

Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society

Reg. Charity No. 702484 www.cawos.org



BIRD NEWS

Number 120

July 2022



Species Spotlight: Garganey
County Rarity: Greenish Warbler
A Little-known Cheshire Naturalist:
James J Cash 1872-1956

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

Chairman : Phil Hampson

2 Winsfield Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 6ES Tel: 01625 260059

Email address : chairman@cawos.org

Vice-Chairman : Tony Parker

Secretary : Ted Lock

2 Bourne Street, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5HD Tel: 01625 540466

Email address : secretary@cawos.org

Treasurer : John Patterson

10 Mere Hall, Mere, Cheshire WA16 0WY Tel: 01565 830677

Email address : treasurer@cawos.org

Recorder : Jane Turner

Quaintways, Marine Road, Hoylake, Wirral, CH47 2AS Tel: 0151 632 3308

Email address : countyrec@cawos.org

Membership Secretary : Phil Hampson

2 Winsfield Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 6ES Tel: 01625 260059

Email address : memsec@cawos.org

Newsletter Editor : Sheila Blamire

Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, WA16 6QG Tel: 01565 830168

Email address : sheilablamire@cawos.org

Bird News welcomes articles, letters and comments relevant to birdwatching in Cheshire and Wirral. Please either email or post your contributions to the Editor at the address shown above.

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Society, the Council of the Society, or the Editor. Appearance of advertisements in this publication does not infer any recommendation or approval by the Society for the products and services being promoted.

Front cover: Bluethroat by Ray Scally

Other illustrations by Phil Jones and Ray Scally

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 15th October 2022

Guest Editorial

Since this is my first Guest Editorial, I'm hoping there might be something of a 'honeymoon period' and I can get away with turning this into a bit of a soapbox. I'm a passionate advocate of low carbon birding - in fact I'm practising zero carbon birding since I've not been anywhere except by bicycle for well over a year now. Of course, I am really lucky, having a house and garden where the birds come to me and where I can catch and ring a wide variety of migrants and never be quite sure what I might catch. Last week I was amazed to encounter a Willow Tit on a Constant Effort (ringing) Site survey*. It is 40 years since I last saw one on north Wirral and to be honest I'd have been less surprised if I'd been presented with an Orphean Warbler. It's terrible news of course for Cheshire's (or Lancashire's) last few remaining pairs of Willow Tits, because this one at least has dispersed so far from its breeding site, that it is now almost certainly lost to the gene pool.

George Hill's article in this *Bird News* reflects on the differences between the 1966 *Cheshire Bird Report* and now. He points out the big differences in both Willow and Marsh Tit numbers, which were described as common in the NE and SW of the county respectively as opposed to in grave danger of extinction now. Other big changes include Corncrakes and Turtle Dove, birds that are also highlighted in Gill Barber's piece on 'A little-known Cheshire Naturalist - James J Cash' and his Natural History notes column in the *Manchester Evening News*.

Climate breakdown and the biodiversity crisis aren't theories, they are here and they are decimating our wildlife. So it's especially frustrating that in different parts of the county local activists are having to campaign to save rare and threatened habitats. A massive tract of wildlife rich land adjacent to the Danes Moss SSSI is under threat from a housing and retail development. This is peatland, the most important habitat for carbon capture and it has breeding Willow Tits. The Pasture Road Flash near Leasowe Lighthouse is also under threat of development. Grand Pasture Flash, as it is known amongst birders, held a Garganey this spring, the species covered in Richard Smith's species spotlight. Please take a few minutes to sign the petitions opposing these developments.

Danes Moss petition: <http://tinyurl.com/2p8ndcz2>

Pasture Rd petition: <http://tinyurl.com/48bytu2u>

This is where I am going to abuse my position. There is a huge 'battle' raging in Hoylake between those who want to protect the 12 hectares of developing embryo dune and Atlantic salt meadow and those who want to remove half, or all of it, re-establishing an artificial raked beach. To put this into context, there are less than 1000 hectares of embryo sand dune in the entire county. If this was ancient woodland, the beach would need to be the size of Wiltshire to be as important in a national context. The embryo dunes have held up to 80 Linnets, the biggest flock I have seen in the area this century. They are popular as a high tide feeding location, especially with plovers - including a fabulous American Golden Plover which was strutting around in them last year; they are providing a less disturbed roosting site for shorebirds at high tide and are holding good numbers of Wheatears, Pipits, Buntings and Wagtails in the appropriate season. 170+ species of plant have been identified, including 23 that are locally or nationally endangered. Add to this that the developing habitat is a soft defence against storm surges and the eleven trucks a day on average of sand that are arriving from the East Hoyle Bank that will just keep going into the town if not stopped out on the beach, and any plan to strip that habitat away in the interests of 'looking more tidy' is as financially irresponsible as it is environmentally reprehensible.

Between now and August 10th there is a consultation process run by Wirral Borough Council to establish public feelings around this. They have explicitly said that they are interested in the views of people who live outside Hoylake and even outside Wirral, so please take the time to fill in the short survey provided by WBC. It is 5 minutes of your time. <http://tinyurl.com/yc4rc33x>

Since I'm a totally sedentary birder I'm really interested to hear about ambitious plans to revert the Hoylake Langfields to Willow Carr and a WWT reserve plus flood abatement scheme. A mini Minsmere in walking distance is all I could ask for. One day there may be even suitable habitat for the next Willow Tit.

Jane Turner

*The Constant Effort Sites (CES) scheme uses changes in catch sizes across a network of standardised mist-netting sites to monitor changes in the abundance and breeding success of common passerines in scrub and wetland habitats. At each constant effort site, licensed ringers erect a series of mist nets in the same positions, for the same amount of time, during 12 visits evenly spaced between 1 May and 31 August (Peach et al. 1996).

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 15th October 2022 - *please be prompt*

We cannot guarantee that material received after this date will be published in that issue. If you are aware that your material may be delayed, please let the Editor know as soon as possible.

CAWOS News

The main event in the world of CAWOS was the Annual General Meeting which took place on Friday 4th March via Zoom. The meeting was quorate and three new members were elected to Council. We welcomed Jane Turner as County Recorder and Carolyn Bailey and John Jones as ordinary members. Phil Hampson was elected as Chairman, replacing David Stevenson who had done his 5-year term. Tony Parker was voted as Vice-Chairman, while John Paterson and Ted Lock were re-elected as Treasurer and Secretary, respectively. The other ordinary members elected were David Steventon, Hugh Pulsford and David Hiley, leaving one position on Council unfilled. On behalf of Council we would like to thank Hugh who has put in many years as County Recorder and now is the BTO representative on Council. David Stevenson has also been involved in CAWOS over many years and has just finished his second time as Chairman and agreed to remain as an ordinary member. The Chairman's, Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports were in the last issue of *Bird News* for members to read.

In addition to the above Brian Dyke, a long-term COA and then CAWOS member, served the society for 30+ years, as a former Treasurer and Chairman on a number of occasions. Brian was awarded a Vice-Life President of the Society. Many congratulations Brian and a big thank you for helping get CAWOS to where it is today.

Council has met twice since the AGM, firstly in April where the Treasurer presented the latest position at this stage of the year telling us our projected budget was in line with expectations. The only major spend was on a laptop computer for the Membership Secretary. The main issue under discussion was the auditing of our accounts. Alex Brenninkmeijer has done this for the last two years and is unable to continue. As a consequence, John P looked to see what the Charity Commission required. In 2008 the Charity Commission introduced new regulations regarding the level of scrutiny needed based on the level of income p.a. which was last updated in 2017. CAWOS income falls below the threshold of the lowest requirement for examination. However, the CAWOS Constitution requires an audit by a qualified accountant. John P prepared a position paper recommending we amend our Constitution and remove the need for a professional audit. In its place Council should appoint a non-Council member to review the accounts for a period of say three years, after which a new member would be appointed to take on the role. Council discussed that at some length and as the Charity Commission does not require an audit based on our annual income Council agreed to change the Constitution. This needs to be done at an Extraordinary General Meeting which could take place at the October Zoom meeting before the talk.

Currently Council does not have a member responsible for our Zoom meeting programme. Council discussed this at our June meeting and whether we should go back to an indoor programme. The unanimous view was to continue with Zoom meetings. The basis for the decision was two-fold, one that this allowed members from across the County to join, which has happened, and two that Covid is still around and currently increasing rapidly again, although cases are generally less severe than at the start of the pandemic. Tony Parker and John Jones agreed to take on this role for the 2023/4 season.

The 2020 *Bird Report* was circulated to members in April and the feedback has been positive with some suggestions for minor changes. Phil and Ted, the editors, wish to thank all those members who helped. The closing date for the 2021 records was extended to the end of May and all the data and reports are in and the compilers will be sent the records in July. At present we are on target to have the report out before the year end. Thanks again to all those members who have provided the data to make that happen, photographs for selection, birding site reports, ringing report for the year, rarities committee data, etc.

Council discussed the production of *Bird News* as the cost is about £1800 pa for the three issues for the printing and with the increase in the price of stamps. Council agreed this was too expensive and that we should move to circulating *Bird News* as a digital publication (PDF). As not all members have email addresses we will still have to produce some paper copies. The Chairman agreed to discuss this with Sheila to find a way forward.

CAWOS has an agreement with NE to look after the Rostherne Observatory and provide an annual report on the birds observed on the reserve. A new agreement has been approved for the next three years and Council wish to thank John Holland and the Rostherne committee members for their efforts and in particular to Bill Bellamy for producing the annual bird report. This year is the 60th anniversary of the Observatory on 7th September and plans to celebrate are under discussion. We are very lucky to have access to the AW Boyd Observatory (permit required). Rostherne Mere has been observed by ornithologists since 1886 when it was a National Nature Reserve and the famous observers were TA Coward and AW Boyd who report on the fauna in 1914 and 1955 respectively.

Ted Lock, Secretary

MEMBERSHIP

Current membership is 304, there are 11 people who have not renewed who are not included in this number. They have had three reminders now and there has been no communication. This is the normal rate of non-renewal.

Since the last copy of *Bird News* in March we have had 7 new members: Mr Steve Edward, Mr Michael Naden, Mr Richard Barnard, Mr Les Jones, Mr Anthony Sinnott, Mr Mark Neugebauer and Mr Jim Freeman and family.

Welcome all, thank you for joining CAWOS and enjoy your first copy of *Bird News*.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We are in that time of year where the dawn chorus is gradually going quiet. In our gardens we can see adults feeding juveniles. I am lucky to still have a good number of House Sparrows and they are going through a large feeder in 2 days. I've always had good numbers of tit species but this year there are far fewer visiting and mainly Coal Tits. Through the lounge window I can watch Swifts busy collecting balls of insects to feed the young, very hard to count and without doubt fewer than 10 years ago but thankfully still here.

In working with Jane Turner, our new County Recorder, we are finding that people are seeing birds in the Cheshire and Wirral areas which are County Rarities; these can be found on the website home page under the 'Species List'. All the County Rarities have a CR next to them and therefore require a description to be officially accepted by the CAWOS Rarities Committee. Please if you see one of the species in this category complete a Rarity Form from the website or write a detailed email and send it to Jane. This all helps in the Bird Report production cycle.

This is especially important as we move into the time of year where waders start to pass through on their return from breeding grounds. The mudflats of the Dee and Mersey estuaries are well worth a visit.

