breeding season was a few days earlier than the average recent mean dates (2011-2016) with the first young noted on 28<sup>th</sup> April and the first fledged juvenile seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

The gully was censused by means of aerial photography from a quadcopter drone from Natural England on 18<sup>th</sup> May. The population total obtained by the 2017 aerial survey realised 10,484 nests (including 4 nests on the islet at the north end of the reservoir), a minor increase (3.4%) on the 10,136 nests estimated during the last aerial survey in 2014. This reinforces the site's credential as probably Britain's largest Black-headed Gull colony (*JNCC 2016: Seabird Population Trends and Causes of Change: 1986-2015 Report*) holding c7.2% of the UK breeding population.

The 2017 breeding season was again extremely productive with many pairs noted with two or three juveniles. Counts of adults with large young/juveniles in attendance in late June realised 1.93 young per successful pair from a sample of 1771 birds.

Flocks in excess of 100 were seen throughout December at both Bretherton Eyes and on Croston Moss.

**Mediterranean Gull** (*Larus melanocephalus*)

***Rare visitor now also breeding***

In February, birds were noted at Eccleston (26<sup>th</sup>) and Bretherton Eyes also 26<sup>th</sup>, feeding with Black-headed Gulls. March sightings came from Bretherton Eyes on a couple of occasions and from Heath Charnock (4<sup>th</sup>) and Eccleston (28<sup>th</sup>). Two were feeding with Black-headed Gulls at Brindle on 17<sup>th</sup> April.

The 6 birds back in the Black-headed Gull colony at Belmont Reservoir on 21<sup>st</sup> February were the earliest ever here. Numbers in and around the gullery rose to 17 by 12<sup>th</sup> March, 70 by 8<sup>th</sup> April and on to an estimated 120 in late-April to mid-May. Of note was a colour-ringed bird within the colony which had been ringed as a *pullus* at Belmont on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2007, making it now 10 years old.

Intensive survey work realised 49 confirmed pairs with, due to viewing impaired by vegetation, the actual total in 2017 thought to be probably in excess of 55 pairs. 16 nests were physically monitored with at least 46 eggs laid giving an average clutch size of 2.9. The 49 confirmed pairs in 2017 was an increase of some 19% on the 2014 figure of 41 pairs and is highly significant with the Belmont colony now holding some c.5.3% of the UK population and considered to be the largest inland colony of Mediterranean Gulls in the UK (*Natural England 2016: West Pennine Moors SSSI. Supporting Information*) and the only sizeable colony away from the S and SE coasts of England.

Sample counts in July of successful 'family groups' realised 51 Mediterranean Gull juveniles with 31 distinct attendant adult/s giving an encouraging average for that sample of 1.65 young per successful pair in 2017. Slightly less than the excellent productivity ratio of 1.8 young per successful pair achieved in 2016.

**Common Gull** (*Larus canus*)

***Common winter visitor***

Small numbers could be found on the reservoirs and in the Lower Rivington gull roost during the winter months.

**Great Black-backed Gull** (*Larus marinus*)

***Scarce winter visitor***

There were usually one or two to be found on the reservoirs during the winter months.

Two first-summer birds were regular on the edge of the Belmont Reservoir gullery throughout the breeding season.

**Herring Gull** (*Larus argentatus*)

***Common winter visitor and on passage***

Small numbers could be found on the reservoirs and in the Lower Rivington gull roost during the winter months.



**Lesser Black-Backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)**

**Common in most months; has bred**

A gathering of 120 birds was feeding on fields by the A49 at Charnock Richard on 13<sup>th</sup> April.

Up to 30 birds were regularly present loafing on the edge of the Belmont Reservoir gully throughout the breeding season. Three pairs of adults were subsequently considered to be holding territories with one incubating bird noted from mid-May onwards with the nest becoming hidden from view by vegetation growth by late May and the outcome unknown.

Small numbers could be found on the reservoirs and in the Lower Rivington gull roost during the winter months.

**Gull Roost (*Laridae spp.*)**

No systematic count of the gull roost was made this year.

**Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)**

**Scarce breeding bird and passage migrant**

First record for the year was one at Croston Twin Lakes on 19<sup>th</sup> April, with the first returning bird at Yarrow Valley Park on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 3 there by the 29<sup>th</sup>. The birds left the site shortly after 1<sup>st</sup> May and didn't breed this year. Two pairs of Moorhen on the rafts had young so the possibility exists that they were deterred by them. A single bird was at Croston Twin Lakes on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

There was just a single record in July – an individual on Lower Rivington Reservoir on the 8<sup>th</sup>. One on the Douglas near Croston on the 13<sup>th</sup> was the only August record.

**Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*)**

**Common resident**

There are still plenty to be found around Chorley town centre despite the continuing presence of a breeding pair of Peregrines.

**Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)**

**Uncommon breeding bird**

A small flock could be found on the mosses during the winter months.

Pairs were present at the usual farm and quarry sites at Anglezarke, Rivington, White Coppice and Whittle. 10 were at breeding sites around Belmont Reservoir on 4<sup>th</sup> June. 2 regularly visiting a Belmont garden bird table from August to October was unusual.

**Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)**

**Abundant resident and passage migrant**

150 roosted at Upper Rivington on both 13<sup>th</sup> January and 7<sup>th</sup> February.

70+ were feeding on clover at Belmont Reservoir on 23<sup>rd</sup> April and 200+ were doing the same near Belmont on 25<sup>th</sup> June.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimated 30 breeding pairs and 80 were feeding on bilberries on adjacent moorland on 21<sup>st</sup> June.

A total of 34 was recorded on 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area in April.

It came 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, compared to 15<sup>th</sup> when the survey started 20 years ago.

Maximum birds per hour south over Belmont were 1921 on 25<sup>th</sup> October.

In December, flocks in excess of 1000 birds could be seen on Croston Moss and Bretherton Eyes and a flock of several hundred was at Lower Healey on 27<sup>th</sup>, feeding in a wheat field which for some reason had not been harvested.

### **Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)**

#### ***Common resident***

It came thirteenth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen.

14 were in a Belmont garden on 30<sup>th</sup> August and 21+ were there on 27<sup>th</sup> October including a recently fledged juvenile.

### **Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)**

#### ***Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant***

First back was one at White Coppice, on 15<sup>th</sup> April, followed by one near Rivington Pike (16<sup>th</sup>) and another in Lead Mines Clough (22<sup>nd</sup>). The first record for the Rivington area was off the mast road on 28<sup>th</sup> April.

In May, birds were seen in the White Coppice area throughout the month with other birds also recorded in Lead Mines Clough (3<sup>rd</sup>), Great Knowley on a few dates, Anglezarke Moor (12<sup>th</sup>), 4 sites at Rivington throughout and Red Lea Reservoir (25<sup>th</sup>).

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised one territorial male whose territory included the woodland and there was possibly another male adjacent.

The last record came from Great Knowley on the relatively early date of 4<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)**

#### ***Uncommon resident - increasing***

In January, birds were seen on Croston Moss and at Ulnes Walton (2<sup>nd</sup>), Croston Sewage Works (5<sup>th</sup>) and Cuerden Valley Park (11<sup>th</sup>). One was seen at Gale Moss on 5<sup>th</sup> February.

Birds were recorded hunting at Bretherton Eyes, the E-shaped Pond, Croston Moss, Croston village and Great Knowley during March.

Birds were recorded at 7 sites during May. A pair at Hoghton had 3 young and one at Anglezarke had 4. Two pairs bred at Belmont fledging one and 6 young.

Breeding probably also occurred at several other sites in the recording area.

One was seen perched on a car in Eccleston on 1<sup>st</sup> July! A pair was also seen on Croston Moss on several dates.

A family group was reported from Rivington on 8<sup>th</sup> August. Other sightings in August came from Croston Moss and Great Knowley, with the Croston Moss bird seen again on 26<sup>th</sup> September. One was seen hunting along the Douglas embankment at Bretherton on 21<sup>st</sup> October. In November, birds were noted at Hic Bibi (20<sup>th</sup>) and Charnock Richard (28<sup>th</sup>). At least 7 were out hunting in the mid-afternoon around Belmont during the hard weather in mid-December.

### **Tawny Owl** (*Strix aluco*)

#### **Common resident**

Most January records came from Eccleston including 4 on the 9<sup>th</sup>. One was heard uttering the 'ocarina' call (aka the xylophone trill) on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Records in February came from Euxton and again from Eccleston where 4 were noted along Syd Brook. March records came from Anglezarke, Common Bank, Eccleston, Ulnes Walton and White Coppice.

Records in May came from 7 sites, with successful breeding confirmed in Eccleston. One or two pairs bred in Cuerden Valley Park. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 3 territories. Birds were recorded in all months of the year in Rivington, with young noted at 3 sites.

Records in August came from Wheelton and Eccleston. In September, a young Tawny Owl was noted at Eccleston on the 14<sup>th</sup> with 2 there the next day. Calling birds in Chorley and Euxton on the 25<sup>th</sup> may well have been young birds dispersing.

Birds were also heard calling in December in Chorley, at Heskin and at Whittle Bottoms.

### **Little Owl** (*Athene noctua*)

#### **Fairly common resident**

Just a single record in January of a bird on Croston Moss (5<sup>th</sup>). Birds were recorded on Croston Moss and at White Coppice during March, April and May, with the White Coppice bird being particularly vocal.

A pair with at least one young was noted on Croston Moss in June. No information was received regarding the success or otherwise of the White Coppice bird. One pair bred (successfully raising 4 young) at Belmont Reservoir for the first time since 2013. In July, one of the Croston Moss birds was seen with a juvenile in tow. Birds were also noted on Bretherton Moss (9<sup>th</sup>) and Withnell Fold (9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>). The latter was seen regularly in August.

The regular bird was noted at Withnell Fold on 14<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Long-eared Owl** (*Asio otus*)

#### **Scarce breeding resident**

A second-hand report was received of one hunting over Stronstrey Bank on 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

**Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)**  
**Scarce winter visitor and breeding resident**

Two or three were seen hunting over Croston Moss from 20<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> March. One was over Winter Hill on 29<sup>th</sup> April.

In contrast to 2016, successful breeding occurred on the moors with two pairs fledging young.

One was over Rivington Moor on 13<sup>th</sup> August. November records came from Adlington (10<sup>th</sup>) and Bretherton Eyes (18<sup>th</sup>), and at least one remained around Belmont into November.



**Swift (*Apus apus*)**  
**Common summer visitor and passage migrant**

First back was one over Mawdesley on 1<sup>st</sup> May, followed by birds at Belmont, Hoghton, Eccleston, Chorley, White Coppice, Coppull and Euxton. The first back at Jepsons Clough, Rivington was on the 10<sup>th</sup> May with 6 back on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 24 screaming overhead on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Over 35 were feeding high over the moors above Belmont on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. By July, birds were gathering in post-breeding flocks, including 6 at Great Knowley (1<sup>st</sup>), 10 over Bretherton Eyes (4<sup>th</sup>), several at Brinscall (6<sup>th</sup>), 20 over Pilling Lane (6<sup>th</sup>), 20 at Eccleston on the same day, 32 at Belmont (9<sup>th</sup>) and 11 over Eaves Green (18<sup>th</sup>).

Most August records came in the first week of the month when they traditionally leave for the south and these included 8 over Jepsons Clough, Rivington on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 10 over Bretherton Eyes (5<sup>th</sup>) 8 over Pilling Lane (6<sup>th</sup>) and 4 at Belmont (10<sup>th</sup>). 3 were then seen at Wheelton on the 17<sup>th</sup> and a single was at Croston sewage works on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

September was a good month for late Swift records with one at Eccleston (4<sup>th</sup>), 2 at Croston sewage works (5<sup>th</sup>) and one over Coppull (12<sup>th</sup>).

**Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)**  
**Fairly common resident**

January records came from across the area including Arley nature reserve, Bretherton Eyes, Eccleston, Great Hanging Bridge, Park Hall, Spring Wood, and Yarrow Valley Park. Birds were seen regularly at Belmont and Wards Reservoir throughout the year.

In April, birds were noted at Bretherton Eyes (1<sup>st</sup>) and Anglezarke (22<sup>nd</sup>). A territory was occupied by a pair at Upper Rivington.

Post-breeding dispersal appeared to have started in June with sightings from Common Bank (1<sup>st</sup>), Bretherton (4<sup>th</sup>), Yarrow Valley Park (20<sup>th</sup>), Syd Brook (23<sup>rd</sup>) and Croston Moss (24<sup>th</sup>). In July, birds were seen on Syd Brook (2 on 8<sup>th</sup>), the

Yarrow at Eccleston and the Yarrow at Euxton. On the 17<sup>th</sup> one was at Heapey embankment, Anglezarke reservoir, and on 28<sup>th</sup> one was below the Street embankment Upper Rivington Reservoir.

August sightings came from Bretherton Eyes, Croston Moss, Withnell Fold and Yarrow Valley Park. In September, Kingfishers were well into dispersal with records from at least 9 sites including one through a member's garden at Euxton on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

November records came from the ditches at Bretherton Eyes and Croston Moss and from the E-shaped Pond and Yarrow Valley Park. One was found freshly dead on A675 at Belmont Reservoir on 12<sup>th</sup> November – specimen now in Liverpool Museum.

In December, birds were noted at Arley nature reserve, Croston Moss, Croston Twin Lakes and Yarrow Valley Park.

### **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** (*Dendrocopus minor*)

#### ***Uncommon resident***

One was seen at Limbrick on 29<sup>th</sup> April by an experienced birder.

### **Great Spotted Woodpecker** (*Dendrocopus major*)

#### ***Common resident***

In January, birds were seen at Anglezarke, Astley Park, Croston village, Croston Moss, Lower Burgh Meadow, Spring Wood and Syd Brook, Eccleston. Birds were noted at 5 locations in February, and 8 in March. Birds were recorded at all the usual woodland sites in Rivington, in all months of the year.

April sightings came from Charnock Richard (2<sup>nd</sup>), White Coppice (3<sup>rd</sup>), Heskin (5<sup>th</sup>), and Withnell Fold (8<sup>th</sup>). The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 4 territories. Pairs bred in three locations in Cuerden Valley Park.

A juvenile was at Great Knowley on 14<sup>th</sup> June.

Records in August came from Croston Moss (1<sup>st</sup>), Withnell Fold (6<sup>th</sup>), Eccleston (3 on 12<sup>th</sup>), Hoghton Bottoms (17<sup>th</sup>) and Anglezarke (2 on 26<sup>th</sup>). Migrants were noted flying south over Belmont on 6<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> October.



### **Green Woodpecker** (*Picus viridis*)

#### ***Uncommon resident, declining***

The first sighting of the year was at Hoghton on 31<sup>st</sup> March. One was also seen at White Coppice on 8<sup>th</sup> April. On 13<sup>th</sup> April a bird was noted at Gilsbrook, Rivington and also on 26<sup>th</sup> at Jepsons Clough.

Bird/s were present at a site near Belmont occasionally throughout the year although it was thought that breeding did not occur.

A record was again received from Hoghton on 17<sup>th</sup> August. One was calling near Anglezarke Reservoir on 9<sup>th</sup> September, and again on 15<sup>th</sup> December.

**Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*)

**Fairly common resident**

Birds were reported from 9 sites during January, 5 in February, 7 in April and 5 in May.

A pair at Hic Bibi successfully fledged 3 young and a pair at Belmont reservoir fledged 6 young. A pair in Cuerden Valley Park fledged three young, with possible breeding elsewhere in the park. Pairs were also noted at Croston and Mawdesley Moss and Great Knowley during June. Pairs nested at a minimum of 2 sites in Rivington, raising young and were regularly noted in those areas throughout the year.

In July, records came from nine sites including family groups at Croston Moss (1<sup>st</sup>) Hic Bibi (1<sup>st</sup>), Mawdesley Moss (3<sup>rd</sup>), White Coppice (9<sup>th</sup>) and Adlington (16<sup>th</sup>). Records came from similar sites in August including parties of 3 on Croston Moss (1<sup>st</sup>), 5 on Winter Hill (12<sup>th</sup>) and 14+ around Belmont (25<sup>th</sup>). Parties of 3 in September were recorded at Rivington (2<sup>nd</sup>), Croston Moss (3<sup>rd</sup>), and Anglezarke moor (24<sup>th</sup>). Nine were over one small valley near Belmont on 16<sup>th</sup> September, believed to be feeding on an abundance of field voles.

Six were noted on Croston Moss on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, with the species being recorded at a minimum of 10 sites during October and November.

**Merlin** (*Falco columbarius*)

**Scarce resident and passage migrant**

A female was seen regularly around Belmont during the first winter period, but no territories were located during the breeding season.

Birds were seen on Bretherton Eyes on 28<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October. November sightings came from Bretherton Eyes (13<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>), Mawdesley Moss (24<sup>th</sup>) and Croston Moss (30<sup>th</sup>), and in December from Mawdesley Moss (11<sup>th</sup>) and Croston Moss (16<sup>th</sup>). A male and a female were around Belmont through the second winter period.

**Hobby** (*Falco subbuteo*)

**Rare summer visitor**

First record for the year came from Eccleston on 5<sup>th</sup> May, followed by birds at Croston (26<sup>th</sup>) and Yarrow Valley Park (27<sup>th</sup>).

In June, birds were seen at Eccleston (10<sup>th</sup>) and near Tesco, Chorley (16<sup>th</sup>). One flew over Lower Rivington Reservoir on 30<sup>th</sup> July.

One was seen at Whittle on 8<sup>th</sup> August in a skirmish with Peregrines, and another was seen at Rivington on the same day. One was at Eccleston on 13<sup>th</sup> August. One was at Belmont on 28<sup>th</sup> August, two were there on 2<sup>nd</sup> September (catching migrating Red Admirals) and singles were there on 10<sup>th</sup> September (arriving with migrating Swallows) and again on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)**  
**Scarce resident and winter visitor. Has bred**

Birds were noted around Morrison's chimney throughout January, February and March.

Birds were also recorded at Bretherton Eyes, Eccleston, Great Knowley and White Coppice during March. In April away from breeding sites one was on Croston Moss on 4<sup>th</sup>, one was over Manor House, Anglezarke, and on 13<sup>th</sup> one over Terraced Gardens, Rivington. On 16<sup>th</sup> July an individual was calling and soaring over Jepsons Clough, and on 29<sup>th</sup> one was over the Yarrow fields.

A pair bred at a town centre church, hatching 4 young, three of which survived and were ringed on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. All 3 fledged successfully during June, and had left the site by July. Single adults and juveniles were then seen regularly at Morrison's chimney during August, although birds from the family were also seen frequently at a site in Wigan, outside the recording area. Pairs also bred at Hoghton and Whittle and a pair fledged a single juvenile from a moorland site.

Other August records came from Belmont Reservoir (up to 3 birds seen every month here), Croston Moss, White Coppice and Whittle. September records came from Withnell Fold (10<sup>th</sup>), Morrison's chimney (12<sup>th</sup>) and Croston Moss (16<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>). One or two were seen regularly at Bretherton Eyes during October, and two, possibly the same birds, were on Croston Moss on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. Birds were conspicuous in November with records from Bretherton Eyes (1<sup>st</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>), Croston Moss (2<sup>nd</sup>), White Coppice and Anglezarke Moor. (4<sup>th</sup>), and Morrison's chimney (5<sup>th</sup>).

**Ring-necked Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)**  
**Probable escape**

One was at Hartwood, Chorley on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Birds were again seen at Hartwood during March and also at Lower Burgh Way and near St Mary's school. Pairs were noted in April at Lower Burgh (2<sup>nd</sup>), Astley Park (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Hartwood (24<sup>th</sup>). A pair at White Coppice on 7<sup>th</sup> May was away from the usual sites.

In June, 3 were at the Gillibrands (5<sup>th</sup>) and 4 were at Hartwood (22<sup>nd</sup>), possibly indicating breeding success.

A party of 8 was seen at Whittle on 31<sup>st</sup> August.

In December, birds were seen at Shaw Hill (4<sup>th</sup>), Hartwood (5<sup>th</sup>), Whittle (8<sup>th</sup>) and Weldbank Lane (23<sup>rd</sup>).

**Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)**

**Common resident**

Common enough in woodland and wooded areas with noisy parties of several birds conspicuous in Spring.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 4 territories. It came 20<sup>th</sup> in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen.

## **Magpie** (*Pica pica*)

### **Common resident**

Gamekeepers at Belmont reported shooting/trapping 71 Magpies in 2017. Despite the commonly held view that Magpies are taking over the world and destroying the small bird population, only 6 were recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April.

A pair nested in a Gorse bush (nest only 5 feet up) on the moor-edge near Belmont.

It came sixth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen.

## **Jackdaw** (*Corvus monedula*)

### **Common resident; increasing**

Jackdaws continue to increase with good numbers breeding in quarries, and pairs also breeding in classic chimney pot locations across the area, including 4 pairs on a public house at Belmont. However, numbers breeding in Withnell Quarry were only a handful of pairs (<5) down from the usual 25+ pairs, for reasons unknown.

The species is present around Jepsons Clough, Rivington, but a record of over 30 birds gathered on the 25<sup>th</sup> June was exceptional. Increasingly, the birds are visiting garden bird feeding stations and mastering peanut feeders, like jays.

Numbers in the Upper Rivington roost were, however, much lower than usual. Maximum roost size in Cuerden Valley Park was 350.

## **Rook** (*Corvus frugilegus*)

### **Common resident**

The rookery census on 2<sup>nd</sup> April recorded a total of 302 nests, which was a decrease of eight compared to 2016. Details of the census are tabulated at the end of this report.

40 feeding at Belmont on 5<sup>th</sup> November was an unusual record.

## **Carrion Crow** (*Corvus corone*)

### **Common resident**

Gamekeepers at Belmont reported shooting/trapping 130 Carrion Crows in 2017. leucistic birds were seen regularly around the area.

A total of 19 birds was recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 4 territories.

It did, however, disappear out of the Top 20 in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being recorded in less than half of the gardens taking part. Numbers at roost sites were also down. 120 roosted at Upper Rivington on 7<sup>th</sup> February with 100



there on 14<sup>th</sup> November. 250 roosted in Roddlesworth Plantations on 29<sup>th</sup> January with 200+ there on 10<sup>th</sup> February and 27<sup>th</sup> November.

**Raven** (*Corvus corax*)

***Scarce but increasing resident***

Probably breeds at 3 quarry sites in the recording area. A party of 7 on Withnell Moor on 2<sup>nd</sup> July was possibly a family group. Several sizeable flocks were seen around Belmont during the year with 6 on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 10 on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 11 on 6<sup>th</sup> October with the largest being 15 there on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

**Waxwing** (*Bombycilla garrulous*)

***Fairly common but irregular winter visitor***

January saw plenty of Waxwings around town with up to 40 in Collingwood Road (1<sup>st</sup>), 12 in Hollinshead Street (2<sup>nd</sup>), one in Eccleston (5<sup>th</sup>), 24 at the top of Harpers Lane (8<sup>th</sup>), 40 in Coppull (18<sup>th</sup>), 37 in Pilling Lane (21<sup>st</sup>) and 51 in Adlington (21<sup>st</sup>).

