

Monthly Newsletter



ISSUE 2

www.blackburnbirdclub.com

November 2025



Photo: Kevin Scott



Photo: Jonathan Fry

Highlights From Leighton Moss

Our first outing of the new season took us to Leighton Moss, where, although things were a little quiet at times, it was still an enjoyable day out for everyone. Kevin recorded a total of 53 species, which was a great result for the conditions. A Red-breasted Merganser was spotted on the Eric Morecambe Pool, and Eiders were seen out on the sea as the tide went out. The Bearded Tits were a real highlight, showing well as they gathered grit.

October Indoor Meeting – Birds of Florida

We had a great start to our indoor season at our new venue, Mellor Brook Community Centre, where Dennis Atherton gave an entertaining talk on the birds of Florida. Dennis shared highlights from his trip some years ago, during which he recorded an impressive 158 species, including Bald Eagle and an abundance of Ospreys.

A big thank you to everyone who came along and supported the evening. If you missed this one, don't worry — make sure to join us for our next talk!

November Indoor Meeting

A Bird Study- Expanding Knowledge Of Feathered Friends

Our next talk will be presented by Jonathan Fry, our Chairman, who will take a closer look at some of Britain's stunning wildlife. From the Red Deer rut at Tatton Park and wildflowers on the Wirral to Puffins and Gannets at Bempton Cliffs, Jonathan will share a wonderful mix of excellent photography and engaging stories from his adventures. It promises to be an enjoyable and inspiring evening — don't miss it!

November Field Walk – Elton Reservoir, Bury Nov 18th (Tue) 9.30am (4 hours)

Our next outing takes us to Elton Reservoir, a lovely local site near Bury that always offers plenty of interest. The reservoir is excellent for waterfowl, and the nearby feeders are a good place to look for Willow Tits. With luck, we may also catch sight of a Water Rail in the reeds or a Peregrine Falcon overhead.

We'll meet in the car park at the end of the lane (postcode BL8 2BR). We hope you can join us for what should be an enjoyable and rewarding morning's birdwatching!

Octobers First Meeting & Leighton Moss Walk

What's On in November

Bird Of The Month

Fieldcraft Focus

Birds To See In November

Arrival Of Winter Thrushes

Murmuration

Monthly Walk

Bird Sightings

Crow ID



Bird Of The Month/Short Eared Owl

As autumn turns to winter, one of the most striking visitors to our marshes and coastal fields is the Short-eared Owl. With its pale underwings, intense yellow eyes, and graceful, buoyant flight, it's a real treat to watch as it quarters low over the grasses in search of voles.

Unlike most owls, the Short-eared Owl is often active in daylight, especially in the late afternoon. Their slow, moth-like wingbeats and occasional hovering make them easy to pick out, even at a distance.

These owls arrive in good numbers each autumn from Scandinavia, Iceland, and northern Europe, joining our smaller resident population in northern Britain. In some years, when vole numbers are high, several pairs may even nest close together — quite unusual for an owl!

Locally, they're best looked for over open habitats such as Pilling Marsh, Fleetwood, Marshside, and Parkgate on the Wirral with occasional sightings around Leighton Moss.



DID YOU KNOW,
THE LATIN NAME
Asio Flammeus

Means “Flame Coloured” a nod to the owls golden tones in sunlight

Fieldcraft Focus: The Early Birder

As the saying goes, “the early bird catches the worm” — and for birders, it couldn't be truer!

Birds are most active in the early hours of the day, making it the best time to be out watching and listening. Arriving at your chosen site early often brings the greatest rewards — from birds that have travelled overnight and drop in to rest or feed, to others continuing their migration as the daylight reveals new habitats.

These visible movements are most often seen shortly after sunrise, so those first few hours can be especially productive. In short, the earlier you're out, the more you're likely to see.

Locally, places such as Leighton Moss, Marshside, and the Ribble Estuary can be particularly lively in the early morning — well worth an early start!