I see out of 'county' there are European Bee-eaters attempting to breed in a small Norfolk quarry. In the words of Gordon Yates 'what a bird!' If you are going to Norfolk the RSPB have set up access for viewing. Two were in Lancashire last week; could they be moving into the area and become a Cheshire and Wirral bird? I hope so. Or, over to the east at Bempton we have Albert the Black-browed Albatross which has returned again this year. Personally, when I went to New Zealand some years ago and had good numbers of Albatross species I never expected to see

one in the UK. Both are well worth a visit if you are in the area. Back into our 'area' a trip to the Wirral and working the way up from New Brighton to Burton Mere Wetlands can make for an excellent day's birding. Now we have regular Great Egrets and Spoonbills; none of us older birders would have foreseen these two species being regulars 30 years ago. But, with the way that Little Egrets spread rapidly up the country maybe we should have had a clue. It makes one wonder what the next new breeding species will be in our area.

Rostherne reserve is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year and permit holders will be able to visit and join in the celebration. If you don't have a permit and would like to start visiting just email me at chairman@cawos.org and we can sort it out - the cost is minimal for a superb location. Just last night I received an email from our residential ear to the ground who is the font of all knowledge Sheila Blamire that Malcolm Calvert has been ringing Reed Warblers at the reserve for 50, yes 50, years. A fantastic achievement and an incredible display of dedication. The 2021 CAWOS *Bird Report* will include an article on the subject that is very interesting.

Lastly, before I stop rambling and close can I ask people to give a thought about what they would like from CAWOS. What can we do to increase our membership, we are treading water year on year and yes I know that is good in this day and age. But, it'd be great to have input from our members on what you would like to see from the Society. Please just drop me an email at the address above. We are quite good at ticking over producing 3 *Bird News* a year (thanks Sheila) and the annual *Bird Report*, which is now back on track to be published within the next calendar year. But, that does not mean we should ignore change. After all change can refresh and we should not be afraid to embrace it.

Have a good summer and every best wish, Phil

Phil Hampson, Chairman, Data Manager and Membership Secretary

BIRD REPORT 2021

Good progress has been made. All the data has been received and processed into BirdTrack. On completion the extract was run from BirdTrack. All post-extract processing is complete and the data will be sent to the compilers shortly. Ted Lock and myself have to look at the split for the compilers, as the order of birds in the BOU list has changed. We have 500+ photographs to review and reduce to the c80 we will use, with a small number as backup if we have additional space. The report will be 160 pages as previous years. All the data we use from the BTO has been received and is being reviewed and translated into the format for the compilers. We are on track to publish the 2021 *Bird Report* in this calendar year.

Sites to Watch

NESTON REEDBED FIRE: THE VIEW FROM THE GROUND

First published on the RSPB Dee Estuary Blog on 24 Mar 2022 – see <https://community.rspb.org.uk/placestovisit/deeestuary/b/deeestuary-blog/posts/neston-reedbed-fire>

Heartbroken. Angry. Rueful. Just three of the many emotions coursing through my body and brain since Saturday evening [19th March].

Heartbroken for the Marsh Harrier pair that had started nest building just days before the fire, now flying around aimlessly and confused by the dramatic change in appearance of their home. Angry that for the third time in my eleven years working here, I've witnessed this precious wild habitat going up in flames in suspicious circumstances. Rueful because after growing pressures on the tidal reserve during the pandemic lockdowns and despite the best efforts of RSPB staff, volunteers and supporters, we had yet to achieve any real progress in preventing damage and disturbance occurring.



Developments since the weekend suggest that initial suspicions of the fire being started deliberately are being investigated by the Police. Why, we repeatedly hear being asked, would anybody do such a thing? Well, whilst it's unlikely that anyone would intend to raze 100,000 square metres of internationally important nature reserve to the ground, it highlights the lack of understanding and respect

for how valuable to wildlife the estuary is. What hurts so much more than the last severe fire in 2013 is that since the reedbed recovered that time, it first became an important winter roost for Marsh Harriers and Bitterns in 2015, before a pair of Marsh Harriers nested there since 2017.

Burning is one of several conservation management techniques for reedbeds, so some might argue that the 2013 blaze was beneficial to these subsequent arrivals. Yet this scientific practise must be done carefully, in a controlled manner, not eliminating an entire habitat in one fell swoop, including an untold loss of invertebrate life that serves as the vital food source for the wildlife we see and hear there.

From assessing the damage on Monday [21st March], some comfort can be taken from the fact the roots and rhizomes of the reeds appear to be largely intact, having been protected by the waterlogged ground they grow from. What burned so fast and fiercely, aided by the stiff south-easterly breeze, was the dry six-foot reed stems and crucially, the papery layer of dead leaf litter that falls to the base of the reedbed in winter, building up to create the habitat for many of the inhabitants to make their home. Whilst the reeds will grow significantly this spring and summer, realistically it will be at least a couple of years before the reedbed starts to resemble its former glory, but it will take even longer for the important leaf litter to build up again.

To our surprise, a relatively small area of saltmarsh on the outer edge of the reedbed also burned, demonstrating the intensity of the fire that was able to scorch such wet vegetation. This will take significantly longer than the reeds to recover its complex assemblage of plants, but at least it is a tiny fraction of the extensive saltmarsh managed on the reserve.

As well as no Marsh Harrier nest this year, dozens of Reed Warblers will be returning in the coming weeks to find their usual nesting site gone, along with resident Cetti's Warblers and Water Rails that should have escaped the fire but are now forced to seek alternative homes. Thankfully, the reedbed we planted at Burton Mere Wetlands 15 years ago has matured to support one of three further pairs of Marsh Harriers that now nest across our reserve, the two others being in small pockets of naturally emerging reeds on the tidal estuary. But that doesn't mean that a quarter of the Dee Estuary's breeding Marsh Harriers probably not nesting this year is any less of a tragedy.

It also leads me onto another major current concern for the reserve team; the increase in people inadvertently causing disturbance to the rich and varied wildlife that we work so hard to protect while they access the marsh. With our small team of staff focussed predominantly at Burton Mere Wetlands, it is a huge challenge for us to be visible around the wider reserve to begin addressing these pressures on the birds we give so much time and energy to protect.

Even some of the most local residents may not appreciate what is on their doorstep, and how it has changed over the forty-odd years since the RSPB established the first part of our reserve in 1979. The Dee Estuary is rather unique, in that unlike most intertidal land in the UK, it is not owned by The Crown Estate. Owing to its fascinating industrial heritage, which also influenced the change in natural habitats resulting in today's priceless marshland, ownership was relinquished into private hands almost 300 years ago.

Buying 2000 hectares of marsh around Parkgate from British Steel created a sanctuary for ducks like Pintail and Wigeon whose numbers were declining dramatically on the Dee in the preceding years, and quashed any proposals of damaging development on the marsh. In 2006, our purchase of Burton Marsh Farm gave us the grazing management of the marsh from Burton Point to Neston Reedbed, and has since become one of the best locations in the country for threatened Redshanks to nest, as well as seeing a twenty-fold increase in the number of wintering Pink-footed Geese.

Whilst some locals may have grown up roaming freely on the marshland, it's no longer a mere sheep farm or earmarked for industrial development, where walking would have had little impact.

In addition to the RSPB influence, the estuary is legally protected for its wildlife, particularly birds, and its habitats; it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Ramsar site. It is one of the most important estuaries in all of Europe for supporting wintering birds, and the vast, expanding saltmarsh not only represents an excellent mix of specialist plants, but it is also a rare site where saltmarsh is not being lost to erosion and the threat of rising sea levels.

What much of nature needs more than anything else is space to thrive without contact with humans and everything we bring with us, somewhere that the estuary has the potential to be. It is difficult to know where to start with spreading this message far and wide. These birds choose the Dee Estuary due to the suitability of its natural habitats; they have little other choice of equivalent space in the local area. We, on the other hand, can choose to give them the space they need, keeping to established paths, parks or anywhere else that our recreational activities have no negative impact on nature. It seems assumed by many, but there is no public right of access to the Dee's marshes, nor even permissive access since Burton Marsh Farm changed hands in 2006. Of course, admire the views along the three miles of Greenway from The Harp to Burton Point. Perch on Denhall Quay to look for hunting owls, and egrets streaming past at sunset. If you still choose to walk dogs around the well-trodden loop, please at least keep them on short leads or at heel if well trained.

Long before the recent fire, the reserve team were planning to start tackling the issue this year. It fits neatly with the RSPB's #WatchYourStep campaign which launched a year ago in response to the 2020 bird breeding season being severely impacted in places by the rise in people accessing the countryside during lockdown, and is now live for another season. As the pandemic restrictions hopefully ease for good, we want to build on supportive discussions with councillors about having these conversations in front of a sizeable public audience. You too can help by sharing this blog and encouraging these conversations amongst friends and family.

The amount of public support we've received since Saturday's fire has been truly touching. We know we have thousands of like-minded people in our midst, who share our frustrations of the disregard for wildlife on the estuary, and in general. Many have offered to donate; others to volunteer to help. In truth, following a devastating fire like this, there is little immediate need for either. No amount of donations would help the reedbed grow back any quicker. There is no clear-up required as everything has been burned to cinders. Even the established team of volunteer wardens who were due to start their daily patrols this week have nothing left to protect this year. Saying that, there are a variety of volunteer roles you can get involved with around the Dee Estuary reserve, which may include community engagement to help us tackle the aforementioned issues, once we have had time to make plans and plot our way forward.

Similarly, whilst there is no immediate appeal for donations in response to the fire, if you wish to contribute financially to the RSPB's work, there is no better way than by becoming a member. It's probably not as expensive as you think (in fact, you get to choose how much you donate), and this steady source of income is what drives the vital conservation work of the entire organisation including our reserves - not to mention adding another public voice to our efforts to do more to protect nature in the wider countryside, and urban areas.

For more information on volunteering or becoming a member, why not come and see us at Burton Mere Wetlands for a friendly chat, and especially if you've never been before, an inspiring introduction to this breathtaking reserve.

Dan Trotman, Visitor Experience Manager, RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve

TATTON PARK

After the initial, traditional first spring migrant arrival, a Sand Martin over Tatton Mere on 8th March, things appeared to move very slowly. It was noticeable that hirundines just didn't appear in their usual numbers over the meres. The ones that did could be seen hawking insects over the meres during spring and is always a welcome sight. Wheatears did arrive in April and were seen along the Mill Pool track and the deer enclosure which are traditional areas for them to be seen at this time of year. It was nice to find a pristine Whinchat on the banks of Melchett Mere on 20th

April during a walk, as they are not a common sight in the park. Other migrants passing through during the spring period included an Arctic Tern and three Common Sandpipers. A female Cuckoo was seen again by Melchett Mere on 15th May, unfortunately they are becoming much rarer in Tatton over the past few years as they are sadly everywhere.

We had a good year at the Heronry in Higmere at the southern end of Tatton Mere, with 16 occupied nests this year. It is quite a small heronry, but the numbers have remained quite stable over the years. Other early breeders got off to a good start too with two Ravens' nests in the park and a 'branching' fledgling out and about on 27th April. Kingfishers are suspected of nesting at two sites in the park and more controversially, the pair of Egyptian geese had eight fledglings on 4th April on the Ice Pond which is the small pond in front of the mansion. Another annual breeder, the Green Woodpecker, was again present and very vocal during spring. Other sightings of note were of a Little Gull in April.