The only February record was of a single bird at Mawdesley on the 19<sup>th</sup>. March sightings included 12 in Pilling Lane, Chorley (28<sup>th</sup>) and at least 7 in Lower Burgh Way (29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>).

Waxwings were still in town at the beginning of April with a flock of 30 seen in the Lower Burgh area on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and the fast disappearance of cotoneaster berries from other areas was further evidence of their continued presence.

**Coal Tit** (*Periparus ater*)

***Common resident and winter visitor***

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimate of 25 breeding pairs.

25 passed south over Belmont in the first hour after sunrise on 6<sup>th</sup> October.

It retained eighth place in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen.

**Willow Tit** (*Poecile montana*)

***Scarce resident***

February sightings included 3 at Hic Bibi nature reserve (4<sup>th</sup>) and 2 in a garden at Great Knowley (15<sup>th</sup>). Records from both sites continued throughout March. April sightings came from Hartwood, where possibly four birds were seen on the 19<sup>th</sup>, one from Croston Reed Bed (19<sup>th</sup>) and a pair in the Common Bank area of Yarrow Valley Park. Two birds were seen on several occasions in Cuerden Valley Park during March and April.

One was at Hic Bibi nature reserve on 27<sup>th</sup> August, and 2 were there on 17<sup>th</sup> September. Birds were also seen in September at Euxton (22<sup>nd</sup>) and Yarrow Valley Park (24<sup>th</sup>).

November records included 2 at Euxton (2<sup>nd</sup>), 2 at Hic Bibi (17<sup>th</sup>) and one at Great Knowley (30<sup>th</sup>). In December, birds were again at Great Knowley (22<sup>nd</sup>) and at Hic Bibi (31<sup>st</sup>).

**Blue Tit** (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

***Abundant resident***

A total of 25 was recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimate of 40 breeding pairs

It came second in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen.

**Great Tit** (*Parus major*)

***Very common resident***

A total of 21 was recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimate of 45 breeding pairs.

It came seventh in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen. A fall of two places from last year.

Maximum birds per hour south over Belmont were 24 on 25<sup>th</sup> October.

**Skylark** (*Alauda arvensis*)

***Common resident and summer visitor***

In January, 100 Skylark were on Croston Moss (21<sup>st</sup>) when 150 were also on Bretherton Eyes. 40 were on Croston Moss on 12<sup>th</sup> February. One was back in song above Belmont on 15<sup>th</sup> February. A flock of 20 was near Belmont on 19<sup>th</sup> March.

Breeding mainly occurs on the moorland and the mosses with just a few pairs on the pastureland between, chiefly where the odd arable field or set aside is maintained.

Over 30 were on Belmont moor on 19<sup>th</sup> August. A flock of around 100 birds was on Croston Moss throughout November and December.

**Sand Martin** (*Riparia riparia*)

***Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant***

First back in Spring were at Croston Twin Lakes and Cuerden Valley Park on 14<sup>th</sup> March. 30 were feeding at Twin Lakes on 1<sup>st</sup> April. 97 were counted flying north through Belmont Reservoir in a period of 30 minutes on 16<sup>th</sup> April.

A colony at Adlington had an estimated 150 nest holes.

15 were over the lake in Cuerden Valley Park on 8<sup>th</sup> August and the last record was of 2 at Withnell Fold on 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)**  
**Common summer visitor and passage migrant**

First back was one at Euxton on 30<sup>th</sup> March. The first at Belmont was on 7<sup>th</sup> April.

10 were recorded in 2 BBS squares during April in the Brindle area, where most farms have breeding pairs. Numbers had increased to 41 in the second visit at the end of May / early June.

Gatherings in August included 80 at Croston (22<sup>nd</sup>) and a similar number at Euxton on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Flocks of up to 30 were seen on a daily



basis at Bretherton Eyes in the first two weeks of September. 60 roosted at Belmont reservoir on 5<sup>th</sup> September, with 150 feeding there on the 10<sup>th</sup> and over 230 on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

A roost at Buckshaw village was monitored from 26<sup>th</sup> August when c2500 were counted to 17<sup>th</sup> September when numbers had reduced to c1000. The peak occurred on 2<sup>nd</sup> September when c3500 were counted.

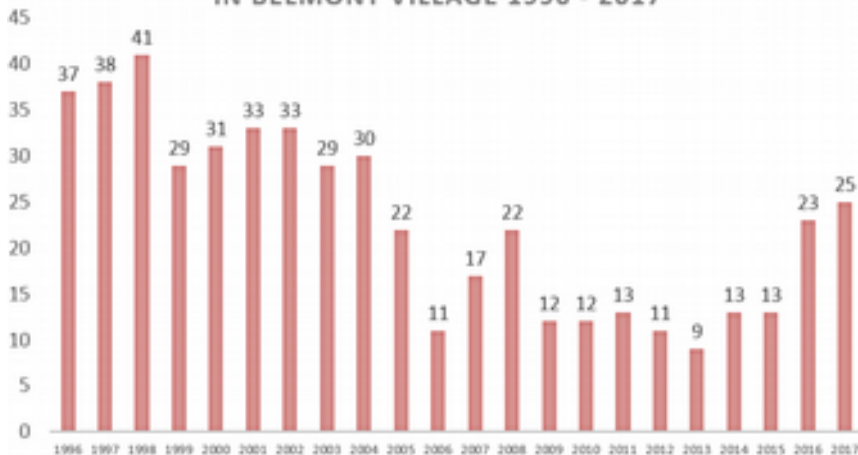
Migration over Belmont included 30 at dusk on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 20 per hour on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 39 on 20<sup>th</sup> and finally 29 on 6<sup>th</sup> October. 80 in Cuerden Valley Park on 21<sup>st</sup> September were the last recorded at the site. 13 were seen over Healey Nab on the 13<sup>th</sup> October and the last record for the species was one at Adlington on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)**  
**Common summer visitor and passage migrant**

First back was one over Cuerden Valley Park lake on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, followed by 2 over the Gillibrands on the 7<sup>th</sup>. The first back at Belmont was on 24<sup>th</sup> April.

A few pairs bred at a couple of farms in the Brindle area as well as in the village. Similarly, several pairs bred on a new housing estate at the Gillibrands in Chorley, whilst a few pairs continued to breed at traditional sites on the eastern side of Chorley. The villages of Croston and Eccleston also had small breeding colonies. A full survey of Belmont Village maintained the resurgence noted in 2016, with 25 active nests located.

## BREEDING PAIRS OF HOUSE MARTIN IN BELMONT VILLAGE 1996 - 2017



A flock of 50 was feeding over Anglezarke Reservoir on 7<sup>th</sup> June. In July, breeding was noted at small colonies at both ends of Eaves Lane and at Great Knowley. 20 or more were feeding over the nature trail at Brinscall (6<sup>th</sup>). Flocks of up to 25 birds were noted at 6 sites across the area in August. 80 were on wires at Belmont on 27<sup>th</sup> August. In early September, flocks were gathering for the journey south, but in Belmont, Chorley and Eccleston, young were still being fed in the nest. A couple of recently hatched birds were still being fed by their parents at a site in Chorley on the 1<sup>st</sup> October. Migration over Belmont included 35 on 20<sup>th</sup> September and 22 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The last record for the species was 1 at Eccleston on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

### Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

**Common resident; increasing**

50 in 3 flocks were near Belmont on 21<sup>st</sup> January.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 8 territories with flocks up to 11 recorded in the winter period preceding.

At least one pair bred in Cuerden Valley Park. A pair with 6 young was on Croston Moss on 13<sup>th</sup> May. Another pair with 9 young was at Hic Bibi on 7<sup>th</sup> June. Over 25 were near Belmont on 27<sup>th</sup> August, and movement was noted over Belmont in October with 31 on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 23 on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

It came 12<sup>th</sup> in the Winter Garden Bird Survey.

### Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

**Common summer visitor**

The first returning birds were 2 at Belmont Reservoir on 31<sup>st</sup> March, also a single near Crosses Cottage, Rivington and singing birds were noted at 4 more sites by 8<sup>th</sup> April.

The White Coppice area remains the epicentre for this species in the recording area, with numbers of singing birds in high double figures. 11 territories were recorded around Belmont Reservoir in the breeding season (c/w 5 pairs in 2012) due to increasing scrub. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 20 territories.

A family party was at Great Knowley on 4<sup>th</sup> June.

22 migrants were on the moorland edge at Belmont on 6<sup>th</sup> August. 4 migrants were in moorland bracken beds at Belmont on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. A late bird was at Hic Bibi nature reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

### **Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

**Common summer visitor and occasional winter visitor**

An over-wintering bird was at Croston sewage works on 1<sup>st</sup> January.

The first singing bird was at Hic Bibi on 11<sup>th</sup> March and the species was widespread by 18<sup>th</sup> March. 10 were singing at Ulnes Walton on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Six singing birds were recorded on 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. These had increased to 12 by the late visit at the end of May. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 10 territories. Seven territories were located in Cuerden Valley Park.

Singing birds were noted at 4 sites during September. One was at Belmont on 6<sup>th</sup> October and another at Eccleston on 18<sup>th</sup> October. One was on Mawdesley Moss on 11<sup>th</sup> December.

### **Wood Warbler** (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)

**Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant**

First back was one singing in Heatherlea Woods (Wheelton Plantation), Brinscall on 27<sup>th</sup> April. It was a key target species during the breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation given the county significance of this site for Wood Warbler. Singing males were recorded at five locations in the plantation between 27<sup>th</sup> April and early June and it was subsequently considered that four territories were established and at least two pairs bred.

Elsewhere in May, birds were also recorded at Rivington (3<sup>rd</sup>), Anglezarke (5<sup>th</sup>), Roddlesworth (6<sup>th</sup>) and Withnell Quarry (10<sup>th</sup>).

### **Sedge Warbler** (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

**Fairly common summer visitor to the limited suitable habitat**

First back was one at Croston Reed Bed on 14<sup>th</sup> April, followed by 2 on Lower Burgh Meadow (22<sup>nd</sup>). Birds were then noted at Bretherton Eyes, Croston Twin Lakes and Great Knowley. Two were singing at Belmont reservoir in mid-May, but they subsequently moved on.

Birds still singing in July were recorded at Croston Moss, at the E-shaped Pond and at Withnell Fold.

**Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)**

***Scarce summer visitor***

First record was one at Ulnes Walton brick pits on 19<sup>th</sup> April. 14 singing birds were counted along the Rufford canal spur between Bretherton and Sollom on 4<sup>th</sup> June. Two or 3 singing birds were also in Yarrow Valley Park.

In July, 7 singing birds were noted along the old canal at Sollom on the boundary of our recording area on the 2<sup>nd</sup> with another 2 singing along the Douglas in the same area. Other singers were noted at the E-shaped Pond (4<sup>th</sup>) and in Yarrow Valley Park (6<sup>th</sup>).

September sightings came from Yarrow Valley park (7<sup>th</sup>) and the Rufford canal between Sollom and Bretherton (11<sup>th</sup>).

**Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*)**

***Scarce passage migrant and summer visitor***

First back was one at Lower Burgh Meadow on 6<sup>th</sup> April, followed by one at Lower Healey (11<sup>th</sup>), one at Belmont (15<sup>th</sup>), one at White Coppice (17<sup>th</sup>), then 2 on Lower Burgh Meadow (22<sup>nd</sup>).