Birds to See in November

October brought plenty of seasonal movement across Lancashire, with the first Redwings and Fieldfares arriving from Scandinavia and spreading through local parks and hedgerows. Pink-footed Geese were seen in good numbers over the Ribble Estuary and across the fields near Marshside and Cockerham, while Whooper Swans began to appear at Martin Mere and other wetland sites. A few Bramblings were reported among mixed finch flocks, and coastal watchers picked out Red-breasted Mergansers, Eiders, and the odd Great Egret around the estuaries.

As we move into November, many of our winter visitors are settling in. Look out for Goldeneye, Goosander, and Teal on local lakes and reservoirs, while Bearded Tits at Leighton Moss may still be showing well on calm days. It's also a good month to watch for Short-eared Owls hunting over rough grassland and coastal marshes, and Bullfinches, Treecreepers, and Goldcrests brightening up our woodland walks.

Arrival Of Winter Thrushes

At this time of year Redwings and Fieldfares arrive to winter in the UK from Scandinavia, escaping harsher winter weather and taking advantage of milder British winters. They feed on berries of Rowan, Hawthorn and even Holly, but will also look for food in open fields.

Redwing ID

Redwings are small, brown thrushes, about the size of a Starling or Song Thrush. Here are some ID features to look out for -

- Obvious white stripes above the eye and below the cheek.
- White breast and flanks are covered in brown streaks.
- Red underwings, particularly obvious in flight.
- Redwings migrate at night, so if you listen carefully you'll hear a fine 'tseep' contact call, which birds also make in flight during the day.

Fieldfare ID

Fieldfares are large thrushes, the size of a Mistle Thrush. Here are some ID features to look out for -

- Grey head and rump with a long tail. Brown back and streaks on the breast with a dark ochre colouration.
 - White underwings, obvious in flight.
 - Fieldfares are often easily identified by their chattering call, frequently given in flight.
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What Is A Murmuration

A “murmuration” refers to the large, swirling, coordinated flight of hundreds or thousands of starlings (the species Common Starling) as they gather before roosting.

The reason they do this: largely believed to be for predator-avoidance (harder for a predator to isolate one bird in a swirling flock), and possibly for warmth/social reasons.

When & Where Can You See A Murmuration

- Brockholes is one of the best places in the Preston/Lancashire area to see a starling murmuration.
- Best season: October through March, when the starling numbers increase with migrating birds.
- Best time of day: just before dusk. At Brockholes the blog states they have seen the swooping flights around 3:50 pm–4:30 pm (note: this will vary with sunset, so the exact time shifts through the year).
- Location for viewing: The blog suggests sitting by the Visitor Village and watching the starlings swoop over the water of Meadow Lake and adjacent areas.

Recent Indications 2025

On their “Latest wildlife sightings” page, Lancashire Wildlife Trust mention that autumn heralds spectacular starling murmurations at their reserves.

Social-media posts from Brockholes show that the first murmurations of the year have already been sighted.

What This Suggests For You

On their “Latest wildlife sightings” page, Lancashire Wildlife Trust mention that autumn heralds spectacular starling murmurations at their reserves.

Social-media posts from Brockholes show that the first murmurations of the year have already been sighted.

The activity has already begun: you’re not too early — the murmuration season is kicking off.

The core period for good displays tends to be late autumn to early winter. According to one blog: “Late autumn, normally during a six week period in November and December at around 4:15 pm” sees amazing murmurations at Brockholes.

So the next few weeks (October through December) are prime time.

Tips To Maximise Your Chance Of Seeing It

- Aim for just before dusk. The light is lower, the starlings gather to roost.
- Pick a vantage point overlooking open water or marsh — the reflective lake at Brockholes helps the spectacle.
- Arrive ahead of time (30–60 minutes before expected dusk) so you can settle, pick a spot and watch.
- Dress for the time of year: early evening post-autumn may be chilly.
- Keep watch on Brockholes’ social-media / sightings page — if they post updates, you might pick a night when the show is strong.

Join Our Monthly Sunday Walks

If you enjoy being outdoors and discovering local birdlife, why not join us for our monthly Sunday walk? It's a relaxed and friendly outing open to all members (and friends), offering a great way to share sightings, pick up tips, and enjoy some fresh air and good company.