Sadly, no Osprey or Hobby sighting so far but Hobbies do tend to make an appearance in the park in late summer as we do have a wealth of dragonflies in the 2000 acres that the parkland covers. Plus, there is always a chance of an early returning Osprey.

July will hopefully see newly-hatched Great Crested Grebe chicks calling endlessly for food from their parents and plenty of other young fledglings to be seen to test ID skills. It's also a good time to see young Green Woodpeckers venturing forth and they can often be seen out in the open and on the ground looking for ants.

Although they are quite rare here, July and August are also the best time to see a Black Tern on Tatton Mere which can be more productive after a storm or bad weather.

Darren Morris, Tatton Park Ranger

ROSTHERNE MERE

Newsletter Apr-Jun 2022

I can't believe we are already halfway through the year! The spring at Rostherne has been exciting with some interesting avian passage migrants and seasonal visitors plus the emergence of an array of insects and plants.

Apr saw the arrival of the first Blackcaps, Willow Warblers, Reed Warblers, Sedge Warblers and Whitethroats. Up to four Cetti's Warblers were calling on two dates. Several Sand Martins arrived on 1st and around 20 House Martins were feeding over the Mere on the 29th. A Marsh Harrier circled Shaw Green Willows and Red Kite was seen on two dates. Two juvenile Bramblings were spotted in Mere Covert. Passage migrants included a stunning male Whinchat in Dolls Meadow. Six Goosanders flew into roost on several nights as the breeding Cormorant colony continued to grow with 178 occupied nests by the end of the month. Two Yellowhammers were seen in the hedgerow near Mere Meadow.

Both Arctic Tern and Common Tern were recorded in May. A Grasshopper Warbler was heard reeling from the Snipe Marsh on several dates. One of the highlights of the month was the arrival of both male and female Cuckoos which were seen almost daily until mid-Jun. Two Hobbies were most welcome additions and a pair of Spotted Flycatchers nested in Wood Bongs. A female Wheatear visited Old Meadow on 3rd and a Little Egret was seen on the edge of the Mere on 7th. The first Swifts were seen on 10th and an amazing 150 were wheeling over the Mere on 29th. In comparison, Swallows numbers were low throughout the month. Goslings, ducklings, Coot chicks and noisy young Cormorants brought new life to the Reserve.

The first young Reed Warblers emerged in Jun. A Great White Egret visited on 7th and a juvenile Black-necked Grebe was in front of the Boathouse on 13th. The surprise of the month was a juvenile Willow Tit caught near the Bittern Hide on 17th.



Whinchat by
Phil Jones

Bill Bellamy

County Round-Up

Some of the records may be unauthenticated and therefore will require review by the Society's Rarities Panel or the BBRC. This report covers the period from January to April 2022.

SITE REPORTS

Chester area

Three White-fronted Geese were at Tattenhall on Feb 10th, Cattle Egret was at Handbridge on Jan 6th and Puddington on Jan 19th and Purple Heron at Gowy Meadows on Apr 26th. Single Red Kites were over Aldford on Mar 12th and Saltney on Apr 21st. Two Whinchats were at the Gowy Meadows on Apr 23rd.

Congleton area

Two Egyptian Geese were at Rode Heath on Jan 10th and Mar 10th, two Scaups at Astbury Mere on Feb 20th and single Common Scoters there on Feb 26th, Mar 14th and Apr 5th. A Black-necked Grebe was at Astbury Mere Mar 22nd-24th and Sandwich Tern there on Apr 6th. Two Red Kites were at Congleton on Mar 12th with Hobby on Apr 26th. 100+ Yellowhammers were at Rode Heath on Mar 11th.

Crewe and Nantwich area

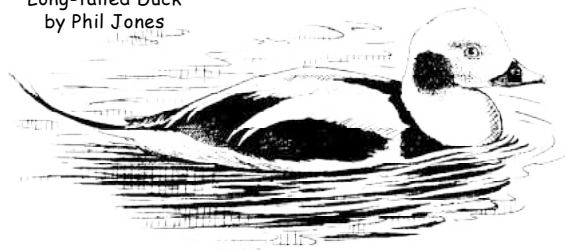
Three Egyptian Geese were at Doddington on Jan 9th, two Garganeys at EHF on Mar 19th, 957 Wigeons at Sandbach Flashes on Jan 7th-8th and a Scaup at Marbury Big Mere during Jan. Two Black-necked Grebes were at Doddington on Apr 19th, two Avocets at EHF on Mar 23rd, Whimbrel on Apr 23rd, a Bar-tailed Godwit on Apr 28th and eight Woodcocks were at Fodens Flash on Jan 8th. An Iceland Gull was at EHF on Jan 25th and 27th and Railway Flash on 13th, Common Tern at EHF on Apr 27th with another at Watch Lane Flash on Apr 30th.

A Marsh Harrier was at Maw Green Tip on Jan 12th, single Red Kites were noted at Pump House Flash on Apr 17th, Sandbach on Feb 27th and 28th with two at Scholar Green on Mar 1st, elsewhere a possible Black Kite was reported at EHF on Apr 21st and 22nd and Hobby at Church Lawton on Apr 22nd. Three Ring Ouzels were at Bickerton Hill on Apr 12th along with a single Redstart and a Corn Bunting at Maw Green Tip on Mar 5th.

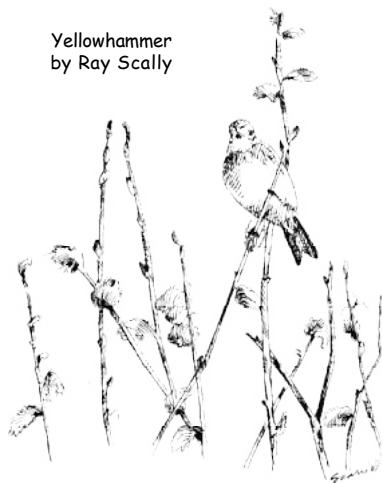
Ellesmere Port and Neston area

Wildfowl included: 9658 Pink-footed Geese on Jan 23rd, two Bean Geese on Jan 15th, two White-fronted Geese on Jan 16th, Snow Goose on Jan 2nd, all at Ince, three Bewick's Swans at BMW on Jan 23rd and Shotwick on Jan 8th and 10th and 33 Whooper Swans at Burton Marsh on Feb 13th, two Egyptian Geese at BMW on Mar 22nd with Seven Garganeys on Mar 25th and Long-tailed Duck on various dates during Mar-Apr and Shotwick on Jan 2nd. Over 100 Avocets were at BMW on Apr 6th with two Whimbrels on Apr 14th, Bar-tailed Godwit on Apr 6th and 40+ Knot on Mar 31st. Five Woodcocks were at Burton on Feb 2nd, Wood Sandpiper at BMW on Apr 25th and 26th with 10 Spotted Redshanks on Apr 17th and 22nd. Little Gulls were noted at BMW on several dates in Apr, single Great Northern Diver at Shotwick on Jan 7th to 13th, nine Cattle Egrets were at Ince on Mar 20th.

Long-tailed Duck
by Phil Jones



Yellowhammer
by Ray Scally



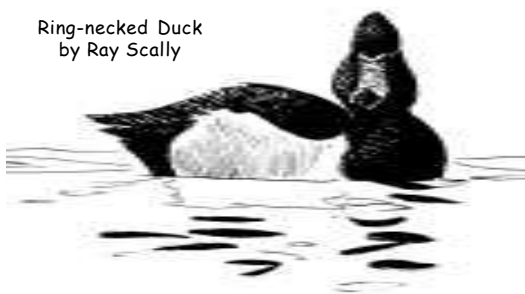
Single Ospreys were over BMW on Apr 13th, Burton Marsh on Apr 6th and Ness Gardens on Apr 8th, 13 Marsh Harriers noted at Neston on Jan 28th and four Hen Harriers at Parkgate on Jan 3rd. Red Kites were at BMW on Mar 20th, Burton Point on Mar 27th and Parkgate on Mar 4th, a Black Kite reported at Burton on Apr 16th and 17th, at least seven Short-eared Owls at Denhall on Jan 3rd and Hobby at BMW on Apr 26th and 27th. Single Siberian Chiffchaff at Parkgate on Jan 12th and BMW on Mar 26th and 29th, Spotted Flycatcher at Burton Point on Apr 30th. Ring Ouzel was at Ince on Apr 17th, Redstart at BMW on Apr 14th, two Whinchats at Burton Point on Apr 18th, three Water Pipits at Neston on Jan 20th and eight Twites at Parkgate on Mar 12th.

Halton area

59 Avocets were on the Mersey at Hale on Apr 20th, two Whimbrels at Hale on Apr 20th, a Bar-tailed Godwit at Pickering's Pasture on Apr 22nd and three Little Stints at Hale on 30th. Little Gull was at Hale on Apr 30th, Caspian Gull at Widnes on Jan 7th and Mar 9th to 20th, two Arctic Terns at Hale on Apr 24th. Five Great White Egrets at Hale on Feb 11th. Single Ospreys were at Hale on Apr 15th and Oxmoor LNR on Apr 1st and Red Kite at Hale on Mar 20th. A Firecrest was at Hale Park on Jan 9th, Redstart at Hale on Apr 14th and 20th, Tree Pipit on Apr 14th and five Yellowhammers at Widnes Warth Marsh on Mar 7th.

Macclesfield area

Two White-fronted Geese were at Acre Nook SQ up to Feb 19th, 47 Mandarins on Feb 2nd and four Garganeys on Apr 30th, elsewhere 17 Goldeneyes at Tatton on Feb 6th, two Smews at Lapwing Lane Pool throughout Mar with two Ring-necked Ducks at Acre Nook SQ from Apr 14th to 26th. Two Black-necked Grebes were at Lapwing Lane Pool on Apr 3rd. A Whimbrel was at Acre Nook SQ on Apr 15th with four Little Gulls on Apr 12th and 23rd and Kittiwake at Disley on Feb 23rd to 26th, whilst two Arctic Terns were at Acre Nook SQ on Apr 24th. Great Northern Diver was at Mere Farm SQ on Jan 10th and 11th.



Ring-necked Duck
by Ray Scally

Ospreys were noted at Danebower on Apr 10th and Radnor Mere on Apr 13th, Marsh Harrier at Acre Nook SQ on Apr 2nd and a Hen Harrier at Wildboardclough on Mar 29th. Red Kites were over the Cat & Fiddle on Mar 6th, with two at Danebower on Apr 30th with single birds at Higher Disley on Apr 8th, Macclesfield Forest on Feb 23rd and Wildboardclough on Mar 29th. Five Ring Ouzels were at Danebower on Apr 10th, single Pied Flycatchers were at Mow Cop on Apr 16th and Tegg's Nose on 23rd, Redstart at Mow Cop on Apr 12th and Bosley on 24th with two Tree Pipits there on 15th.

Vale Royal area

c5000 Pink-footed Geese were at Frodsham Marsh on Feb 10th along with two White-fronted Geese on Jan 15th, Snow Goose on Feb 3rd, four Bewick's Swans from Jan 2nd-8th and a max of 29 Whooper Swans on Feb 10th, elsewhere two Egyptian Geese were at Marbury CP on Mar 27th and two Garganeys at Frodsham Marsh on Mar 23rd and Apr 3rd. Waders in the Frodsham Marsh area included: c200 Avocets on Mar 15th, 52 Whimbrels on Apr 29th, seven Bar-tailed Godwits on Apr 28th, 10 Knot on Apr 9th and two Greenshanks at Marbury CP on Apr 10th. Three Little Gulls were at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 24th, Common Tern at Marbury CP on Apr 30th, two Black Terns at Marbury CP on Apr 14th. Two Cattle Egrets were at Frodsham Marsh on Feb 20th with seven Great White Egrets at Feb 5th.