7 territories were identified around Belmont Reservoir (7 also in 2016). One 'reeling' bird was noted at Lodge Bank, Brinscall during the UU breeding bird survey of Wheelton Plantation. On 28<sup>th</sup> April reeling birds were noted at 5 sites during survey work at Anglezarke moor. In June, birds were reeling at Great Knowley (4<sup>th</sup>) and on Bretherton Eyes (17<sup>th</sup>). In July, they were reeling at Great Knowley (1<sup>st</sup>), Croston Moss (4<sup>th</sup>), Lower Burgh Meadow (21<sup>st</sup>) and White Coppice (24<sup>th</sup>). Three were still reeling at Belmont on 6<sup>th</sup> August with 2 still reeling there on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The last record was from Belmont on 16<sup>th</sup> September.

**Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)**

***Summer and winter visitor***

An over-wintering bird was in an Eccleston garden on 7<sup>th</sup> January. Another was in Spring Wood, Duxbury on 1<sup>st</sup> February.

The first singing bird was at Great Knowley on 29<sup>th</sup> March, followed by birds at 4 more sites by 8<sup>th</sup> April. The species was widespread in Rivington from the 7<sup>th</sup> April. Just 5 singing birds were recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 12 territories.

The last at Belmont was on 24<sup>th</sup> September.

A wintering bird was at Euxton on 1<sup>st</sup> December and another was in a Clayton garden on 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)**

***Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant***

The first returning bird was one at Cuerden Valley Park on 7<sup>th</sup> April, followed by birds at Crosse Hall (11<sup>th</sup>), Lower Healey (15<sup>th</sup>) and Yarrow Valley Park (16<sup>th</sup>).

One territory was identified at Belmont Reservoir. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 2 territories.

One was noted at Eccleston on 13<sup>th</sup> July. Two were seen feeding on elderberries at Croston sewage works on 31<sup>st</sup> August.

**Lesser Whitethroat** (*Sylvia curruca*)  
***Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant***

First back was one at Tincklers Lane fields, Eccleston on 10<sup>th</sup> April followed by one at Wymott (12<sup>th</sup>) with 3 there on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Whitethroat** (*Sylvia communis*)  
***Common summer visitor***

First back was one at Lower Healey on 11<sup>th</sup> April. Birds on territory were noted at Bretherton Eyes, Croston Moss, Great Knowley, Hic Bibi, Jack Green, Mawdesley Moss, Syd Brook and White Coppice. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised one territory. Four territories were located around Belmont in the breeding season including a pair at Belmont Reservoir that fledged 2+ young, albeit one was subsequently killed on the A675.

Whilst Whitethroats are widespread across the area, nowhere are they more numerous than on the mosses, with good numbers singing at Bretherton, Croston and Mawdesley throughout. 4 were also singing at Hic Bibi on the 8th. Last record was one at Belmont on 16<sup>th</sup> September.

**Goldcrest** (*Regulus regulus*)  
***Scarce breeding bird. Common passage migrant and winter visitor in variable numbers***

A total of 7 was recorded on 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. A pair was on territory at Eccleston on 15<sup>th</sup> April, which was then seen with 5 young on 13<sup>th</sup> June.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimated 20 breeding pairs.

**Wren** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)  
***Abundant resident***

A total of 33 mainly singing birds was recorded on 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimate of 90 breeding pairs. One nest was found in a moorland gully at 360m/1180 ft asl on Belmont Moor and singing territorial birds recorded up to 375m/1230ft asl on Winter Hill.

It came fifteenth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen.

**Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)**  
**Fairly common resident; increasing**

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 5 territories. Migrants south over Belmont were noted on 24<sup>th</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> October.

It came sixteenth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen, a rise of two places.

**Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*)**  
**Fairly common resident in the area's woodlands**

Common enough in all the woodlands and wooded areas throughout the recording area. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 8 territories.

**Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)**  
**Abundant resident and winter visitor**

January flocks included 400 on Croston Moss (4<sup>th</sup>), 200 at Withnell Fold (4<sup>th</sup>) and 200 at Eccleston (20<sup>th</sup>). A flock of 200 was off Sheephouse Lane, Rivington with redwing, fieldfare and lapwing on 29<sup>th</sup>. These birds were present throughout February and March. A flock of 600 was at Belmont Reservoir on 16<sup>th</sup> February, and 400 were near Belmont on 7<sup>th</sup> March. A flock of 750 birds was still together at Ulnes Walton on 19<sup>th</sup> March.



Breeding records from several members' gardens were received during the first half of May. The first juveniles at Belmont were seen on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

Migration south was noted over Belmont on 1<sup>st</sup> November with 22 birds per hour passing through.

Post-breeding flocks included 200 at Belmont on 26<sup>th</sup> July,

500 there on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 500 at Withnell Fold on 12<sup>th</sup> September and 700 on Croston Moss (26<sup>th</sup>). Massive flocks were seen in November, including 3000 on Croston Moss (2<sup>nd</sup>) and a huge murmuration of 10,000 over Bretherton Eyes on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

On 6<sup>th</sup> December an estimated 200 were feeding near Lower House, and on 19<sup>th</sup> 250 were nearby at the Hall Barn, Rivington. 2500 were near Abbey Village on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 500+ were at Bretherton Eyes on the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 500 were near Rivington on the 26<sup>th</sup> and over 1000 birds were at Withnell Fold on the 30<sup>th</sup>.



**Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*)**  
**Scarce passage migrant**

First on Spring passage was one at Belmont on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, followed by birds at White Coppice on several dates between 7<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, and another at Belmont on the 24<sup>th</sup>,  
Eight birds passed through Belmont in Autumn with singles on 16<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> September and 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> October and two birds on 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> October.

**Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)**  
**Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor**

Wintering flocks in January included 40 at Wheelton Plantation (4<sup>th</sup>), and 30 at Belmont (8<sup>th</sup>). In February, 25 roosted at Upper Rivington on the 7<sup>th</sup>.  
By the 17<sup>th</sup> March a female was already nest building in a garden in Rivington. Breeding records from several members' gardens were received during the first half of May. A total of 27 was recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimate of 25 breeding pairs, with 40+ wintering birds recorded there on 4/1/17. It remained in first place in the Winter Garden Bird Survey – a position it has held since the survey started in 1998. Winter roosts included 20 at Upper Rivington on 24<sup>th</sup> October and 14<sup>th</sup> November, while 30+ were at Belmont on 29<sup>th</sup> October and 40 on 26<sup>th</sup> November.  
Ringing controls at Belmont produced one bird on 10<sup>th</sup> November which had been ringed on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 near Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France (372 days, 436.5km, 226°), and another on 15<sup>th</sup> December which had been ringed as a first year female at Spurn Point on 5<sup>th</sup> November (40 days, 174km,W)

**Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)**  
**Winter visitor, often in large numbers**

January flocks included 35 at Eccleston (4<sup>th</sup>), 20 at Withnell Fold (4<sup>th</sup>), 40 at White Coppice (25<sup>th</sup>) and 100 at Anglezarke (27<sup>th</sup>). On 29<sup>th</sup> January an estimated 100 were with a mixed flock off Sheepphouse Lane, Rivington and were present all through February with 80 still present on 28<sup>th</sup> March. Records received in February included a small flock at White Coppice (4<sup>th</sup>), 12 at Eccleston (6<sup>th</sup>), 80+ at Belmont (9<sup>th</sup>) and 80+ at Roddlesworth (10<sup>th</sup>).  
Flocks in March included 11 at Coppull (7<sup>th</sup>), 60 on Croston Moss (20<sup>th</sup>), 15 at Eccleston (24<sup>th</sup>) and 9 at Belmont (25<sup>th</sup>).  
After receiving no record in April, a late bird was noted on the cricket field at White Coppice on 1<sup>st</sup> May.  
First back in Autumn was a party reported from Hoghton on the 6<sup>th</sup> October and a single bird at Belmont on the same day with 13 there on the 8<sup>th</sup>. The next were 3 at Tincklers Lane, Eccleston, and a single at Coppull on the 20<sup>th</sup>, followed by 37 at Tincklers Lane on the 21<sup>st</sup>. 98 were recorded on passage over Belmont in the first hour after dawn on 29<sup>th</sup>. On 31<sup>st</sup> October small numbers were already back off Sheepphouse Lane, Rivington and present to the year end. There were a few good-sized flocks in November, including 17 at Hic Bibi (5<sup>th</sup>), 100 on Croston Moss (11<sup>th</sup>), 120 at Withnell Fold (12<sup>th</sup>), 20 at Lead Mines Clough (12<sup>th</sup>)

and 150 at Bretherton Eyes (26<sup>th</sup>). In December, best Fieldfare flocks were 60 at Eccleston (7<sup>th</sup>), a similar number at Bretherton Eyes (26<sup>th</sup>) and 100 at Belmont Reservoir (28<sup>th</sup>).

**Song Thrush** (*Turdus philomelos*)

**Fairly common resident;**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> January a bird was already back singing in Jepsons Clough, Rivington

Just 4 were recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 16 territories.

3 grounded migrants were on a moorland wall above Belmont on 24<sup>th</sup> March.

A vismig watch produced a maximum of 4 birds per hour south over Belmont on 9<sup>th</sup> October.

It remains just outside the Top 20 in the Winter Garden Bird Survey, being recorded in 10 of the 17 gardens taking part.

**Redwing** (*Turdus iliacus*)

**Winter visitor, often in large numbers.**

January flocks included 30 at Lower Healey (2<sup>nd</sup>), 50 at Heath Charnock (4<sup>th</sup>), 25 in Euxton (5<sup>th</sup>), 50 at Upper Rivington (13<sup>th</sup>), 50 on Croston Moss (21<sup>st</sup>) and 35 at Eccleston (22<sup>nd</sup>). On 29<sup>th</sup> January an estimated 100 were feeding in a field off Sheephouse Lane, Rivington and were present all through February and into March. In February, sightings included 20 in Lead Mines Clough (4<sup>th</sup>), 60 in Tincklers Lane fields, Eccleston (6<sup>th</sup>) 27 at White Coppice (16<sup>th</sup>) and 60 roosting in Belmont Plantations (25<sup>th</sup>).

March sightings included 30 at Withnell (5<sup>th</sup>), 30 on Mawdesley Moss (11<sup>th</sup>), 50 at Withnell Fold (12<sup>th</sup>), with the last 3 recorded at Belmont (19<sup>th</sup>).

One over Belmont and 5 at Hic Bibi nature reserve on 24<sup>th</sup> September were the first back in Autumn, the Belmont bird being the earliest ever recorded at the site. There were then 2 at Belmont, 4 at Healey Nab and singles over Eccleston and Great Knowley on the 8<sup>th</sup> October, with heavy nocturnal passage that night over Belmont. 12 were at Eccleston on the 9<sup>th</sup> but the main influx didn't occur until 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> when 50 were at Eccleston, 140 at Tincklers Lane fields, 40 over Yarrow Valley Park, 40 at Lower Healey and 423 south over Belmont in the first hour after sunrise. Flocks in November included 94 on Croston Moss (1<sup>st</sup>), 106 west over Belmont (2<sup>nd</sup>), 17 at Hic Bibi (5<sup>th</sup>), 12 at Withnell Fold (12<sup>th</sup>) and 110 north west over Belmont (15<sup>th</sup>) as the main sightings. In December, 50 were off the Monkey Run, Rivington on 21<sup>st</sup> and on 27<sup>th</sup> 40 were at Smithells Farm near White Coppice, 40 Redwing were at Anglezarke Reservoir (25<sup>th</sup>) and 60 were at Eccleston (28<sup>th</sup>).

**Mistle Thrush** (*Turdus viscivorus*)

**Fairly Common resident**

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised one territory with two more adjacent.