Our walks have traditionally taken place at Witton Park, Blackburn, but we're now exploring a variety of locations across Lancashire, chosen each month based on recent sightings and local interest. **Walks will still take place on the third Sunday of each month at 10am, with the meeting point announced during the week before on our Facebook page, by email, and in the WhatsApp group.**

Whether you're new to birdwatching or a long-time member, it's a great way to spend a relaxed morning in nature and see what's about!

Recent Sightings In Lancashire

25 Oct 2025

Brookfoot Farm

Ring-necked Parakeet (5) inspecting a possible nest-hole. eastlancsornithologists.org.uk

25 Oct 2025

Fishmoor Reservoir

Cetti's Warbler (1) heard calling. eastlancsornithologists.org.uk

22 Oct 2025

Alston Reservoirs

Whooper Swans (4) among 100+ Greylag Geese. eastlancsornithologists.org.uk

21 Oct 2025

Ightenhill Bridge & Pool

Redwing (40) passing over. eastlancsornithologists.org.uk

18 Oct 2025

Blackburn, Queen's Park

Yellow-legged Gull (1, 1st-cycle) recorded in town. eastlancsornithologists.org.uk

17 Oct 2025

Dean Clough

Pink-footed Geese (105) flying west in two flocks. eastlancsornithologists.org.uk

16 Oct 2025

Ightenhill Bridge & Pool

Redwing (~120) + Pink-footed Goose (~70) moving west. eastlancsornithologists.org.uk

20 Oct 2025

Barrowford Reservoir

Blackcap (3 males) in birch trees. eastlancsornithologists.org.uk

20 Oct 2025

Foulridge Reservoir Lower

Teal (156) + Goosander (9) among winter arrivals. eastlancsornithologists.org.uk

20 Oct 2025

Martin Mere (WWT)

~11,000 Pink-footed Geese on migration; small pulses of Redwing & first Fieldfare. wwt.org.uk+1

BIRD ID Crow Confusion , Sorting Out the Corvids

Crows are clever, adaptable, and often frustratingly similar! Our common corvids can look like “just another black bird” at a glance, but a few key features can help tell them apart.

Carrion Crow – Our familiar, all-black crow of towns and countryside. Look for the thick bill and shaggy throat feathers. Usually seen singly or in pairs; they’re the ones eyeing you in the car park.

Rook – Often mistaken for a crow, but slimmer, with a bare greyish bill base and a peaked crown that gives it a “monk-hood” look. Rooks are sociable – where there’s one, there are usually many, especially around rookery trees or freshly ploughed fields.

Jackdaw – The smallest and most sociable of the bunch. Compact and neat, with a silvery-grey nape and pale eyes. Their chattering calls and aerial acrobatics make them easy to recognise.

Raven – The heavyweight! Huge, with a thick neck, shaggy throat, and a massive bill. Often seen in upland areas or soaring over cliffs. Their deep “cronk” call is unmistakable. When seen in flight, look for the wedge-shaped tail, which is a reliable way to tell a Raven from the rounded tail of a Carrion Crow.

Chough – A real treat to spot. Glossy black like a crow, but slimmer, with red legs and a curved red bill. Found on coastal cliffs in parts of Wales and Cornwall, and expanding elsewhere.

Tip: Voice is often the best clue – from the rook’s “kaah” to the raven’s deep “cronk” or the jackdaw’s cheerful “chak”. Next time you’re out, stop and listen – the corvid chorus is full of character!



Coming Up In December (Wed 3rd)

Here’s what’s coming up for the club in December — a wonderful evening talk and a chance to round off the year together.

December Indoor Meeting – “Kilimanjaro & a Serengeti Safari” with Kevin Scott

Our final indoor meeting of the year promises to be a real treat! We’re delighted to welcome Kevin Scott, one of our own members, who will be sharing highlights from his incredible travels in Tanzania. His talk, “Kilimanjaro & a Serengeti Safari,” will take us on a journey through the spectacular landscapes of Mount Kilimanjaro and the Serengeti, home to an amazing variety of birds and large African mammals.

It should be a fascinating and inspiring evening, and we hope you can join us before the Christmas break!

GROUP