Ospreys were noted at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 14th, Middlewich on Apr 10th and Neumann's Flash on Apr 8th and 11th, Marsh Harriers were at Neumann's Flash on Feb 10th-11th and Apr 1st and 22nd and Ashton's Flash on Apr 6th. Red Kites over Dairy House Meadows on Feb 28th, Frodsham Marsh on Feb 27th and Apr 18th, Marbury CP on Feb 18th and Sutton Weaver on Apr 1st. A Wood Warbler was at Hatchmere on Apr 30th, Siberian Chiffchaff at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 2nd, Firecrest at Marbury CP on Feb 25th and Pied Flycatcher at Delamere on Apr 12th and 30th. Redstarts were at Marbury CP on Apr 11th and Higher Marston on Apr 13th, Black Redstarts at Hartford on Feb 9th and Frodsham Marsh on Apr 24th and c15 Crossbills at Delamere on Jan 14th.

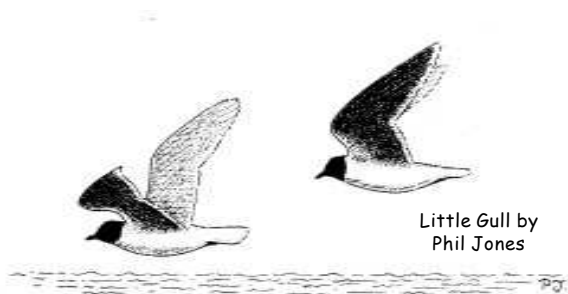
Warrington area

Four Garganeys were at Woolston Eyes on Mar 28th, a record count of 108 Wigeons at Silver Lane Pools on Mar 4th, 843 Tufted Ducks at Woolston Eyes on Jan 27th with single Ferruginous Duck on Apr 30th. The first two Black-necked Grebes were at Woolston Eyes on Mar 5th increasing to 29 by Apr 17th. A Whimbrel was at Silver Lane Pools on Apr 18th, Temminck's Stint at Woolston Eyes on Apr 28th, 70 Snipes at Stretton on Jan 20th and an early Wood Sandpiper at Woolston Eyes on Apr 19th. Kittiwake was at Woolston Eyes on Apr 12th, Sandwich Tern on Apr 15th, Common Tern on 17th and two Black Terns on Apr 15th. Two Glossy Ibises were at Woolston Eyes on Feb 6th to 11th and again on Apr 25th.

Ospreys were at Moore NR on Apr 13th, Silver Lane Pools on 15th and Woolston Eyes on 7th and 13th and five Marsh Harriers there on Mar 29th, Hen Harrier at Fiddler's Ferry on Apr 1st, Red Kite at Woolston Eyes on Mar 5th with the first Hobby on Apr 26th. A Marsh Tit was at Moore NR during Mar, Siberian Chiffchaffs were at Silver Lane Pools on Mar 8th-9th and Woolston Eyes on Apr 2nd, Ring Ouzel at Moore NR on Apr 27th. Water Pipit was at Woolston Eyes on Apr 15th where 440 Bramblings were present on Feb 22nd, a Mealy Redpoll was at Silver Lane pools on Mar 8th.

Wirral area

400+ Brent Geese were at Hilbre on Jan 14th, 5000 Pink-footed Geese at Thurstaston on Jan 28th, 34 Whooper Swans at Thurstaston on Mar 19th, 5000 Common Scoters off Hoylake on Jan 14th with Long-tailed Duck on the same date, 13 Goosanders at West Kirby on Jan 26th and 21 Red-breasted Mergansers at Heswall on Jan 23rd. Waders included: 182 Whimbrels at Heswall on Apr 30th, 660 Black-tailed



Little Gull by
Phil Jones

Godwits at Caldy on Apr 16th, 250 Turnstones at New Brighton on Feb 17th, 11,000 Knots at Hoylake on Jan 23rd, Curlew Sandpiper at Hilbre on Apr 30th and Little Stint at Meols on Apr 12th. 25 Little Gulls were at Hilbre on Mar 24th and 25th, 110 Sandwich Terns on Apr 15th, Little Tern on Apr 12th, 30 Common Terns on Apr 19th and two Arctic Skuas on Apr 3rd. A Guillemot was at West Kirby on Jan 7th, four Razorbills at Hoylake on Jan 30th, Puffin at Hilbre on Apr 15th, 11 Red-throated Divers at Hilbre on Apr 15th, Great Northern Diver at Hoylake on Jan 12th and Shag at Hilbre on Apr 25th.

Ospreys were at Hilbre on Apr 15th, Hoylake on Apr 11th, Leasowe on Apr 8th, 14th and 23rd, Meols on Apr 14th, 15th and 24th and Willaston on 29th, Red Kites present at Hoylake on Mar 24th and Leasowe on Mar 23rd. Wood Warblers were at Leasowe and Meols on Apr 24th, Iberian Chiffchaff at Hoylake on Apr 11th, Siberian Chiffchaff at Heswall on Mar 6th. Three Ring Ouzels were at Leasowe on Apr 12th and three Pied Flycatchers at Moreton on Apr 11th. Six Redstarts were at Leasowe on Apr 12th and 13th with four Whinchats on 25th. A Channel Wagtail was at Hoylake on Apr 27th with 75 White Wagtails on 13th, Richard's Pipit at Hilbre on Apr 26th, two Common Redpolls at Hoylake on 15th and six Crossbills at West Kirby on Mar 17th. Up to five Snow Buntings were in the New Brighton/Wallasey area during Jan-Feb with Corn Bunting at Heswall on Jan 27th.

Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 2SG
Tel: 01925 726986 Email: tonyparker@cawos.org

Thanks/acknowledgments to: Dee Estuary Website, SECOS, WECG, Dermot Smith (Mersey WeBS), NNHS, Frodsham Marsh Birdlog, *Birdwatching* Magazine, Manchester Bird Forum, whatsapp groups (Cheshire, Marbury and Sandbach), Rob Cockbain, Bill Bellamy and everyone else who passed records on.

County Rarities

GREENISH WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Nationally, Greenish Warblers are usually late spring (late May and early June) and early autumn (August to mid-September) migrants with around 20-40 records a year nationally. The species is becoming commoner too as it spreads westwards in NW Europe, but despite being regularly recorded at west coast migration hotspots, for example, it's not unusual for Bardsey to have multiple records in a year, there have only ever been two records in Cheshire.



The way you are most likely to first locate a Greenish Warbler is by its distinctive call, which to my ear doesn't really sound that much like a *Phylloscopus* Warbler. It's closer to the soft Pied Wagtail. The first time I heard one, I was expecting a small finch to appear! The song sounds to me a little like an unenthusiastic Wren. They are similar to Chiffchaffs in shape: short-winged and short-tailed and usually very active in the canopy of trees; plumage-wise, unless you are unlucky and stumble across a worn adult in late summer, they are clean, bright-looking birds with rather white underparts, except perhaps for a slight grey wash to the flanks and perhaps some yellow streaks to the upper breast on fresh birds. They have greenish upperparts with especially bright green edges to the flight feathers and tail and crucially a wing-bar formed by whitish tips to the outer four to six greater coverts - this is broadest on the outermost feathers and narrows rapidly. They have a very distinct head pattern with a striking long, whitish or very slightly yellowish supercilium, broadest behind the eye, and relatively straight and which bridges over the bill - this is actually one of the most important features to establish once you think you might be looking at a Greenish Warbler because it helps to rule out several similar rarer species that also have a wing bar. The supercilia are made to look even clearer by a neat dark eye-stripe and rather uniform olive-grey ear coverts.

The next most important thing to focus on is the bill - it should be small, stubby and neat looking with rather a lot of pale yellowish/pinky tones, especially to the lower mandible and bases of both. The leg colour is nondescript mid to dark horn - not too dissimilar from Willow Warbler.

So if you are lucky enough to find yourself face to face with a *Phylloscopus* warbler with a wing bar, maybe at the coast in autumn, or singing 'its head off' in an inland forest in late June and early July, first check its wing length. Arctic Warbler is closer to Wood Warbler than Chiffchaff in structure. Leg and bill colour, a 'proper' crisp wing bar and green tones will rule out Siberian Chiffchaff. It should have unmarked tertials and just a single wing bar, unlike Yellow-browed Warbler.



Greenish Warbler also has two much rarer sister species/subspecies depending on the taxonomic view at the time: Green Warbler and Two-barred Greenish Warbler which come from much further east, so any records later than mid-September warrant a really close look. Green Warbler tends to have a lot more yellow in the face and a rather long spikey bill, and as its name suggests, Two-barred Greenish Warbler has a second wing bar. It really pays to get a recording of any calls; the sonagrams are as useful as DNA.

There have been two Cheshire records of Greenish Warbler: a classic early autumn migrant which moved quickly through the dunes at Red Rocks on September 9th 1995 and an elusive, but fortunately very vocal bird, also at Red Rocks on the potentially alarming date of October 30th 2017.

Jane Turner, County Recorder

Projects and Surveys

THE WETLAND BIRD SURVEY (WeBS)

WeBS counters monitor the UK's internationally important non-breeding waterbirds; sites are counted once a month, providing data for population and trends. Waterbirds include wildfowl (ducks, geese and swans), waders, rails, divers, grebes, cormorants and herons. Gulls and terns are optionally included. In a typical year over 220 waterbird species, races or populations are counted in WeBS, including non-native, feral and vagrant species. National trends are produced for the most numerous 110 of these.



You do not have to be an 'expert' birder to participate in WeBS. Many of the locations mainly hold species we are all familiar with. Yes, there may be some that are not as familiar, but with a decent field guide and a few minutes a very high percentage will be identified. Generally the birds are fairly easy to count on water as well, not like fields full of geese. Neither do you have to do the counts alone, many are couples who use the opportunity for a walk and birding together. Or, even shared between a number of counters as a group, as long as someone co-ordinates them.

Each counter adopts a place to count monthly. Non-breeding waterbird numbers peak in different numbers for different species, so counting is done year-round and reported on WeBS years running from July to June. The counts are nationally synchronised, with counters requested to visit during the day on priority Core Count Dates (Sundays), if at all possible. There are of course some dates over a year that a counter cannot do their count and in these situations there is some latitude of a couple of days either side. The monthly dates are based on coastal high tides so over a year vary throughout each month. Each counter surveys the whole of their defined count area, known as a WeBS sector, identifying all the waterbird species present and counting the number of individuals of each species. Counters can also add supplementary data, such as evening roost counts of gulls, or casual counts of notable numbers of passage species that are higher than those present on their Core Count visits.

You do not need to be a member of the BTO to participate.

If you can give the time to carry out a count once a month and are interested in taking part as a counter, please let me know and we can discuss it if you wish - my contact details are at the end. Alternatively access the BTO website: go to WeBS and follow the instructions for taking part. That will take you to an interactive map where you can find free locations. If you select one an email is generated and sent to me, then I will contact you, or a site can be allocated and away you go. In Cheshire there are over 140 sites, with 50% coverage. It would be tremendous to increase that coverage. There is a snapshot of free locations shown below.

Maybe one of these is within your local patch and you already cover and count it, if so and you'd be happy to do the WeBS count on specific dates then please do contact me.

