

Filey Bird Observatory and Group



FBOG members newsletter spring 2025

Welcome

Welcome to the FBOG spring newsletter. As nature lovers, I am sure that this time of year fills you with joy and hope as everything around us bursts into life - Spring is the season of rejuvenation.

It also feels like our bird group is entering into its latest phase of rejuvenation with lots of new members and new faces on the FBOG Committee. In addition to me taking on the role as Chairman, I am pleased to welcome Emily Harrison who takes over the Secretary role and Margaret Denny as our Treasurer. A big thank you to you both.

Our group has a clear purpose which is:

to connect birders (wildlife enthusiasts) in order to monitor & report on the status of wildlife in our area and to enhance the natural environment in support of biodiversity

We are currently formulating fresh plans to make this even more of a reality and all of our members can play an active role in this. Take a look at the "volunteer" article at the end of this newsletter to see whether you may be able to help out a little more.

These quarterly newsletters will aim to keep you up to date on what we have seen (wildlife reports) and what we have done (reserve updates).

Andrew Cottrell, Chairman FBOG

Sighting Summary January – March 2025

A quiet winter, but with enough going on to keep birders interested on land and at sea. Our regular divers, Great Northern and Red-throated, could usually be found.



Figure 1: Great Northern Diver, Filey Bay, John Harwood



Figure 2: Red-necked Grebe, Filey Bay, Andrew Cottrell

Rarer geese included ten White-fronted in February - March (see article below) and occasional Brent, Barnacle and Egyptian. A Red-necked Grebe was seen frequently during the period, with a Slavonian Grebe a brief visitor on 25th February.



Figure 3: Redshank, Filey Brigg, Andrew Cottrell

Large numbers of Herring, Common and Black-headed Gull were present in the evening bay roost. Mediterranean Gulls were seen in March. Knot, Turnstone, Ringed Plover, Redshank, Oystercatcher, Sanderling and Purple Sandpiper could be seen on the Brigg and Country Park. Guillemots and Razorbills began appearing.

January was an unusual winter sighting.

Red Kites appeared in March. Two – three Short-eared Owls at the Tip were a popular feature of the winter period (see article below).

Chiffchaff and the occasional Blackcap could be found locally. A Jay on 16th February was a local rarity. The now-established Cetti's Warblers could be heard singing at Filey Dams.

Linnet, Yellowhammers and Reed Bunting were in the Top Fields, but no rarer buntings.

George Watola

A Manx Shearwater north on 10th



Figure 4: Yellowhammer, North Cliff, Nigel Webster

Russian White-fronted Goose – *Anser albifrons*



Figure 5: White-fronted Goose, East Lea, Judith Henley

Russian White-fronted Geese are the most colourful of all the grey Geese and often the most lively and nervous. They breed on the ground in the northern tundra of Siberia. Most birds winter in the Netherlands, some also in Northern France, England and South-East Europe. Their lively dominance and threat displays are a feature of winter flocks, high laughing calls have a yodelling quality like a distant pack of dogs.

They are winter visitors from October to March, smaller than Greylag Geese but about same size as Pink-footed Geese. Length 64-78 cm and wingspan 130-160 cm. They feed in the fields and grazing marshes on grass, potatoes and grain. Russian White-fronted Geese are scarce in Britain. A lot of traditional wintering sites have been abandoned, it is now red listed as a species of 'highest conservation concern'.

Juvenile birds lack the white blaze at the bill base and the black tiger stripes on their belly, the white blaze develops in the second calendar year. They are usually in family groups. Greenland birds race *flavirostris* are much darker with an orange bill and winter in Scotland and Ireland.

On 7th February 2025 Nick spotted five Russian White-fronted Geese, four adults and a juvenile amongst the Greylag Geese in the fields at East Lea. They were regular visitors all month. On 27th February 2025 another five joined them in the fields at East Lea amongst Canada & Pink-footed Geese, subsequently the ten were spotted occasionally at the Dams. The last sighting was on Saturday 15th March 2025 at the Dams, before flying over to East Lea.

Judith Henley and Nick Robinson

Wintering Short-eared Owls

The Short-eared Owls on the Tip and surrounding fields have been very obliging this winter. With as many as six being reported from Newbiggin to Carr Naze, though it seems to have quietened down a bit now, with just three seen on occasions. Resting overnight in long grass or a low tree, they can be seen hunting throughout the day for food, which can be voles, mice, shrews, small birds, or even rabbits and grasshoppers.



Figure 6: Short-eared Owl, Tip, Ian Robinson

Some will no doubt be moving soon to breed on the northern moorlands or new plantations, with breeding time being late April to May. They nest on the ground and lay between four to eight eggs, but sometimes more, with breeding success depending on a good supply of voles. The Short-eared Owl can live up to 12 years in the wild, and in winter, there is an influx of continental birds from Scandinavia, Russia and Iceland.

