



EAST LANCASHIRE ORNITHOLOGIST CLUB

Field Trip Report

Date: January 17th, 2026

Attendees: 23

Sunrise: 08:17

Hightide: 10:32

Weather: 08:00 – Overcast, Temperature 5°C. Wind 8 mph E

12:00 – Overcast, Temperature 7°C. Wind 9 mph SE

Species Count: 68

Heysham Nature Reserve and Harbour

It was a large group of ELOC members who met near the Ocean Edge Holiday Park and, in the early morning light, we walked through the reserve to the sea.

A skein of Pink-Footed Geese flew high overhead and, as the light improved, we picked out two Peregrine sat on a sand bank just offshore. They later flew up to the roof of Heysham Nuclear Power Station and were identified as a male and female.

Shore birds such as Curlew, Redshank, Turnstone and Oystercatcher were present and a single Snipe flew past. A Little Egret was feeding in a nearby rock pool. Shelduck and Wigeon were seen, as were Black-headed, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls.

The group then started to walk round the perimeter of the power station towards Heysham harbour, on the way seeing both Rock and Meadow Pipit.

There had been a report of Brent Geese (Light-bellied) in the area and a flock of 30 now flew past us low over the sea flying south. A single duck seen bobbing on the sea near the power station outflow, turned out to be plastic decoy duck, but nearby we did find two female Red-breasted Mergansers.

A mixed flock of Linnet and Goldfinch was present in the bushes by the side of the harbour. In the harbour Lesser Black-backed Gull were seen, along with Cormorant and large flocks of Knot were seen flying to their high tide roosts.

We then re-traced our route, noticing a smaller flock of Brent Geese flying south, as well as seeing a Grey Seal catch a large Sea Bass. A male Eider was on the sea near where we had started. Scanning the high tide roost, we saw that it now contained a large group of Brent Geese (circa 58), two female Red-breasted Merganser were busy hunting for food, as well as the previously seen shore birds.

We drove round to the North Side of the harbour where a large flock of Oystercatcher, a few Curlew and a single Bar-tailed Godwit were roosting on the sea wall.

With the tide now receding we drove down to Sunderland Point.

Sunderland Point

Parking on the shore, we had lunch while watching Waders and Gulls feeding on the water's edge. Close to us were more Redshank, Oystercatcher and Curlew, with both Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwit being present as well as a single male Red-breasted Merganser.

On the far side of the Lune estuary, we could make out a large flock of Knot, with Lapwing, Great Crested Grebe and Dunlin mixed in.

We now walked south, past the houses, scanning for more birds. Pink-footed Geese flew over along with a single Whooper Swan.

Partially retracing our steps, we took the path through the fields towards the coast. In a flooded field we saw Teal, and in the stubble of a ploughed field there was a large flock of Fieldfare with some Redwing mixed in. The flock took flight as a Marsh Harrier flew over. A Stonechat was seen, one of the few Passerine species at the first two locations. Returning to the cars, a Greenshank was seen on the shoreline.

The field trip was planned to finish at Sunderland Point, but some of the members decided to detour to Eagland Hill on the way home.

Eagland Hill

In the late afternoon light, as we approached the hamlet of Eagland Hill, we saw a flock of 19 Corn Buntings perched on telegraph wires.

We then parked next to the church where there was a large and noisy flock of Starling in the trees. Walking to the first of the two feeding stations, there was the expected flocks of Tree and House Sparrow, along with Great Tit, Blue Tit, Chaffinch and Robin. A Barn Owl now started hunting in the field in front of us. Walking down the road to the second feeding station we disturbed both a Grey Partridge and a Red-legged Partridge and then watched as a probable second Barn Owl started hunting in the gloom.

A Buzzard was seen roosting in a small tree. With the light failing it was time to return to the cars and drive home, but not before watching the large flock of Starling preparing to go into roost. The end to another very enjoyable ELOC members fieldtrip.

Thank you to Nigel and Glenn for the work they do in planning the trips and for the good company of all that attended.

Species List

Brent Goose (light-bellied)	Black-tailed Godwit	Carrion Crow
Canada Goose	Snipe	Blue Tit
Pink Footed Goose	Redshank	Great Tit
Mute Swan	Greenshank	Long-tailed Tit
Whooper Swan	Turnstone	Wren
Shelduck	Knot	Starling
Shoveler	Dunlin	Song Thrush
Wigeon	Black-headed Gull	Redwing
Mallard	Common Gull	Blackbird
Teal	Herring Gull	Fieldfare
Eider	Great Black-backed Gull	Robin
Red-breasted Merganser	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Stonechat
Grey Partridge	Cormorant	Tree Sparrow
Pheasant	Little Egret	House Sparrow
Red-legged Partridge	Grey Heron	Duncock
Woodpigeon	Marsh Harrier	Pied Wagtail (yarrellii)
Collared Dove	Buzzard	Meadow Pipit
Moorhen	Barn Owl	Rock Pipit
Great Crested Grebe	Kestrel	Chaffinch
Oystercatcher	Peregrine	Linnet
Lapwing	Magpie	Goldfinch
Curlew	Jackdaw	Corn Bunting
Bar-tailed Godwit	Rook	