Astbury Mere	Bollinhurst Reservoir	Booths Mere
Bosley Reservoir	Capesthorpe Hall Pools	Cholmondeley Meres
Dane Valley - Holmes Chapel to Swettenham		Dunham Park Pools
Elton Hall Flash	Elworth and Warmingham and	Crabmill Flashes
Elworth Flashes	Fodens Flash	Grobby Flash
Horse Coppice Reservoir	Huntington Reservoir	Moss Mere
Moss Side (Mersey)	Newplatt Wood Sand Quarry	North Rode Pool
Nunsmere GP	Lewis Sand Pit Cuddington	Oakmere
Oulton Mere	Quarry Bank Mill Pond	Quarry Bank Mill Reservoir
Railway Farm Flash (s of Elton)	Risley Moss	Rookery Pool
Runcorn No Man's Land Marsh	Shakerley Mere	Styperson Pool
Trent and Mersey Canal Basin	Trent and Mersey Canal Flash	Winsford Bottom Flash

Phil Hampson, WeBS BTO Local Organiser, Cheshire - North Tel: 07545 465069 Email: pjhampers@me.com

Ringling News

Ringling plays an important part in developing our knowledge of birds. In this feature we invite ringling groups, or individual ringling, active in Cheshire and Wirral to contribute their own accounts of their activities. In general, the idea is that these should provide a means of updating local birders on the groups' work - both by way of information about birds ringling or recovered, and news of other events (or incidents). Future contributions will be welcomed.

HILBRE BIRD OBSERVATORY (HIBO)

Ringling March to June 2022

This report has good news as well as some bad news and lots of puzzles related to the birds migrating through Hilbre this spring.

To get the bad news out of the way, we had very few Goldcrests, Robins or Wrens moving through Hilbre this spring so we can confirm that it is likely that the breeding season for Goldcrests in Scandinavia was poor last year. 6 Robins and 3 Wrens ringling this year were the only representatives of those species passing through the island this spring so their productivity last year does not look good. However, we did catch 3 Blue Tits in March. Blue Tits are rare birds on Hilbre and getting 3 birds was a surprise. An even bigger surprise was that one of the birds was already ringling. Blue Tits do not generally move very far so we expected a local ringer, perhaps somebody from the Merseyside Ringling Group (MRG), to have ringling the bird. We were right that it was an MRG ringer, Bob Harris, but it turned out that the bird had been ringling at one of his sites in Shropshire, Whixall and Fenn's Mosses. Clearly the Blue Tits had not read the books about how far they should move.

April arrived with steady catching of the migrant birds that we would expect. Chiffchaff, Greenland Wheatear, Whitethroat, Redstart, Willow Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler and Woodpigeon. We do not catch many nominate race Wheatears as they do not like the potter traps; we catch the Greenland race birds in and then it was 26th April.

The ringling who arrived early saw that the island was covered in birds, the weather conditions had been just right and a fall had occurred. The most obvious birds were Willow Warblers. It was estimated that there was of the order of 150 of them, 65 were caught and ringling. The ringling were kept busy with these and other birds, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Whitethroat, Blackcap and then a pipit turned up. It was a very large bird, for a pipit, and after confirmation using the standard tests it was identified as a Richard's Pipit. Richard's Pipit is a rare bird in the UK but they do turn up in small numbers on the east coast normally in the autumn. They breed from central Siberia through to China and should spend the winter around the Indian subcontinent. So another bird that has not read the books!

We had already controlled a Blue Tit this spring but 3 other birds were also controlled.

A Kestrel ringling by MRG raptor stalwart, Steve Binney, was caught on 13th April. This bird fitted in with the expected parameters for a bird turning up on Hilbre.

Another bird obeying the rules was a Willow Warbler that was ringling at Portland Bill Bird Observatory 20th April and was caught on Hilbre 27 hours later on 21th April. Birds the size of a Willow Warbler have an estimated optimum speed of 22 km/hour in still air (*The Ecology of Bird Migration*, Ian Newton) consequently this bird would have been flying for 14/15 hours during this journey of 323km.

The third control was a Goldfinch that was ringling on Ball Hill in Hampshire on 6th Jan 22 and arrived on Hilbre 255km later on 12th April 2022.

June is more than half way through as this report is being written. The major ringling activity now is related to Linnets, Rock Pipits, Meadow Pipits, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes, but we still can be surprised by other birds that arrive. A juvenile Stonechat was caught and ringling in June. The bird was in complete juvenile plumage and like other chats looks nothing like the adult bird.

John Elliott, on behalf of Hilbre Bird Observatory

RINGING AT WOOLSTON - WINTER 2021/2022

This note covers the winter period from October 2021 through March 2022 ('this winter').

In the period under review 1,856 new birds of 34 species were ringed at Woolston which compares with 1,538 new birds of 40 species in the 2020/2021 winter period 'last winter'. Last winter was impacted by the second national lockdown and no ringing took place between January 6th and February 13th. This increase of 318 birds (or 20.7%) was driven by a very large influx of Bramblings and masks a number of reductions. On No.3 Bed the Fixed Duck Trap was not operated at all as a result of the outbreak of Avian Flu. Whilst Woolston never fell into a Control Zone a voluntary moratorium was considered appropriate. As a result no Teals were ringed compared with 80 last winter.

Winter ringing is a combination of resident birds and migrants from further north in the UK or continental Europe. Totals for a representative selection of resident birds are shown below. It would seem that, with the exception of Wren, the 2021 breeding season was very similar to 2020.

	2021-2022	2020-2021	Delta
Dunnoch	19	16	-3
Song Thrush	7	11	-4
Robin	20	23	-3
Wren	44	31	+13
Long-tailed Tit	53	55	+2

Chiffchaffs were present in good numbers with 55 ringed compared with 38 last winter. However, none were ringed in January or February so how many were genuine overwintering birds is open to question and most of them were clearly late migrants. Although 15 were ringed in the first quarter of 2022, the first of these was on March 15th so these birds were probably early arriving migrants. The Blackcap autumn passage ran into November with the last bird ringed on the 15th of that month. Overwintering Blackcaps are uncommon at Woolston and none were ringed in the first quarter of either year. A total of 10 Cetti's Warblers were ringed compared with five last winter. Birds trapped in winter include young birds dispersing from other natal sites together with locally hatched juveniles so it is not easy to draw conclusions about breeding success.

In late autumn we anticipate the passage of both Goldcrests and Redwings. Both species arrived in good numbers. In the case of Goldcrests 163 were ringed compared with 104 last winter and in the case of Redwings the numbers were 117 compared with 64. There was also a moderate passage of Meadow Pipits with 34 ringed compared with just eight last winter.

As is usually the case, winter visitors were evident in variable numbers. There was a remarkable arrival of Bramblings and 466 were ringed compared with just two last winter. Birds continued to be present up to the end of April and the final total was nearly 600 Bramblings ringed. Several birds were caught that had already been ringed elsewhere in Britain and two Norwegian-ringed Bramblings were also controlled. Chaffinches were ringed in similar numbers to last winter but the relentless decline in Greenfinch numbers continues. The depressing trend in ringing numbers is 2020: 273, 2021: 189, 2022: 109. We do not see much evidence of Trichomonosis on the Reserve itself but it must be having a devastating effect in the wider area.

Lesser Redpolls are irruptive at Woolston and the big arrival in quarter four of 2020 was not repeated in 2021 with the result that 57 were ringed compared with 120 last winter. Goldfinches are attracted to seeding thistles which were not as abundant in 2021 as they were in 2020 with the result that 26 were ringed compared with 60 last winter. Reed Buntings feed the area on No.3 Bed where a sacrificial crop is grown. Although the crop attracted mixed flocks the plants present were too short to accommodate even a two-shelf mist net and not a single bird was ringed from that area. As a result, 92 Reed Buntings were ringed compared with 170 last winter.

As I write this at the end of May it is too early to have any view of the breeding season except to say that the Blue Tits and Great Tits appear to again have done reasonably well in the nest boxes. A total of 141 chicks have been ringed on No.3 Bed compared with 134 in 2020, 171 in 2019 and 158 in 2018. There are three late broods still to ring so the final total will exceed 150. Of course, the real acid test is how many chicks successfully fledge but the early signs are promising with good brood sizes. Indeed, a brood of 12 Blue Tits was ringed on No.1 Bed.

Michael Miles, on behalf of the Woolston Eyes Ringing Team

CHESHIRE SWAN STUDY GROUP

Since my last report in February, the Swan Study Group started ringing again on 5th May. Since then we have ringed a total of 10 swans including 5 second-years and 5 adults. These included 1 control and 1 retrap.

The maximum counts of flocks of Mute Swans since my last report are as follows:

- Acre Dell Pools, nr Congleton: 40 on 24th Apr.
- Bottom Flash, Winsford: 28 on 27th Mar, 30 on 13th Apr and 31 on 1st May.
- Burleydam Pool, nr Whitchurch: 14 on 8th May.
- Trent and Mersey Canal, Middlewich: 24 on 7th Mar.
- Coole Pilate, nr Nantwich: 22 on 18th Mar and 15 on 2nd Apr.
- Doddington Mere, nr Nantwich: 4 on 14th Mar, 15 on 4th Apr and 54 on 26th May.
- Sankey Valley CP, Warrington: 10 on 20th Mar, 12 on 17th Apr and 14 on 15th May.
- Spike Island, Widnes: 58 on 18th Mar.
- Woolston NR, Warrington: 21 on 20th Mar, 23 on 17th Apr and 23 on 17th May.

Movements:

CNL8 was ringed as a second-year male on 25.2.19 at Spike Is)land, Widnes and was seen on 7.9.21 at Aber Ogwen near Bangor = 91kms. Also on 5.3.22 at Cae Ddol, Ruthin = 47kms.

CPA4 was ringed as a male cygnet on 1.8.21 on the canal, Barbridge near Nantwich and was seen on the river Clwyd, Rhyl = 66kms.

CPP4 was ringed as a male cygnet on 1.8.20 on the canal, Barbridge near Nantwich and was seen on the Wyle and Essington canal, Willenhall, Birmingham = 68kms.

The final *Cheshire Swan Study Group Report* for 2021 is available to view on the website under Reports.: <http://cheshireswanstudygroup.wordpress.com>

Sightings of all swans, geese and Mallards should be sent to David Cookson at cheshireswans@gmail.com giving details of place (6-fig map ref), colour/character combination of ring and, if with other birds, total number present in flock. All sightings will receive a printout of the history for the relevant bird(s).

David Cookson, 70 Rope Lane, Rope, Crewe, CW2 6RD
Tel: 01270 567526. Email: cheshireswans@gmail.com

MID-CHESHIRE BARN OWL GROUP

The first few months of the year indicated a reasonable year ahead, with a number of pairs of Barn Owls being recorded. We were just hoping for good weather and quiet, normal, conservation work. Things, in that respect, could not have been better. The weather has been as good as we could have hoped for and the availability of food (voles, shrews, etc) has been good as well. Consequently, Barn Owl breeding is currently going well, although brood sizes could be a bit better.

I say 'currently' because, as ever, Barn Owl survival is, as you will know, weather dependent; with the birds not being 'waterproof'. So no counting our chickens (or pullies) just yet. But we are in a good state just at the moment.

In fact, the number of breeding pairs has now stayed relatively stable over the last 4-5 years. However, although one or two brood sizes of 5-6 eggs has been found, the average surviving number of chicks this year looks like being in the 2-3 range. As ever, fingers crossed for the rest of the year – continuing good weather, voles and shrews aplenty.