Two family groups (with 3 and 2 juveniles) were in Belmont Village on 25<sup>th</sup> May. A flock of 9 was on Croston Finney on 11<sup>th</sup> June, a family party was at White Coppice (17<sup>th</sup>) and a flock of 10 was near Syd Brook, Eccleston on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. A post-breeding flock of 26 was on Mawdesley Moss on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July, and a party of 3 was at White Coppice on the 9<sup>th</sup>. In August, 13 were at Eccleston (4<sup>th</sup>), 10 were at Rivington (13<sup>th</sup>) and 12 were at Belmont (27<sup>th</sup>). 11 were on Croston Moss on 1<sup>st</sup> September. A vismig watch produced a maximum of 4 birds per hour south over Belmont on 6<sup>th</sup> October.

**Spotted Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa striata*)  
**Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant**

First back was a pair at Anglezarke on 20<sup>th</sup> May. A pair was noted in Haddock Park Wood, Brindle on 4<sup>th</sup> June. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised one territory with the first bird noted on 24<sup>th</sup> May. A pair was feeding young at White Coppice in the first two weeks of August.

**Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*)  
**Abundant resident**

Breeding records from several members' gardens were received during the first half of May. A total of 36 was recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimated 80 pairs. It came fifth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen. In 2003 it was equal 1<sup>st</sup> and has been slipping ever since.

**Pied Flycatcher** (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)  
**Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant**

First back was one at Belmont on 19<sup>th</sup> April, followed by one at Roddlesworth on 5<sup>th</sup> May. Subsequently numbers at Belmont peaked at 3 males and 2 females present on 5<sup>th</sup> May with the 2 males still present on 20<sup>th</sup> May with behaviour indicative of having incubating females close-by. One pair nested, but unsuccessfully, at Rivington.

**Black Redstart** (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)  
**Rare visitor**

One was noted on Winter Hill on 26<sup>th</sup> September.

**Redstart** (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)  
**Fairly common summer visitor in the east of the area**

First record was one at Anglezarke on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, followed by one at Belmont on the 24<sup>th</sup> and then one at White Coppice on the 27<sup>th</sup>. From 19<sup>th</sup> April birds were singing at 4 sites in Anglezarke, with at least 2 pairs going on to raise young.

Two were at White Coppice on 11<sup>th</sup> June with territories also noted at Belmont and Roddlesworth Plantations.

**Whinchat** (*Saxicola rubetra*)

***Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant***

First back was one at Bretherton Eyes on 26<sup>th</sup> April. Five passed through Belmont between 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> May.

A female with an attendant juvenile at Belmont on 6<sup>th</sup> August was considered not to have travelled far from its breeding site (ie. almost certainly bred in the West Pennine Moors).

4 passed through Belmont during August and 6 birds passed through in September between 1<sup>st</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. A female and 2 juveniles passed through Buckshaw Mossfield area on 11<sup>th</sup> September. One was on Croston Moss on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

**Stonechat** (*Saxicola torquata*)

***Scarce resident***

A pair was seen regularly on Croston Moss in January, and a single bird was seen along the canal at Botany Bay (14<sup>th</sup>).

March records came from Bretherton Eyes, Coppull Moor, Croston Moss, Withnell Moor and the White Coppice area where 4 pairs were noted on the 25<sup>th</sup>. On 18<sup>th</sup> May a male with 4 young was present at the head of the Yarrow valley, and on 4<sup>th</sup> June a pair was seen carrying food off the Pike road. Some 11 pairs were on territory around Belmont and several broods were noted later with 30+ estimated adults/juveniles in the Belmont area in mid-September, including a communal roost of 15 on 21<sup>st</sup> September.

In July, the species was conspicuous on the moorland edge with 6 on Withnell Moor (2<sup>nd</sup>) and 5 at White Coppice (24<sup>th</sup>). In August, records again came from White Coppice (6<sup>th</sup>), and from Croston Moss (13<sup>th</sup>) and George's Lane, Rivington (28<sup>th</sup>). On 28<sup>th</sup> September 2 young birds were noted below Stronstrey Bank, Anglezarke.

In November, Stonechat were noted on both Croston Moss (11<sup>th</sup>) and Mawdesley Moss (25<sup>th</sup>) and also still on their moorland territories at Dean Black Brook (4<sup>th</sup>) and Anglezarke Moor (25<sup>th</sup>). They were again noted on Croston Moss throughout December and also on George's Lane, Rivington (28<sup>th</sup>). One (female) was still at altitude (at 320m/1050 ft) on Belmont Moor on 31<sup>st</sup> December.

**Wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

***Fairly common passage migrant and scarce summer visitor***

First back in Spring was one on Bretherton Eyes on 16<sup>th</sup> March followed by one on Withnell Moor and 3 at Belmont on the 24<sup>th</sup>. 2 male birds were at Peewit Hall, Anglezarke moor on 8<sup>th</sup> April and on 28<sup>th</sup> a total of 9 birds were seen at Anglezarke moor. 20 were at White Coppice on 23<sup>rd</sup> April and 28 on Croston Moss on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Returning birds in August were noted on Winter Hill (6<sup>th</sup>), Anglezarke Moor (14<sup>th</sup>), George's Lane, Rivington (28<sup>th</sup>) and Withnell Moor, where 3 were seen on the 30<sup>th</sup>. September sightings came from Rivington (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Croston Moss (16<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>). The last was one at Belmont on 27<sup>th</sup> October.

It was a good year for passage through Belmont with 172 recorded:- 8 through during March, 80 through during April including a group of 38 on 22<sup>nd</sup>, 45 through during May then 10 through during August, 27 through during September and 2 through during October

### **Dipper** (*Cinclus cinclus*)

***Fairly common resident on the faster flowing rivers of the area***

Pairs in January were noted in Astley Park, at Euxton, White Coppice and in Yarrow Valley Park. On 18<sup>th</sup> January 2 flew low over Yarrow reservoir and Alance Bridge. One on the Yarrow at Eccleston on 21<sup>st</sup> February was an unusual record so far downstream.

On 6<sup>th</sup> April birds were noted at Dean Black Brook, White Coppice and also the embankment at No. 6 lodge. Birds on territory in April were noted at Belmont, White Coppice, Limbrick and Yarrow Valley Park. The latter had fledged 4 young by 19<sup>th</sup> May. However, one or two were quickly predated by the local grey heron. The pair at Belmont also failed at the young stage. In May birds again noted at White Coppice, and Lead Mines Clough and also more interestingly a pair in the upper Dean Brook valley at Rivington.

One on Syd Brook at Eccleston on 20<sup>th</sup> August was a surprise for the finder. It would be nice to think that 3 together in Yarrow Valley Park on the 24<sup>th</sup> September were a family group.

November records came from Euxton and White Coppice.

### **House Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*)

***Abundant resident***

Breeding records from several members' gardens were received during the first half of May. A total of 20 was recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April.

There were maximum counts in a Belmont garden of 35+ on 26<sup>th</sup> January and 2<sup>nd</sup> February and 30 on 17<sup>th</sup> June. 3 at a moorland farm above Belmont on 13<sup>th</sup> June was noteworthy. 25+ were at allotments at Belmont on 2<sup>nd</sup> September.

It came fourteenth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen, being completely absent from a few of the gardens completing the survey, although in those gardens where it was present, it was probably the most numerous.

### **Tree Sparrow** (*Passer montanus*)

***Fairly common resident***

A flock of 10 was at Croston sewage works on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

One was in a Belmont garden on 4<sup>th</sup> October. In November, 2 were at Euxton (1<sup>st</sup>), 6 at Bretherton Eyes (3<sup>rd</sup>) and 10 on Mawdesley Moss (19<sup>th</sup>).

**Dunnock** (*Prunella modularis*)

**Abundant resident**

Breeding records from several members' gardens were received during the first half of May. A total of 12 was recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 3+ territories.

It came equal third in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen.

**Yellow Wagtail** (*Motacilla flava flavissima*)

**Scarce passage migrant**

A bird on passage was in George's Lane, Rivington on 6<sup>th</sup> August, and another was at Belmont Reservoir on 10<sup>th</sup> September.

**Grey Wagtail** (*Motacilla cinerea*)

**Common resident by the rivers and reservoirs of the area**



One was at White Coppice on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation indicted a pair breeding adjacent. Birds occupied 7 sites in Rivington throughout the year.

In May, a pair with 2 young was at Common Bank Lodge (9<sup>th</sup>), and in June pairs with young were noted at White Coppice (17<sup>th</sup>) and Yarrow Valley Park (22<sup>nd</sup>).

**Pied Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)

**Common resident**

150 birds were counted on Bretherton Eyes on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. 30 were at Heapey Lodges on 15<sup>th</sup> April and 20 were at Croston Sewage Works on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 9 territories were recorded at Belmont Reservoir during the breeding season. September flocks included 15 at Rivington (2<sup>nd</sup>), 20 on Bretherton Eyes (3<sup>rd</sup>) increasing to 35 by the 8<sup>th</sup>. A roost at Belmont Reservoir peaked at 30 in August and 45+ in September (26<sup>th</sup>).

**White Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba alba*)

**Scarce passage migrant, mainly in Spring**

An early bird was reported from Bretherton Eyes on 14<sup>th</sup> March, with another at the same site on 1<sup>st</sup> April and 2 at Heapey Lodges on the 17<sup>th</sup>. One was at Belmont Reservoir on 25<sup>th</sup> March and 2 were there on 29<sup>th</sup> April.

**Meadow Pipit** (*Anthus pratensis*)

**Common resident and passage migrant; scarcer in winter**

33 were noted in a field at Eccleston (18<sup>th</sup> January), and a dozen on Bretherton Eyes included the strange looking leucistic bird first seen in December 2016.

There remains a large breeding population on the moorlands.

50+ were at Belmont Reservoir on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 70+ on 1<sup>st</sup> September rising to 110+ there on 17<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September. A vismig watch produced a maximum of 251 birds per hour south over Belmont on 27<sup>th</sup> September.

**Tree Pipit** (*Anthus trivialis*)

**Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant**

First back was one over Cuerden Valley Park on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, followed by one in song near Belmont on 5<sup>th</sup> May. 2 territories were established at Grey Heights with later (30<sup>th</sup> June) a recently-fledged juvenile was noted with an attendant adult.

**Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*)

**Common resident and winter visitor**

Maximum counts in a Belmont garden of 40+ on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 30 in March and 15 in April.

A total of 29 was recorded on 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised an estimated 50 pairs.

A vismig watch saw a maximum of 120 birds per hour south over Belmont on 27<sup>th</sup> September.

A flock of 200+ was on Croston Moss throughout November and December. Flocks of up to 30 were at several locations around Belmont in November and December.

It came tenth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen.

**Brambling** (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

**Winter visitor in variable numbers**

Up to 12 were at a feeding station at Lower Burgh Meadow during January and February. 70 roosted in rhododendrons at Belmont on 2<sup>nd</sup> January with maximum counts in a Belmont garden of 20 on 21<sup>st</sup> January and 15 on 28<sup>th</sup> February. On the 4<sup>th</sup> January 60 were feeding on the ground under beech trees in Hall Wood Rivington, with 15 there on the 28<sup>th</sup> February. Other February records came from Brinscall and Yarrow Reservoir. In March, birds were noted in gardens at both Euxton and Heath Charnock on the 7<sup>th</sup>. 12 were at Belmont throughout March rising to 18 on 4<sup>th</sup> April with the last 2 on 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

The first back in Autumn was a male at Belmont on 12<sup>th</sup> October with another 2 flying over. A vismig watch at Belmont saw 18 over south on 19<sup>th</sup> October. Two were at Lead Mines Clough on 29<sup>th</sup> October. Birds were then noted at Euxton on 1<sup>st</sup> December and on Croston Moss on several dates from mid-month.