Other regulars at the Tip at this time of year are linnet, Yellowhammer, Grey Partridge, thrushes, Reed Bunting, Kestrel, Roe Deer and Brown Hare. So, enjoy your birding,

John Redman

East Lea Wetland Reserve

For those members who have not been able to visit East Lea for a while, you will quickly realise that there have been some new developments. Re-sculpting work of the main pool has been undertaken to create more islands, which will be exposed once the water level is dropped a little ready for Spring Migration. Hopefully, this will encourage passage migrants to drop in and perhaps breed.



Figure 7: East Lea, Main Pool Groundworks, Oct 2024, Mike Cole



Figure 8: East Lea, Reedbed Groundworks, Oct 2024, Mike Cole

The reedbed at the back of the Dams, adjacent to the wildflower meadow has also been scraped to remove willow and alder and retain this area as a wetland habitat. At the same time some deeper pools have been created. The area will need a year or two to settle down and regrow naturally once the phragmites recovers. In the meantime, we are likely to cause some disturbance as we walk by, but we are considering options using temporary screens to mitigate this. Once the natural vegetation has established, we may put up some permanent viewing screens to provide another observation "window" on the reserves wildlife. The prospect of seeing new species on this rejuvenated site is exciting. Please report any sightings.

Scraping of the reedbed has created a large amount of spoil and we will be monitoring how this settles and what we can do to make the most of this area. The wildflower meadow created by Tony Feather continues to develop, and there are some handy benches where you can tarry a while and soak up the atmosphere.

All sections of the access path to the East Lea hide are now in a reasonably good condition for all weathers. We hope that you enjoy your next visit to East Lea. Feedback with observations and suggestions is always welcomed.

Mike Cole

Parish Wood Nest Boxes

Parish Wood continues to mature (it is now nearly 30 years old) and provides a valuable home to both visiting and resident birds. However, the stock of housing for those residents was rather limited and those nest boxes that were still remaining were in a poor state of repair.

This is no longer the case as in early November a small group of volunteers erected 22 new nest boxes across the Eastern half of the wood (part with public access). Our main objective is to support the breeding population of Tree

Sparrows although I am sure that some boxes will also become homes for Great Tits and Blue Tits.

We would like to thank The Cobblers Arms for donating £200 from their weekly raffle and enabling the purchase of these nest boxes

Join Us At Our Monthly Social

On the topic of The Cobblers, this is also where we hold our monthly members social. This is an informal gathering and although some of us may be chatting about birds it is just a chance to have a drink and a chat with fellow members - and partners are certainly welcome.

Currently we meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm in The Cobblers back room. Keep an eye on the FBOG Chat WhatsApp for reminders and news of any changes to the regular schedule.

Get involved as a volunteer

Everything FBOG achieves relies upon the contribution of volunteers from our membership. There is a wide range of "jobs" that require volunteer support and we are always looking for more helpers.



Figure 9: Kev & Lois working on a new path extension at East Lea.



Figure 10: Mark & Andrew fitting a new Barn Owl box at the Tip.

Tasks range from manual work on our reserves to secretarial work on our reports and website. If you only have limited spare time and/or don't want a regular commitment, that is fine - small contributions from many will make a big difference.

Please take a look at the list of volunteer roles (below) and get in touch if you'd like to join our band of volunteers.

Can you help out? You may have an interest, a specific skill or enthusiasm that we are unaware of within the FBOG group and that we could really benefit from and expand the number of volunteers. If you would like to get involved and contribute towards some aspect of FBOG we would welcome it.

Task	Description	Skills	Time Estimate
Work Party - The Dams	Manual tasks such as picking litter, nest box maintenance, cutting back vegetation.	None. If anyone has landscaping, building or carpentry skills that would be a bonus and we'd love to hear from you	2-3 hours on the morning of the 1st Wednesday of each month
Work Parties - Other reserves	As above	As above	Ad hoc (via Volunteer WhatsApp group), typically a few hours each month
Wildlife monitoring	Recording species records with the FBOG area with a focus on "non-bird" wildlife	A measure of expertise on identifying a particular group e.g. plants, fungi, insects, mammals etc.	For you to define
Bird & Wildlife Report preparation	Writing individual species reports	None. All guidance on required steps and output will be given	A "package" of 5 species will take around 2-3 hours with inspection of the species records on a spreadsheet (supplied) and write-up
Maintaining Website	Updating Monthly Sightings	None. All guidance on required steps and output will be given	1 - 2 hours a month, depending on season - summary of WhatsApp sightings
Maintaining Website	Reviewing and improving our online presence	Web design or maintenance experience	For you to define
FBOG "brochures"	Update "welcome pack" and prepare potential flyer to attract new members	Desktop design and publishing experience	A few days for initial work and then a few hours annually to maintain
FBOG newsletter	Gather updates and stories and put together a quarterly newsletter	Desktop publishing (or just proficient with Word or equivalent)	Half a day each quarter

Contacts

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