As my now usual final comments - we do our best, but it stretches our limited resources to help support these beautiful and iconic birds. We get a great deal of satisfaction out of the conservation work we do. But we are always in need of more help.

To repeat our usual concerns and plea - if you have seen any Barn Owls recently please could you let us know, either direct or by our sighting report on the website www.cheshirebarnowls.co.uk; as you will appreciate it is important that we know where the birds are regularly seen.

John Mycock, Chairman Tel: 07970 235437 Email: cheshirebarnowls@gmail.com

Conservation News

A round-up of news from the CAWOS conservation representatives, who aim to keep an eye on what is going on in their area. If you have any issues or concerns then do contact your local representative (by letter or email preferably). They may be able to help or should know someone who can! The relevant contact information is listed at the end.

CONSERVATION NEWS FROM STEVE TURNER

I hope you are all keeping well and managing to stay healthy. The summer so far has been far from ideal and the weather seems to let us down time and time again, it does not seem that we have seasons anymore, it was warmer in December and January than it was in May, still we will all have to make the most of it.

Here in Weaverham we seem to be have a good year, so far Blackbirds and Robins are on their third nests although it would appear that two is the new normal for chicks fledging per nest although we have an increase in feline neighbours and there is an increased activity in Magpie and Carrion Crow activity, with both nesting in a neighbour's garden in a monster of a Leylandii, which if it continues to grow at the current rate will be visible from space. I have had a family of Jays visiting the garden - bad news for eggs and nestlings, the Jays appear to have fledged four chicks. Greenfinches managed to fledge four from a nest at the bottom of the garden, plenty of Goldfinch activity on the feeders but no fledglings yet. The current population of Starlings has been boosted by vast amounts of juveniles. These have all found a neighbour's gutters on their conservatory holds water so the noise as they queue for a bath is very disturbing, reminds me of that classic film "The Birds". House Martins appeared very late on 27th April and then moved on to pastures new. Two Swifts arrived 24th May and they are still chasing each other so they appear not to have nested yet. One thing that has brightened up the year is I have heard a Cuckoo for the last few mornings at 06:30 and on Friday it was on a nearby chimney calling for a good few minutes, this is the first time I have heard the Cuckoo locally for the last twelve years.



Jay by Ray Scally

If you see anything suspicious whilst you are out and about, please report it to the Police; use your binos to obtain as much detail as you can and note any descriptions and vehicle registration marks in your notebooks (we all carry one or is it just me). DO NOT put yourselves at risk, let the Police do that they are trained for it. Please obtain an incident number - if you report anything then I have a reference to allow me to chase it up if no progress is made, at present Cheshire Police Wildlife and Rural Crime Unit are doing a good job, they have some keen and devoted officers who are willing to get results and are more than happy to get involved. Use them or lose them. It is apparent from the National Press that Wildlife Crime is going strong and good results are being attained in court, (although the sentences handed out are a bit weak). But please remember that not all gamekeepers are the bad guys, 99.9% are on the same side as us - it is the minority that get the rest a bad name.

As a footnote, my Christmas wish list has STILL not been fulfilled, the Society is still short of Conservation reps for the following areas Chester, Congleton, Crewe and Nantwich and Macclesfield. I have outlined what is required in past *Bird News* and do not intend to repeat it. PLEASE give it some thought it does not take much of your time, but it means so much if action can be taken as soon as an issue occurs rather than later when it may be too late. Please remember that our Society is run by volunteers and like any Society they can only do so much without help no matter how small it may seem. Like everything else in life "you do not miss it until it is gone". Going back to Lord Kitchener it is not our country but "your Society needs you". Please help where you can. Here endeth the lesson.

Have a good summer and I hope you get that lifer that you still need.

Steve Turner, Conservation Officer, 11 Pinfold Way, Weaverham, Northwich, CW8 3NL
Tel: 01606 853796 Email: conservation@cawos.org

HALTON AREA

There's an issue with the Sankey St Helens Canal in Widnes - the stretch from Spike Island to Fiddler's Ferry was fed with water from the power station. The station has been decommissioned and the water supply has now been cut off. Consequently the water level in the canal has dropped by about 1m (not helped by a leak in the locks at Spike Island) which meant that the local swan population was at risk of injury from various items dumped



Mute Swan by
Ray Scally

in the canal. Eventually a group of locals have arranged to re-locate most of the swans (including the resident female Whooper) to Winsford Marina. Discussions between Halton and Warrington Borough Councils are planned to find a solution to the issue but suspect this won't happen anytime soon and may take several years as an alternative water source needs to be found.

Tony Parker, Halton Area Representative

WARRINGTON AREA

Conservation news from Woolston Eyes: Peel Holdings has granted WECG a lease for beds 3 and 4 for the next 20 years. Very good news!

Brian Martin, Warrington Area Representative

CONSERVATION REPRESENTATIVES

Chester	Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role
Congleton	Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role
Crewe and Nantwich	Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role
Halton	Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2SG. Tel: 01925 726986 Email: tonyparker@cawos.org
Macclesfield	Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role
Vale Royal	Roy Leigh, 8 Hall Drive, Marston, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 6DT Tel: 01606 892032 Email: roysleigh@aol.com
Warrington	Brian Martin, 45 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2PF. Tel: 01925 264251 Email: brianmartin1940@hotmail.com
Wirral	Richard Smith, March Wall, King's Drive North, Caldy, Wirral, CH48 1LL. Tel: 0151 625 2320 Email: richard@deestuary.co.uk

Note: If YOU see anything of interest in your local paper, on the Internet, or even in the national press, relevant to Cheshire and Wirral, please bring it to the Editor's attention. Either scan in the article and email it, or cut it out and put it in the post. Please make sure the source and date are clear. Editor's contact details are on the inside front cover of *Bird News*.

Species Spotlight

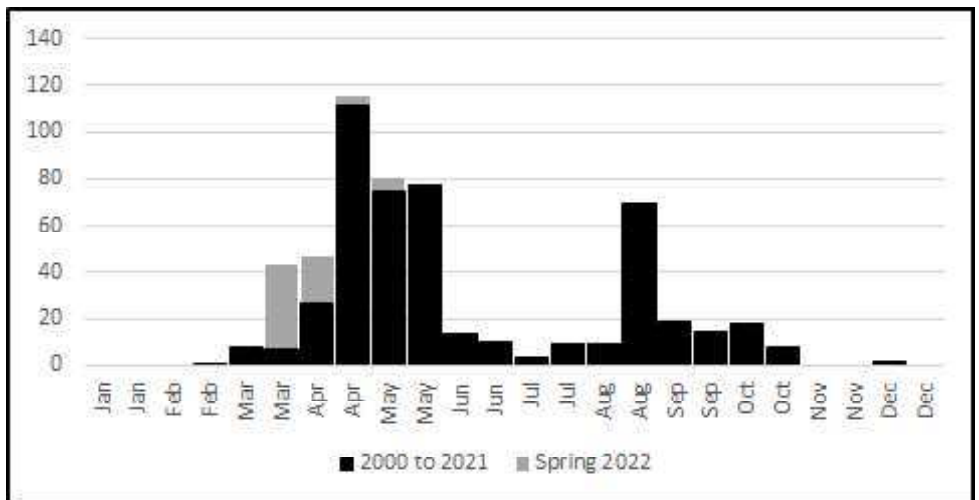
GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

Late March this year saw a remarkable influx of Garganey into the UK. Exceptional numbers were seen in the south of England including a flock of 32 past Dungeness on 21st and 26 offshore at Thurlestone, Devon, on 19th with smaller flocks widespread across England and Wales, including here on the Dee Estuary. The influx appears to have been caused by a south-easterly airflow with very mild conditions encouraging the birds to move further north and west than normal during migration.

Garganey by
Phil Jones



The first two arrived at Burton Mere Wetlands (BMW) on the early date of March 20th - there have only been five earlier records this century on the Dee Estuary. Numbers then quickly built up and by 23rd we had seven. This relatively high number then remained for the rest of the month until reverting back to the more usual ones and twos by early April. A look at the half-monthly distribution chart below shows there were more than five times the number of daily records in the last two weeks of March 2022 than the total for those same two weeks for the previous 22 years!



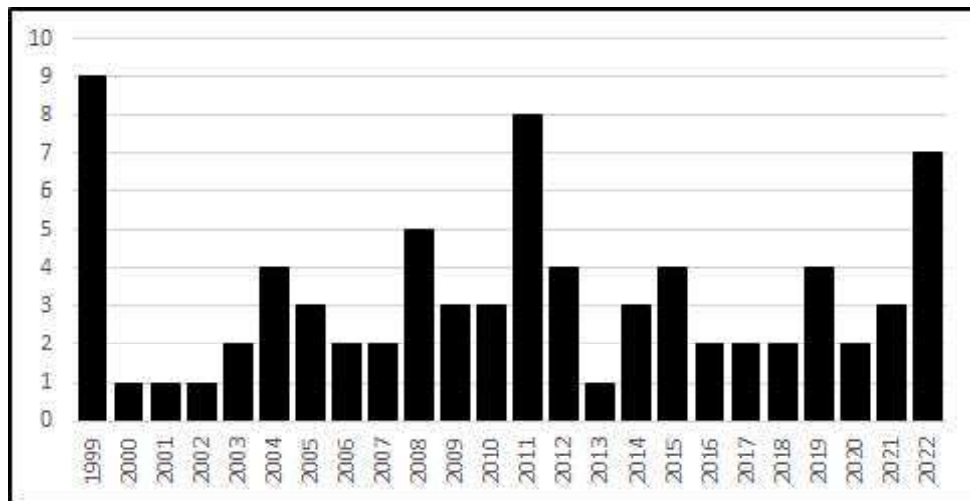
Garganey on the Dee Estuary

Half-monthly totals of daily counts 2000 to 2021 and spring 2022

Since the year 2000 the earliest bird to arrive was on February 16th (in 2012). Most first arrivals come in March but, as you can see from the half-monthly distribution above, the spring migration doesn't really get under way until the second half of April. For the return migration, which nearly always involves fewer birds than in spring, the second half of August is when we see most movement, tailing off into September and October. Winter records are virtually unknown in this country so it is surprising that we have had two birds in December - one at BMW in 2000 and one at Point of Ayr in 2006.

The max count of seven in March 2022 wasn't a record count for the Dee Estuary, which was at Inner Marsh Farm RSPB (IMF) with nine on August 13th 1999, and the second highest (eight) was at the same site in April 2011. It is only comparatively recently that the Garganey has become a

regular visitor to the Dee Estuary. In the 19th century it was a real mega rarity with Coward mentioning only three records, all on Burton Marsh (and that was for the whole of Cheshire). Even in the 20th century they were far from annual until the 1990s. A look at the *Cheshire Bird Reports* from 1964 reveals not a single bird was reported from the Cheshire side of the estuary until 1989 (although they were regular elsewhere in Cheshire by that time). It was the creation of the fresh water reserve IMF by the RSPB in 1989 (later to be enlarged in 2011 and become BMW) which has made a huge difference to the fortunes of this species and since the 1990s they have become regular here during both the spring and autumn migrations. They are still quite scarce, though, and over 90% of records this century are of just one or two birds.