**Hawfinch** (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*)

**Rare visitor**

Our share of the national influx was limited to two at Duxbury Golf Course on 27<sup>th</sup> October, and one at Belmont on 2<sup>nd</sup> November followed by 3 there on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Bullfinch** (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

**Fairly common resident**

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 2 territories. Birds occupied 4 sites throughout the year in Rivington, and in some cases were feeding on a plentiful supply of heather seed, but also coming to seed available at feeding stations.

Up to 8 flocks totalling 38 birds were widely scattered around Belmont in late December.

It came eighteenth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen.

**Greenfinch** (*Chloris chloris*)

**Common resident**

Just 6 were recorded in 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April.

A vismig watch saw a maximum of 26 birds per hour south over Belmont on 24<sup>th</sup> September.

It came seventeenth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey in terms of number of gardens visited and frequency seen; an improvement of two places on last year – could this signal the first signs of recovery? A maximum of 10 were recorded in a Belmont garden in January.

**Twite** (*Linaria flavirostris*)

**Very scarce resident**

A pair was at Belmont on 18<sup>th</sup> April.

**Linnet** (*Linaria cannabina*)

**Fairly common resident**

A flock of 90 was on Croston Moss on 21<sup>st</sup> January, with at least 30 still there on 12<sup>th</sup> February. A flock of 40 was near Croston Twin Lakes on 14<sup>th</sup> March, and a flock of 40 was still together on Croston Moss on 13<sup>th</sup> April.

There was a loose colony of 5 pairs in bracken on Belmont Moor and probably a similar number on the moorland edge at White Coppice.

A post-breeding flock of over 50 birds was on Croston Moss on 28<sup>th</sup> August. September flocks included 30 at Eccleston (16<sup>th</sup>), 80 at Hic Bibi (17<sup>th</sup>) and 100 on Croston Moss (24<sup>th</sup>). The latter flock was again noted on 2<sup>nd</sup> October with a similar sized flock on Bretherton Eyes on 7<sup>th</sup> October. The Croston flock had built up to 200 by 30<sup>th</sup> November, and remained throughout December. A flock of 60 was on Mawdesley Moss on 19<sup>th</sup> November.



**Lesser Redpoll** (*Acanthis cabaret*)

**Common winter visitor; uncommon resident**

45 were near Belmont on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. March sightings came from Belmont, White Coppice, Heath Charnock and Great Knowley.

In April birds were singing and displaying around Anglezarke moorland plantations. One or two breeding pairs were again noted in the White Coppice area. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 5 territories.

In December, birds were at Arley nature reserve (3<sup>rd</sup>) and at Great Knowley (22<sup>nd</sup>).

**Common Crossbill** (*Loxia curvirostra*)

**Scarce visitor**

Two were noted in Lead Mines Clough on 18<sup>th</sup> February, and 3 were there on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised at least one bird present on 4<sup>th</sup> January

Two were again noted in Lead Mines Clough on 29<sup>th</sup> October, and 2 passed over Belmont on 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

**Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*)

**Common resident**

Flocks in January included 125 at Belmont (2<sup>nd</sup>), 30 at Hic Bibi (3<sup>rd</sup>) and 20 along Syd Brook, Eccleston (22<sup>nd</sup>). 37 were in a Belmont garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

A total of 18 was recorded on 2 BBS squares in the Brindle area during April. The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised 3 territories

August flocks included 15 on Mawdesley Moss (10<sup>th</sup>), 20 on Croston Moss (13<sup>th</sup>), 50 at Belmont (13<sup>th</sup>) and 150 along George's Lane, Rivington (13<sup>th</sup>). A flock estimated at 200 were feeding in a gathered hay field off Sheephouse Lane, Rivington on the 26<sup>th</sup>. A flock of 55 was at Belmont Reservoir on 10<sup>th</sup> September and one of around 100 birds was on Croston Moss on 26<sup>th</sup> September. A vismig watch saw a maximum of 97 birds per hour south over Belmont on 19<sup>th</sup> October. A flock of 40 was at Eccleston on 9<sup>th</sup> October. Up to 60 were in a Belmont garden throughout November and December, with possibly the same birds roosting in rhododendrons at Belmont over the period.

It came ninth in the Winter Garden Bird Survey – its highest ever position, and compares to 17<sup>th</sup> at the start of the survey 20 years ago.

**Siskin** (*Spinus spinus*)

**Common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce resident**

March sightings came from Euxton (5<sup>th</sup>), Heath Charnock (6<sup>th</sup>), Yarrow Valley (11<sup>th</sup>), Lead Mines Clough (11<sup>th</sup>) and Great Knowley (29<sup>th</sup>). 30 were in a Belmont garden on 19<sup>th</sup> March.

The breeding bird survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation realised one probable territory with 10+ birds recorded in April. Successful breeding was recorded at Belmont with 4 pairs with one recently-fledged juvenile on 16<sup>th</sup> Jay and a second brood of 2 juveniles on 7<sup>th</sup> June.

A vismig watch saw a maximum of 93 birds per hour south over Belmont on 21st October.

A flock of 20 was at Rivington on 29<sup>th</sup> October. 10 were at Belmont on 12<sup>th</sup> November.

**Corn Bunting** (*Emberiza calandra*)

**Scarce resident; confined to the mosslands**

A flock of 20 was on Croston Moss on 14<sup>th</sup> January, with at least 8 there on 5<sup>th</sup> February. Flocks in March included 35 on Croston Moss (6<sup>th</sup>), 20 on Mawdesley Moss (11<sup>th</sup>) and 50 on Bretherton Eyes near to Sollom (15<sup>th</sup>). A flock of 18 was again noted on Mawdesley Moss on 4<sup>th</sup> April.

A flock of 13 was on Croston Finney on 7<sup>th</sup> June. 4 were singing on Mawdesley Moss on 20<sup>th</sup> June. A flock of 15 was on Croston Moss on 24<sup>th</sup> September. In October, a flock on Bretherton Eyes increased from 9 on the 7<sup>th</sup> to 25 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. At least 12 were there on 11<sup>th</sup> November.

**Yellowhammer** (*Emberiza citrinella*)

**Fairly common resident; declining**

A party of 7 was at Tinklers Lane fields, Eccleston on 4<sup>th</sup> January, increasing to 18 by 11<sup>th</sup> February.

3 were singing on Mawdesley Moss on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and 4 on Croston Moss on 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Reed Bunting** (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

**Fairly common resident**

15 were at Belmont Reservoir on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and a maximum of 5 were in a Belmont garden in January and February with 4 in April.

On 16<sup>th</sup> March a male was singing near Moses Cocker Farm, Rivington and on 27<sup>th</sup> 3 were noted on the edge of Holts Flat Plantation. On 13<sup>th</sup> April a pair occupied a site off the Pike Road and on 28<sup>th</sup> a pair



were at the head of the Yarrow Valley. Eleven pairs bred around Belmont reservoir – the lowest total since 2011. In June, birds were singing at Great

Knowley (4<sup>th</sup>), Withnell Fold (4 on 11<sup>th</sup>) and 5 on the Douglas near Croston (12<sup>th</sup>). Over 20 were still around Belmont in late December.

## **ESCAPES**

### **Black Swan**(*Cygnus atratus*)

One was with Mute Swans on Bretherton Eyes on 20<sup>th</sup> February.

### **Embden Goose**

One was at Belmont reservoir on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

### **Bar-headed Goose** (*Anser indicus*)

One was on Anglezarke reservoir on 26<sup>th</sup> May.

### **Muscovy Duck** (*Cairina moschata*)

One was at the north end of Anglezarke Reservoir for most of the year. Singles were at 2 sites near Belmont throughout the year. At least 5 were resident on Croft Lodge Brinscall.

### **Wood Duck** (*Aix sponsa*)

A female was on a large private pond at Belmont in late November to early December.

### **Grey Cockerel** (*Nymphicus hollandicus*)

A party of 3 was seen flying over Whittle on 2<sup>nd</sup> September.

## **LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS FOR BIRD REPORT**

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

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Apologies to anyone I may have omitted.

## ROOKERY CENSUS

Site	2017	2016	2010	2004	1999
Astley Park	0	4	0	0	0
A49 Euxton	35	37	50	40	56
Howard Arms, Whittle Springs	23	30	25	49	30
Rawlinson La, Heath Charnock	0	0	15	14	18
Railway Road, Adlington	40	39	30	24	24
Prospect House, Wheelton	69	69	32	81	101
Lower Wheelton	4	4	10	16	20
Red Cat, Wheelton	8	3	10	N/C	N/C
St Chad's Wheelton	8	12	6	N/C	N/C
Croston Bowling Green	58	75	80	135	130
Croston Town Road	2	5	0	0	0
Croston Westhead Road	8	6	0	0	0
Wild Bottoms Wood, Hoghton	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Town House Farm, Brindle	26	25	40	22	18
Brindle Village	0	0	11	N/C	N/C
Buckshaw Village	21	1	21	N/C	N/C
<b>Totals</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>397</b>

## WATERFOWL COUNTS

The monthly waterfowl counts cover Anglezarke/Rivington Reservoirs and Heapey and Birkacre Lodges.

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Little Grebe	3	3	3	5	5	5	4
Great Crested Grebe	2	5	4	2	2	3	
Cormorant	6	17	36	11	11	3	13
Whooper Swan							
Mute Swan	7	6	3	8	5	9	7
Pink-footed Goose							
Canada Goose		16	23	96	3	2	2
Hybrid Goose	3	2		1	2		1
Greylag Goose		5					
Mandarin	1						
Wigeon							
Teal	2	2	8	1		1	
Gadwall							
Mallard	134	158	69	200	178	189	182
Shoveler							
Pochard	1	1					
Tufted Duck	9	8	16	12	3	28	32
Goldeneye	4	4					4
Goosander	12	20	29			7	4
Common Scoter	2						
Moorhen	21	20	18	12	23	23	13
Coot	21	26	22	17	14	23	26

## RINGING REPORT

### Introduction

2017 was once again a year of many weather patterns with a lot of days when mist-netting was planned but having to be postponed part way through the session due to unseasonally strong winds. It was also a no-show year for Siskins in the garden at least in any number.

### 2017 Ringing Year Summary

**January.** Ringing was all undertaken in the garden with 8 sessions carried out, catching mostly common garden birds, but also a few Bullfinch, single Woodpigeon, several Starling, 3 Nuthatch, just 2 Siskin and a cracking male Grey Wagtail on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, bringing January's total to 75 birds

**February.** Only 4 ringing sessions took place in February and all in the garden. Small numbers of Siskin (18) were caught and ringed this month. February's grand total was 48 birds.

**March.** Nearly every possible ringing day (days off work) was too windy for mist netting, resulting in just 2 ringing sessions in the garden, catching a pitiful 14 birds.

**April.** Only three sessions were completed this month, one using mist nets at Hic Bibi nature reserve, and 2 ringing Blackbird pullus – a brood of 3 in the garden and a brood of 3 and one of 4 in Cuerden Valley Park. The mist netting at Hic Bibi produced 19 birds including Blackbird (2), Robin (2), Dunnock, Willow Warbler (4), Chiffchaff (3), male Blackcap, Jay (2) and Bullfinch (2), the remainder being titmice. April's total was a rather poor 29 birds.

**May.** May is usually the month totally dominated with the ringing of pulli, mostly in nest boxes, but also from any open nests that we find. A total of 222 passerine pulli were ringed with many more broods going unringed due to their large – ready to fledge – size. Many titmice were at least a week / 10 days earlier than the previous two years' fledging dates.

**June.** June also saw some pulli ringing but in reduced numbers compared to May, with 3 visits to a farm on Mawdesley Moss 10 ring Tree Sparrow pulli(10), and 3 sessions in the garden in the latter stages of the month due to the early appearance of titmice young in the garden. Fledged young appeared in the garden a good 10 days earlier than in the previous 2 years with at least 65 juvenile birds caught during the month, mostly titmice, but the occasional, House Sparrow, Blackbird and Starling were also most welcome.

**July.** July saw just 2 sites visited – a farm on Mawdesley Moss for second broods of Tree Sparrows and a ringing session in the garden with good numbers of juveniles of various species putting in an appearance. House Sparrow (2 on 8<sup>th</sup>), Nuthatch (22<sup>nd</sup>), Robin (4 on 29<sup>th</sup>) and juvenile Blackcap and Chiffchaff both on the 29<sup>th</sup> were ringed in the garden. 70 birds in total were ringed in the month.

**August.** There were just 6 ringing sessions in the month – 5 in the garden and one at hic Bibi. The sessions in the garden produced some cracking results. Following on from July's juvenile Chiffchaff, two further juveniles were seen in the garden on the 4<sup>th</sup> but the weather was not fit for ringing. I wondered if these birds were young from the patch of woodland at the rear of the garden or

juveniles from elsewhere just moving through. Anyway, 5 juvenile Chiffchaff were eventually caught and ringed in the garden. The one session at Hic Bibi also produced Phylloscopus warblers, with 4 Willow Warbler and 5 Chiffchaff caught along with Blackbird (3), Robin (2), Bullfinch (2), Wren (2) and Long-tailed Tit (5), bringing the August total to 76 birds.

**September.** The windy weather continued to hamper autumnal migration ringing, with just 6 sessions for the month and only one away from the garden, that being in Cuerden valley park, where Goldcrest were mist netted on passage, resulting in 11 Goldcrest being caught on the 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2 of which were re-traps. A further 9 Goldcrest were caught in the garden, bringing the September total to 64 birds.

**October.** Just 5 ringing sessions took place this month with 3 in the garden and 2 at sites in Cuerden Valley Park. Good numbers of Goldfinch were caught at both sites with lesser numbers of titmice, and a single Goldcrest in the garden on the 25<sup>th</sup> resulting in a total of 66 birds for October.

**November.** Seven ringing sessions during the month included 3 in the month and 4 at a baited woodland site. Both sites produced Greenfinch with a single male in the garden (6<sup>th</sup>) and 2 males and a female at the woodland site (19<sup>th</sup>). November's total came to 127 birds.

**December.** All 4 ringing sessions in December took place in the garden, catching mostly common garden birds with the exception of a fine male Blackcap on the 28<sup>th</sup>. This brought the December total to 46 birds and the total for 2017 to 901 birds of 25 species caught and ringed.

### Garden Ringing

Despite the lack of Siskin in great numbers, this year's ringing total for the garden was well above average at 498 birds, thanks in part to an autumnal influx of Blackbird (15) and Robin (27) as well as Goldcrest (11) and the regular roving flocks of Goldfinch of which 39 were caught. But once again the vast majority of birds ringed in the garden are post-fledging juvenile titmice, with Coal Tit (17), Blue Tit (70) and Great Tit (25). This year Siskin numbers were well down with only 25 caught. Bullfinch took 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the finch parade with 30 birds caught.

### Ringing Totals 2017

Species	Full grown	Pullis	Retraps/ recoveries	Total
Woodpigeon	2	0	0	2
GS Woodpecker	1	0	0	1
Grey Wagtail	1	0	0	1
Wren	8	0	1	9
Dunnock	16	0	2	18
Robin	36	0	10	46
Blackbird	22	10	5	37
Blackcap	3	0	0	3
Chiffchaff	14	0	0	14
Willow Warbler	8	0	0	8

Species	Full grown	Pullii	Retraps/ recoveries	Total
Goldcrest	20	0	2	22
Long-tailed Tit	18	0	12	30
Coal Tit	20	0	19	39
Blue Tit	119	121	44	284
Great Tit	96	94	33	223
Nuthatch	5	0	5	10
Jay	1	0	0	1
Starling	4	0	0	4
House Sparrow	6	0	0	6
Tree Sparrow	0	21	0	21
Chaffinch	20	0	0	20
Greenfinch	3	0	0	3
Goldfinch	38	0	1	39
Siskin	25	0	0	25
Bullfinch	28	0	7	35
<b>Annual totals</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>901</b>

### **Nest Recording**

This year Michelle and I submitted 186 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, along with frequent visits to Preston docks to record the Common Tern colony there and its breeding success.

Species	Number of cards submitted
Blackbird	1
Blue Tit	30
Bullfinch	1
Canada Goose	13
Chaffinch	1
Chiffchaff	1
Collared Dove	1
Common Tern	72
Goosander	1
Great Crested Grebe	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1
Great Tit	22
Grey Heron	2
Kestrel	2
Little Grebe	1
Little Ringed Plover	1
Mallard	2
Moorhen	4
Mute Swan	5

<b>Species</b>	<b>Number of cards submitted</b>
Oystercatcher	1
Peregrine Falcon	1
Redshank	1
Reed Bunting	2
Robin	2
Song Thrush	1
Tawny Owl	2
Tree Sparrow	13
Woodpigeon	1

### **Visible Migration**

Vismig watches were carried on several occasions in Spring and especially Autumn migration periods and included the following:-

<b>Site</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Movement</b>
Garden	Redwing	12 <sup>th</sup> March	800/1000 NNE
Cuerden Valley Park	Osprey	2 <sup>nd</sup> April	NE at 07:30
Hic Bibi	Meadow Pipit	8 <sup>th</sup> August	20 SE 08:00 – 09:00
Hic Bibi	Meadow Pipit	10 <sup>th</sup> August	30 SSW
Hic Bibi	Tree Pipit	10 <sup>th</sup> August	2 SSW
Garden	Golden Plover	5 <sup>th</sup> Sept.	2 SW at 00:45
Garden	Dunlin	10 <sup>th</sup> Sept	2 SSE at 23:45
Garden	Osprey	14 <sup>th</sup> Sept.	SE at 10.00
Garden	Wigeon	14 <sup>th</sup> Sept.	S at 23:20
Hic Bibi	Meadow pipit	6 <sup>th</sup> October	300+ S 07:00-09:30
Hic Bibi	Skylark	6 <sup>th</sup> October	60 SW 07:00-09:30
Hic Bibi	Crossbill	6 <sup>th</sup> October	3 SE 07:00-09:30
Cuerden Valley Park	Redwing	10 <sup>th</sup> October	200+SW 7:30-9:30
Cuerden Valley Park	Redwing	19 <sup>th</sup> October	400+SE 7:30-9:00
Cuerden Valley Park	Blackbird	19 <sup>th</sup> October	8 SE 7:30-9:00
Cuerden Valley Park	Song Thrush	19 <sup>th</sup> October	4 SE 7:30-9:00

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**Andy Leach**



## MAMMAL REPORT

### Western Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

First of the year were 2 in a Coppull garden on 15<sup>th</sup> March. One was in a Belmont garden on 9<sup>th</sup> April, followed by one at Euxton on 21<sup>st</sup>. Thereafter, regular sightings from a Belmont garden of up to 5 individuals including at least 3 juveniles. This nightly presence of adults and juveniles continued through the autumn and early winter with two juveniles seen into late-December (with later one small 'deteriorating' juvenile taken into care in January 2018).

5 were noted dead on roads at Belmont during 2018 viz. 20<sup>th</sup> April, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup> July and 13<sup>th</sup> August (2 no.). Elsewhere one was found dead on a Chorley street in a 20 mph zone, prompting exasperation on the part of the observer.

The Survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation recorded one on 26<sup>th</sup> May and fresh droppings were noted in another part of the plantation on 13<sup>th</sup> June. A young animal was noted at White Coppice on 24<sup>th</sup> July. Mild weather brought two animals out of hibernation on 21<sup>st</sup> December.

### Common Shrew (*Sorex araneus*)

Occasionally heard throughout the site during the Survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation. Ten other records were received, a few of which were from Yarrow Valley Park, where seed had been put down to attract bank voles. A family group of 6 was noted at Great Knowley on 4<sup>th</sup> June. Most other records were of animals squeaking in the undergrowth.

### Pygmy Shrew (*Sorex minutus*)

**2016** One found dead at Belmont on 26<sup>th</sup> June.

**2017** Two records, both relating to dead animals – one on Wheelton Moor on 28<sup>th</sup> January and one at Euxton on 13<sup>th</sup> July.

### Water Shrew (*Neomys fodiens*)

**2016** One seen on several occasions on a silt trap (catch-water) pond at Belmont in December.

**2017** One again seen on several occasions on a silt trap (catch-water) pond at Belmont in early January.

### Northern Mole (*Talpa europaea*)

Abundant across the area. Many molehills were noted on Belmont Reservoir island in February. The Survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation recorded up to 30 molehills. Molehill activity was also recorded at Croston, Duxbury and White Coppice.

### **Daubenton's Bat** (*Myotis daubentoni*)

2 were noted 'hibernating' in Wheelton Plantation on 4<sup>th</sup> February. One was noted in Yarrow Valley Park in the early afternoon at the end of March. The species was also recorded in a bat survey in Duxbury woods in May. Animals recorded as 'bat species' over Syd Brook at Eccleston on a couple of occasions could well have been this species.



### **Pipistrelle spp** (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)

The first was at Coppull on 15<sup>th</sup> March followed by one on Croston Finney (23<sup>rd</sup>) and 2 at Belmont on 30<sup>th</sup>. The species is widespread across the area, particularly around housing. On occasions when bat detectors were used, in Astley, Park, Duxbury Woods and at Whins Lane, Wheelton only common pipistrelle was detected.

The Survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation recorded one on 11/5/17. A maximum of 5 was at Belmont on 28<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Noctule Bat** (*Nyctalus noctula*)

Just three records were received, from Duxbury in May, Bretherton in July and Belmont in September.

### **Brown Long-eared Bat** (*Plecotus auritus*)

3 were 'hibernating' in Wheelton Plantation on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 4<sup>th</sup> February with 4 there on 4<sup>th</sup> March.

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

One was 'hibernating' in Wheelton Plantation on 7<sup>th</sup> January.

### **Natterer's Bat** (*Myotis nattereri*)

One was 'hibernating' in Wheelton Plantation on 7<sup>th</sup> January.

### **Serotine Bat** (*Eptesicus serotinus*)

During a bat walk in Astley Park on 1<sup>st</sup> July, guided by a member of Merseyside and West Lancashire Bat Group, a possible animal of this species was detected. Although not proven, it is interesting that South Lancs Bat Group claimed to have found a roost in a tree also in Astley Park in 1995. The same organization also 'detected' Serotines in Yarrow Valley Park in 1992 and 1993. In the recently published 'The Vertebrates of Lancashire', the species is only listed as 'potential'.

## **Brown Hare** (*Lepus europaeus*)

There were 72 sightings throughout the year from the Belmont area (a good increase on the 31 seen in 2016) with a maximum count of 7 on 31<sup>st</sup> May. Six leverets were seen (4 on 31<sup>st</sup> July & 2 on 6<sup>th</sup> August).