Max Annual Counts of Garganey on the Dee Estuary 1999 to 2022

The table shows the sites Garganeys have been found between 2000 and 2022 around the estuary with the majority being seen at BMW/IMF. The site with the second highest number of records is Point of Ayr and Talacre, but that is slightly misleading as most records involved just the single bird which stayed in the area for over a month in the autumn of 2012.

Garganey Dee Estuary Records by site 2000 to 2022

BMW/IMF RSPB	320
Burton Marsh	17
Gilroy	16
Greenfield	9
Moreton	2
Parkgate	2
Point of Ayr/Talacre	42
Shotwick Fields	6
Connah's Quay NR	1
Hilbre	1
Hoylake	1
Shotton Lagoons	1

Garganeys aren't easy to monitor as they often hide away in reeds and can disappear for days before re-appearing, and then you are never quite sure if they are the original ones or 'new' in. Trying to establish the presence or not of these ducks is a particular problem during the breeding season when they are even more secretive. Breeding around the estuary has never been confirmed although they have bred elsewhere in Cheshire, the latest successful pair being at

Woolston Eyes in June 2019 when they were seen with a brood of four young ducklings. However, there have been many cases of suspected breeding including at Shotton Lagoons way back in 1960 when a pair had been spotted a few times in the reeds in May and June before six immature birds were recorded in July - but they were by then fully grown so it wasn't possible to say for sure that they had hatched on the reserve. More recently, at BMW, several times there have been one or two Garganeys present through the summer and they have been reported as either 'possible breeding' or 'probable breeding' to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, but young ducklings have never been seen here.

Since that very busy period in March and early April it's been very quiet this spring for Garganeys with just two seen in May, one of which turned up at BMW on the very last day of the month. May be this will be one that stays for the summer!

References

1. *Birdwatch* magazine, May 2022.
2. *Cheshire Bird Reports/Cheshire and Wirral Bird Reports* from 1964 to 2020 (CAWOS)
3. *North-east Wales Bird Reports* (various between 2000 and 2019), Clwyd Bird Reporting Group.
4. Birdguides reported sightings of Garganey 2000 to 2022.
5. Garganey sightings in www.deeestuary.co.uk.
6. T.A. Coward, *The Fauna of Cheshire*, Witherby, 1910.
7. Rhion Pritchard et al, *The Birds of Wales*, Liverpool University Press, 2021.
8. David Norman, *Birds in Cheshire and Wirral (Breeding and wintering atlas)*, 2008 (CAWOS).

Richard Smith

Notes and Letters

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

This section is a chance for members to contribute, whether a few lines, or a long article, which might be spilt over several issues. Some ideas might be amusing (or otherwise!) anecdotes, unusual avian behaviour, special memories, ringing and/or survey stories, and looking back over the years – even back to childhood! The list is almost endless – it's up to members. If you think it's worth writing, other members will think it's worth reading! Also, we are always interested in your views on any of our articles or on the newsletter itself. Ed.

A LITTLE-KNOWN CHESHIRE NATURALIST: James J Cash 1872-1956

Steve and I came across J J Cash while carrying out research for the Rostherne books. Although forgotten now, he was an active birdwatcher from the late nineteenth century to the end of the Second World War and contributed to the popularising of natural history in his newspaper columns and publications, as well as in his role as a local representative of the RSPB.

I was searching for 'Rostherne' in the *Manchester Evening News*, digitised by the British Newspaper Archive, hoping for records of birds seen there and came up with an article on April 25th 1914 entitled *Rural Life*, subtitled 'The Arrival of the Summer Birds', which included among other arrivals a party of about 50 Sand Martins at Rostherne on April 1st, with three Willow Wrens {Warblers} in song there on the same day. These are the first dated records of these species at Rostherne. The author of the article was J.J.C., initials which Steve instantly recognised as belonging to J J Cash, who had a record of two Black Terns at Rostherne on August 1st 1887 in *Birds of Cheshire*, Coward & Oldham 1900. Further searching revealed *Rural Life* articles each Saturday in 1914 until August 1st. The next result was on March 30th 1915 when the articles resumed after being suspended upon the outbreak of war. Unfortunately, the articles then appeared at irregular

intervals on random days of the week, presumably when space was available, and no longer with the same title, making searching for them more difficult. There were no more Rostherne references, but I established that the articles continued until the end of 1918.

I was intrigued and wanted to find out more about him. He often referred to sightings in the Cheshire countryside and I guessed he might have lived in Cheshire. Steve had found an entry on the Cheshire Archives catalogue for James J Cash while researching the Black Tern record. This listed a book he had written in 1933 entitled *In the Season of the Year: A Record of Country Life Throughout the Months*, described as "previously published in the *Manchester Evening News*". The catalogue stated that Cash had lived in Lymm. There was also an article from the *North Western Naturalist* in 1941 by J J Cash on the natural history activities of James Cash 1839-1909, journalist on the *Manchester Guardian*. The rest of the collection comprised the papers of James Cash.

I looked for him in the census, finding a James Johnstone Cash aged 9 with father James, a journalist, and the rest of the family in Levenshulme in 1881. By 1891 the family had moved to Sale and in the 1901 and 1911 censuses James junior was married and living on the borders of Chelford and Over Peover. He was an Insurance Inspector, presumably working in Manchester and making observations during his daily commute. By 1918 he was living in Lymm, still his home when he died in 1956. His father had obviously been the subject of the *North Western Naturalist* article published in 1941. His father's obituary in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1909 stated he had been the chief reporter on the paper, covering many of the memorable events of the mid-Victorian period and reporting the speeches of the major figures of the day. In his leisure time he "dearly loved the open air of the country and delighted in gardening and in studying wild life of every kind".

We visited Cheshire Archives to look at the J J Cash collection to see if we could get any more information. Three sections of the collection looked potentially interesting. The first was the writings of J J Cash. There were six volumes covering the period 1890 to 1955. These were mainly comprised of newspaper cuttings of "my own personal writing". The first entries were Ornithological Notes in the *Naturalists Gazette*. He very quickly started writing columns for local papers including the *Altrincham, Bowdon, Sale and Warrington Guardians*, the *Cheshire County News* and the *Manchester City News*, providing Natural History Notes for the latter from 1891 for at least five years. In 1895 he wrote to a number of local papers offering a weekly column of rural notes at 5 shillings, providing an example of his writing for the *Manchester City News*.

He started a column in the *Manchester Evening News* in 1897 and this continued until at least 1932. His columns usually appeared weekly and Cash covered several branches of natural history and included records from Manchester and the surrounding areas. He followed birdlife through the year, chronicling wintering wildfowl, the arrival of spring migrants, the breeding season, autumn migration and the arrival of winter visitors. Like us he looked forward to the first spring migrants, eagerly awaiting the first song heard and recording the less common species. Among the summer visitors however the arrival dates of Corncrake and Turtle Dove were routinely recorded - a far cry from the present day. He was also interested in flowers, both wild and garden, and butterflies and moths. In an article about Little Stint and Black Tern on a western Cheshire mere in 1903 he referred to his 1887 Black Tern sighting at Rostherne Mere.

Although he often referred to locations in Cheshire, specific sites were very rarely given and when he was asked why by a correspondent he replied saying he thought it was inadvisable to give precise sites. This was in the era of shooting and egg collecting, both of which he was opposed to. In 1894 he had published an article entitled "A Cheshire Mere and its Birds in June" in the *Manchester City News*. The name of the mere was not mentioned in the article, but in his cuttings book "Rostherne" was written alongside the cutting. This was an account of his first boating trip on the mere in the squire's boat and listed the birds seen while circuiting the mere. The village of Rostherne continued to feature in his columns, including the controversy caused by the new Lord Egerton banning cottagers from providing refreshments to visitors in 1909, but there were no further dated bird records.

In 1913 he was writing Nature Day by Day columns in the *Daily Dispatch* and he later wrote for the *Daily Express*. He led Field Naturalists group visits to Cheshire sites including Rostherne and these were reported in the *Manchester City News*. He reviewed books on natural history topics, including a review of *British Birds and their Eggs* by Coward in the *Manchester City News* in 1921.

His first book entitled *In the Season of the Year: A Record of Country Life Throughout the Months* was published in 1933 and there are reviews from several local papers among his cuttings. It described natural history in monthly chapters culled from his articles in the *Manchester Evening News*. Each month was split into sections dealing with weather, birds, and plantlife and insects at the appropriate times of year. The only specific records were in a chapter entitled "Birds in Manchester". He also broadcast on the radio from 1934 to 1938 and there is a report of one broadcast on "Bird Life of the Industrial North" in 1934 from RSPB's *Bird Notes & News*, in which he was described as the Honorary Local Secretary of the RSPB. He had letters published in *British Birds* in 1936 and 1949 on the subject of song periods. In the second letter he stated he had "systematic Cheshire records covering half-a-century". There was no sign of his personal bird records in the collection unfortunately.

In the early 1940s he contributed to the *North Western Naturalist*. There is an offprint of his 1941 article on the natural history activities of his father James Cash among his cuttings. His father's particular interests were botany and geology, but he also had a "very real interest in bird life... encouraged his family to seek the country and enjoy it to the full". There are also extracts from the March/June 1942 issue of the *North Western Naturalist* devoted to the memory of Charles Oldham, joint author with Coward in 1900 of *Birds of Cheshire*, in which he and others reminisce about days in the field with their old friend. Towards the end of his life his writings were restricted to letters on natural history topics published in newspapers, chiefly the *Manchester Guardian*, with his last letter in 1955 bemoaning the destruction of Rooks and their nests.

The volume on natural history 1909-17 in the collection was a disappointment, only containing cuttings on natural history, literary and historical topics and obituaries of well-known figures written by various authors from a range of papers. His letterbook 1893-98 was however much more interesting. This contained copy letters from Cash to various correspondents, including 12 letters to John Baddeley of Higher Broughton. Cash was later very friendly with Baddeley's son Thomas, who provided the photographs for his 1933 book. Baddeley had first written to Cash in 1893 asking about a record of Quail which Cash had presumably mentioned in one of his columns. They proceeded to correspond about birds they had seen or had heard about throughout the period of the letterbook. There are no letters from Cash's correspondents in the book. Two letters were particularly interesting. One dated August 7th 1894 describes his 1887 sighting of Black Tern at Rostherne:

"Black Tern I don't think I before mentioned to you having twice found the Black Tern inland in this county. On one occasion I was rambling along the edge of Rostherne Mere one early August day when I was much surprised to find a pair of these terns hovering about the water fishing. Their actions were most methodical and gave me much entertainment to observe. Perhaps you may have some information in this connection to relate, but from all accounts the appearance of the Black Tern in our midst is worthy of record."

The second letter was dated April 24th 1896 and concerned the forthcoming publication of the *Birds of Cheshire*:

"Birds of Cheshire As very likely you have seen by their letter in the *City News*, two gentlemen, Messrs Coward and Oldham, have decided to publish a work with the above title, and are now busily engaged in gathering together information. I know these gentlemen, especially Mr Oldham, well and may say that in their hands I have no doubt whatever the enterprise is in the right quarter. I am awaiting with much interest the appearance of the volume, though naturally with so much labour before them (for there is little in the way of published matter to help them) a year or two must still elapse before it can see the light of day. I am contributing what I can to further their object, and indeed it is rather strange that just before I heard of their resolve (long before it was mentioned in the press) I myself had decided to *attempt* a similar thing, not astious [*illegible*] certainly, but a guide to at least the more 'get-at-able' birds of our county, principally for outdoor use. I was strongly urged to do this when I delivered my essay on the subject two or three years ago. However, my little plans have been knocked on the head."