Elsewhere there were 61 sightings reported from all areas, including Bretherton, Croston, Eccleston, Euxton, Mawdesley and Shaw Green in the west, Brindle, Jack Green and Withnell Fold to the north, Anglezarke and Rivington to the east and Hic Bibi to the south. Best counts were 13 on Bretherton Moss on 11<sup>th</sup> July, 11 on Croston Moss on 24<sup>th</sup> July and 9 on Mawdesley Moss on 27<sup>th</sup> July.

## **Rabbit** (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

The first record was of 3 at Hic Bibi on 11<sup>th</sup> March. The species is still present in only very low numbers around Belmont. From 13+ early in the year the population peaked at only c40 in July. A black Rabbit was seen near Belmont on 31<sup>st</sup> May.

The Survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation recorded only one Rabbit; an adult on 26<sup>th</sup> May. A small population, with a maximum of 5 seen on 13<sup>th</sup> June, was resident on a field immediately south west of Lodge Bank, Brinscall with 12+ also nearby at Withnell Villa on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

Other casual sightings came from around 20 sites across the area, with double figure counts only from Croston Moss, Duxbury golf course and alongside the Leeds Liverpool canal at Wheelton where a minimum of 20 were counted during a field trip on 20<sup>th</sup> August.

## **Grey Squirrel** (*Sciurus carolinensis*).

Gamekeepers at Belmont reported shooting/trapping 145 Grey Squirrels during 2017. The cull undertaken in Roddlesworth Plantations annually since 2008 was repeated in February 2017 to reduce numbers of this species in those parts of the plantations where widespread bark-stripping to trees & severe damage to



nestbox schemes (plus predation of eggs/Y) has been rife in previous years. Shooting in conjunction with drey poking resulted in 73 Grey Squirrels killed giving a density of 0.6 squirrels/hectare, which extrapolated would give a total estimated population of 129 Grey Squirrels throughout the whole of the Roddlesworth Plantations in

2017.

The Survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation recorded Grey Squirrels on just 10 of the visits with a cumulative total of 36 animals seen and a maximum count of 10 on 4<sup>th</sup> May. It was estimated from assessing the sightings and signs from

individual compartments, that the plantation held a population of around 50 animals in 2017.

Casual sightings from members produced a total of 90 sightings, making it the most recorded species of mammal in the area. No large numbers were recorded, although the population in Chorley Cemetery is well into double figures, and a member counted 12 individuals during a walk in Euxton in January. One was observed being attacked by a Sparrowhawk in an Euxton member's garden.

### **Bank Vole** (*Clethrionomys glareolus*).

Fourteen records were received with half from Yarrow Valley Park, where they are regularly seen feeding on bird seed at two separate locations. Additionally the species was recorded at Adlington, Anglezarke, Bretherton Eyes, Croston Moss, Hic Bibi and Lead Mines Clough. One was also noted in a Belmont garden on 24<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Field Vole** (*Microtus agrestis*)

Judging by the abundance of vole runs/holes present, the multitudes of sightings plus increased presence and breeding success of Short-eared, Barn Owl and Kestrel, the vole population would appear to have recovered well from its crash in 2016. 'Thousands' of runs were noted on fields at Belmont in January with 70+ animals seen on 30<sup>th</sup> January. 100+ runs & 5+ individuals were seen on Belmont Reservoir island on 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

The Survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation considered the species not uncommon in the grassier areas of the plantation. Other records came from Rivington and White Coppice, with the only record away from the 'moorland' area being from Adlington on a couple of occasions.

'Thousands' of runs were again noted on fields at Belmont in December with 50+ animals seen on 9<sup>th</sup> December.

### **Brown Rat** (*Rattus norvegicus*)

262 were trapped by gamekeepers at Belmont during 2017 with an additional substantial number (estimated at 150) poisoned. A 'cache' of 95 dead toads by ponds at Belmont on 1<sup>st</sup> April were considered to have been predated by Brown Rats (with two Rats subsequently trapped there).

Most other records related to dead animals with Eyes Lane, Bretherton evidently a risky area for the species, although on one occasion, the rat had been killed by a stoat.

### **Wood Mouse / Long-tailed Field Mouse** (*Apodemus sylvaticus*)

Common throughout the year around the area including regular sightings in gardens at Belmont and Chorley, with other records from Anglezarke, Belmont, Cuerden Valley Park, Duxbury and Plock Wood.

### **Otter** (*Lutra lutra*)

Two second hand reports were received of animals on the river Darwen at Houghton in January and at the Yarrow / Douglas confluence in October.

### **Seal sp**

An intriguing record was a second hand report of 2 seals at the Yarrow / Douglas confluence in October. Intriguing because it was at the exact same spot where a young female Common Seal spent a couple of weeks in April 2002.

### **Stoat** (*Mustela ermine*)

There were 31 sightings throughout the year around Belmont (24 in 2016), albeit no individuals in Ermine were seen in 2017. There were, however, only 9 sightings from the rest of the area, albeit from all parts of the area. One of these sightings involved a stoat chasing a rabbit along a road in Eccleston, and another was of one catching a brown rat in Eyes Lane, Bretherton.

### **Weasel** (*Mustela nivalis*)

There were 21 sightings throughout the year around Belmont (just 7 in 2016) reflecting the increase in the vole population locally in 2017. Animals noted carrying voles in their mouths were seen at Belmont on 27<sup>th</sup> May and 27<sup>th</sup> October and two Weasels were seen 'tumbling' together there on 3<sup>rd</sup> June (possibly juveniles 'play-fighting'). Only four records were received from elsewhere and, unfortunately, one of these had been caught by a member's cat!

### **American Mink** (*Mustela vison*)

A year round trapping effort is maintained at Belmont which resulted in 3 killed during 2017 (on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 17<sup>th</sup> September and 24<sup>th</sup> September). Three records were received from Yarrow Valley Park, including one featured in a You Tube video and a single record from the Douglas at Bretherton.

### **Badger** (*Meles meles*.)

Signs of this species residence were confirmed at six sites in the West Pennine Moors. Additionally, three road casualties were recorded on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June. At least two live animals were observed in a member's garden on several occasions.

### **Red Fox** (*Vulpes vulpes*)

Seasonal control is undertaken to protect the nationally important gullery and ground nesting wader populations at Belmont Reservoir from predation / disturbance during the breeding season. Following widespread control in early 2017, constant monitoring indicated a seemingly total absence of Foxes from

March until September. Farmers, gamekeepers and wildlife-managers (several with over 30 years' experience of Foxes locally) considered this to be unprecedented, as they had never known a six-month period with apparent total Fox absence before. Exceptional productivity of Lapwing was the most obvious benefit from this lack of Foxes and many successful Curlew broods were likewise noteworthy. However, by the year-end, Foxes were again reported as being widely encountered.

Elsewhere, 18 casual sightings were received compared to only 8 last year, although two related to dead animals. A vixen with 5 cubs was seen in Cuerden Valley Park on 8<sup>th</sup> May.



### **Red Deer** (*Cervus elaphus*)

One was near Belmont on 31<sup>st</sup> July and 1<sup>st</sup> August (with the presence of 2 here confirmed later in January 2018). Approximately 30 (escapees from a 'deer farm' at Adlington) were briefly present at Home Farm, Rivington & adjacent sites in mid-November. A second hand report of 4 near Rivington Hall Barn on 17<sup>th</sup> September could possibly also have been escapees.

### **Fallow Deer** (*Dama dama*)

A small herd (totalling up to 14 individuals in 2017; viz. a male, an immature male and 12 female/juveniles) are occasionally seen near Belmont. These are known to be wanderers from a small feral population in an adjacent area. Animals from a herd resident in the Ulnes Walton area were reported on several occasions with a maximum count of 13, five of which were white animals. Similarly, a herd resident in the Euxton area was also seen on several occasions, including a count of seven on 7<sup>th</sup> February, which included 4 white animals.

### **Roe Deer** (*Capreolus capreolus*)

Common around Belmont with at least 15 present in January and 27 in November. The maximum group size seen was 8 on 11<sup>th</sup> November. Two, six-week-old kids were seen at Belmont on 3<sup>rd</sup> August. One was on Winter Hill at 400m/1310ft asl on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

The Survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation recorded Roe Deer on 15 of the visits with a cumulative total of 33 animals seen. One buck was exceptionally tame allowing approach within 5m indicating either acclimatisation to human presence or perhaps former hand-rearing or feeding. The maximum number seen was 5

on 7<sup>th</sup> March and whilst population estimates for this species are notoriously difficult, by assessment of group sizes seen, together with sex ratios and assumed home ranges, the plantations were thought to hold a maximum of 7 individuals in 2017.

A total of 59 casual records was received from all across the area. Some of these were from Wheelton plantations and from the general White Coppice area. Most records were of ones and twos with the largest group being 6 on Stronstrey Bank on 5<sup>th</sup> November and one of 4 on Mawdesley Moss on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

The species is seen commonly around Belmont with at least 18 present in January. Maximum groups seen were 8 in April and October. One was on moorland (at 320m asl) above Belmont on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Two, six-week-old kids, were seen at Belmont on 19<sup>th</sup> July. Away from Belmont, 31 records were received from across the area, 6 of which were from Heatherlea Woods and 5 from White Coppice, with the largest group being 5 at Anglezarke on 13<sup>th</sup> October.

## **AMPHIBIA**

### **Smooth Newt** (*Triturus vulgaris*)

One seen at Belmont on 18<sup>th</sup> April. Two were at Great Knowley on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

### **Palmate Newt** (*Triturus helveticus*)

6 were in a Belmont garden pond on 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April with 20+ larva noted on 17<sup>th</sup> August. At least 2 were in ponds at Belmont on 4<sup>th</sup> April with over 5 there on 20<sup>th</sup> April.

### **Great Crested Newt** (*Triturus cristatus*)

The only record was of one found dead at Hic Bibi nature reserve on 5<sup>th</sup> April.

### **Toad** (*Bufo bufo*)

Daytime counts on 25<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April revealed some 65 calling males in ponds at Belmont plus a 'cache' of 95 dead Toads that were considered to have been predated by Brown Rats (two Rats subsequently trapped there). 'Thousands' of 'Toadpoles' were later noted in ponds at Belmont on 14<sup>th</sup> June. 20+ were found dead on Rivington Road by Wards Reservoir on 1<sup>st</sup> April. The last seen was one crossing Rivington Road at Belmont on 14<sup>th</sup> November. The only record away from Belmont was from Cuerden Valley Park on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Please report all sightings of this species.

### **Common Frog** (*Rana temporaria*)

First (1) was seen at Belmont on 15<sup>th</sup> February. 10+ in a Belmont garden pond had risen to 100+ there on 12<sup>th</sup> March.

Reports of frog spawn were received from several ponds across the area from 20<sup>th</sup> February, including 12 frogs spawning in a pond at Coppull on the 26<sup>th</sup>. A bizarre record was of a clump of frog spawn 10 feet up a tree in lead Mines

Clough on 25<sup>th</sup> March, perhaps left there by an avian predator. The Survey for UU of Wheelton Plantation recorded approximately 250 clumps of Common Frog spawn present in one pool on 1<sup>st</sup> March. 100 Frogs plus 870 clumps of spawn were at Belmont Reservoir on 25<sup>th</sup> March. 140 Frogs plus 2500 clumps of spawn were in ponds at Belmont on 10<sup>th</sup> March.

Hundreds of tadpoles were noted in Heapey No.6 lodge on 31<sup>st</sup> May. Froglets were on Lower Burgh Meadow (21<sup>st</sup> July) and at Pincock, Euxton (22<sup>nd</sup> July). Last record was one in a Belmont garden pond on 9<sup>th</sup> November.

## **REPTILES**

### **Common Lizard** (*Lacerta vivipara*)

Singles were seen near Belmont on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 2<sup>nd</sup> September.