He also corresponded with a farmer from Siddington, Mr J Worth, who reported Nightjar in the area and sandpipers breeding by the mere, which would have been Redesmere. Members of the Worth family are still farming in the area.

Cash gives an insight into birdwatching in the county from the end of the nineteenth century to the

Second World War, but if only his actual bird notebooks had survived we could have learnt so much more from him!

Gill Barber

References

- 1 British Newspaper Archive and UK Census accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk
- 2 Cheshire Archives catalogue <http://archive.cheshire.gov.uk/calmview/default.aspx>
- 3 Cheshire Record Office D2302 Papers of James Cash
- 4 *In the Season of the Year: Record of Country Life Throughout the Months*, Cash James J., published H Jenkins Ltd 1933
- 5 *Manchester Guardian* archive accessed via Manchester Libraries online reference library http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200062/libraries/110/online_reference_library
- 6 *British Birds*
- 7 BBC programme listings from *Radio Times* online archive <http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/>

HESWALL AREA BIRD NOTES 1960-2015 (part 2)

So, what's changed, over those c.40/50 years? See below, for *brief* notes on *selected* species, using the systematic order in the *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report 2019*.

'Heswall' includes 1) between Heswall and Thurstaston, 2) between Heswall and Gayton, 3) between Heswall and Barnston and 4) between Heswall and Pensby. 'Gayton' includes 1) between Gayton and Parkgate and 2) between Gayton and Thornton Hough. '/' in, eg 'Heswall/Thurstaston' = 'between'. The Heswall/Gayton boundary was always fuzzy, to the locals (if, indeed, they drew the distinction at all - often, they didn't). So, I rely on my own judgement here.

Exact dates are recorded in the notes - but, here, for simplicity, I usually record only the month. Population assessments, of pairs, are: 1) for the breeding season only and 2) based principally on the number of singing males, for songbirds, and of birds present, for others (eg Crows). The assessments are in my own judgement - *not* by reference to BTO criteria. Very few of the pairs would be 'proved' breeders, by those criteria. 'Pair' = a pair present in the breeding season.

'Max' = the maximum over the entire period (60-15), unless otherwise indicated. For counts, 'max' = the max in Heswall and Gayton, unless otherwise indicated - ie the 'best' count over the period for the entire 'patch'. For pairs, the first 'max' figure refers to the best year in Heswall and Gayton, unless otherwise indicated. So, eg 'Max 7 pairs Heswall 84' means the best year was 84, and all the pairs were in Heswall.

In assessing counts, note that visible overhead migration was largely overlooked - ie that (regrettably) little attempt was made to assess it.

This article (part 2) will only include interesting points (in my view). Comments welcome to rodneysatbhf@aol.com. For clarity, I live in St. Mary Hoo, Kent (near Rochester).

Red-legged Partridge: Male Heswall/Thurstaston Jun 03. 2 Heswall Feb 78 and 1 same location Nov 77.

Grey Partridge: Max 10 pairs Heswall (8) and Gayton (2) 84. Max coveys 13 Heswall Jan 80 and Jul 70, 10 Gayton Dec 83.

Pintail: Max combined count 10,780 Heswall and Heswall/Thurstaston shore (2,430) and Heswall and Gayton shore (8,350) 28.12.84 and 2.1.85. Max single count 8,535 Heswall and Gayton shore Dec 86.

Teal: 2 pairs reportedly bred Heswall/Thurstaston field-ponds 76. No other breeding records. Max 900 Heswall and Gayton shore Dec 84.

Scaup: Max 230 Heswall shore Dec 85.

Nightjar: 1 male reported Heswall Dales 68. 1 male Heswall Dales 30.5-1.6.77.

Swift: Max 102+ pairs Heswall and Gayton 72. Max count 190 Heswall/Thurstaston fields Aug 82.

Cuckoo: Max 10 pairs Heswall 71 and Heswall and Gayton 83.

Water Rail: 2 pairs Heswall/Thurstaston fields 69 - and 1 pair 81, 77, 70. 1 pair Gayton shore area 70. 1 pair Heswall shore area 77. No other breeding records. Max count 6+ Gayton shore Feb 78, at high tide.

Ringed Plover: Max 815 Heswall shore Aug 84.

Turnstone: Max 815 Heswall shore Aug 68 - but otherwise Max 200 Heswall shore Aug 69 and 180 Aug 70.

Sanderling: Max 570 Heswall shore and fields above Aug 70 and 550-650 Heswall shore Sep 70. Surprisingly low.

Woodcock: In breeding season (ie from mid-May), 1 Heswall Dales area 30.5.77 and 1 garden near Heswall Dales 25.6.76. Max counts 2 Heswall Dales Jan 82, Jan 78 (dusk) and 1.5.67.

Snipe: 1 drumming Heswall Dales area 28.5.83. Max counts 42 Heswall/Pensby fields Jan 84, 16-17 Heswall shore Dec 72 and 14 Heswall/Thurstaston fields Jan 78. Reported (May 81) that, in the years before World War II, Bill Bevan, then 'the best Snipe-shot in the world', regularly shot 400 each year on Burton Marsh.

Short-eared Owl: Max 6 Heswall shore Feb 78, at high tide. 1 Heswall/Thurstaston fields 19.5.84.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker: 1 Heswall Dales 7.3.76. 2 Backwood Hall (Parkgate) 21.7.71.

Jay: Max 14 pairs Heswall (13) and Gayton (1) 84.

Jackdaw: Max 10 pairs Heswall 72 and 8-16 pairs Heswall and Gayton 71. Max count only 19+ Heswall Feb 76.

Willow Tit: Max 7 pairs Heswall (5) and Gayton (2) 84; 6 pairs Heswall 76 and 71; 5 pairs Heswall 83, 82 and 81; 1 pair Parkgate 81. 1 bird Poulton Royd area 10.8.73.

Grasshopper Warbler: Max 5 pairs Heswall (4) and Gayton (1) 72; 5 pairs Heswall (+ 2 more reported) 68; 5 pairs Heswall 73; 4 pairs Heswall (2) and Gayton (2) 71. Otherwise: 4 pairs Heswall (3) and Gayton (1) 77, 70 and 69, 2 pairs Heswall 81 and 71, 1-2 pairs Heswall 74 and 1 pair Heswall 84, 79, 76, 67 and 66.

Garden Warbler: 3 pairs Heswall 71 and 1 pair 72. No other breeding records. 1 Heswall Dales 14.11.76.

Lesser Whitethroat: Max 23 pairs Heswall and Gayton 82 and 20 pairs 84 and 83.

Spotted Flycatcher: Max 7 pairs Heswall 71 and 2 pairs Gayton 83 and 70. Still 6 pairs Heswall 76 and 3 pairs Heswall (2) and Gayton (1) 84.

Redstart: 1 pair Heswall (Dungeon Wood area) 68. No other breeding records. Max 2 males Heswall Apr 71. Otherwise: 1 Heswall May 81, Apr 79, May 78, Sep 76 and Apr 71, 70 and 69 and 1 Gayton Apr 68: 6 males, 2 females.

Wheatear: Max 3-4 pairs Gayton/Parkgate seawall 67; and 2 pairs 68; and 1 pair 70. 1 pair Heswall shore 67. No other breeding records. Max count 19 Heswall, in 2 fields, Apr 77. 1 Heswall shore 10.11.84.

Tree Sparrow: Max 34 pairs Heswall 82, 3 pairs Parkgate 81 and 3 pairs Gayton 76. Max counts 86 Heswall and Gayton Nov 76 and 75 Heswall Jul 70.

Grey Wagtail: 1 pair Heswall (Dungeon Wood) 71 - and present there Jun and Jul 70. No other breeding records.

Tree Pipit: Max 2 pairs Heswall Dales 81 and 80 and 1 pair 83, 82 and 76. No other breeding records. Max count 4 Heswall Apr 71.

Lesser Redpoll: Max 30 pairs Heswall (29) and Gayton (1) 81. Max 3 pairs Gayton 77 and 72. Max counts 85-90 Heswall, at 5 locations (including Heswall Dales), Dec 71 and 53 Heswall Dales area Dec 86.

Corn Bunting: Max 7 pairs Heswall/Thurstaston (6) and Gayton (1) 71 and still 6 pairs (5/1) 76. Max 1 pair Heswall/Barnston 84. Max count 15-20 Heswall Dec 71.

Yellowhammer: Max 57 pairs Heswall and Gayton 82. Max counts 280+ Heswall Dec 70 (hard weather influx) - and 55 Heswall Dec 77.

Rodney Smyth

OLD BIRD TIMES

Taking up the free offer of old *Cheshire Bird Reports* made in a recent *Bird News*, I was intrigued by some of the observations in the 1966 Report that I added to my report collection. They make remarkable if mostly (but not always) sad reading. Some species were unexpected! Goldeneye, Eider Duck, Shelduck, Fulmar, Petrel, Sparrowhawk, Wood-Sandpiper, Willow Warbler, Hedge Sparrow and even Greylag Goose (!) were real throw-backs; although I suppose the Common/Arctic Tern is still to be found. Some 1966 status reports and records sound quite familiar; thus, 21 Leach's Petrels off Hilbre and 12 off Meols in a westerly September gale, would startle no current Cheshire birder.

But many sad declines are charted. I guess it's a long time since 3,500 Mallard were counted at Rostherne or a 'large herd' of 67 Bewick's Swans on the Dee was seen. No longer do we record three or four calling Corncrakes, or Lapland Buntings wintering at Altrincham Sewage Farm. Particularly poignant were statements like: "The spread of breeding (Curlew) to lowland areas of the county was particularly noticeable along the Dee south of Chester"; or Knot: "several hundred thousands were present; the difficulties of estimating such a flock with any degree of accuracy are immense"; or Redshank: "at least 100 pairs" on Burton Marsh along with 60-70 pairs of Common Terns; or Turtle Dove: "well distributed throughout the county.... particularly common in the south-west"; or Corn Bunting: "a marked and substantial increase" with several dozen singing birds counted mostly across north Cheshire and "it seems likely that the next few years will see a continued increase.... ascribed to.... the increased growing of barley". Two Dunlins were displaying in the Macclesfield area and there were at least 10 nesting pairs of Twites in the hills. Over 3,000 Sand Martins must have been a sight over Tatton Mere (although the first bird of the year was not until March 26th), as must 1000+ Bramblings at North Rode and 2000 Greenfinches at Thurstaston. Marsh Tit is no longer "common in south-west Cheshire" or Willow Tit in the county north-east. 1966 rarities included an unspecified Dowitcher, the county's first ever White-rumped Sandpiper, Sabine's Gull and a (dead) Two-barred Crossbill, although a Bonaparte's Gull was unproven. And report typos were just as common then, with Green Woodpecker having two different summaries in succession! - the second should evidently read Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, at ten localities.

However, some species have strikingly increased; in 1966 there were no inland Cheshire records of Black-tailed Godwit, only two county sightings of Brent Goose and Little Gull, and only one each of Black-necked Grebe, Bittern and Hobby - and the latter was the first county record since 1930. Unsurprisingly all egrets, Red Kite, Avocet, Mediterranean Gull, Raven and Cetti's Warbler were unrecorded then, as were 'artificial' newcomers like Mandarin Duck. The maximum inland count of Cormorants was 11 at Rostherne and there were only two inland sightings of Oystercatcher and only one report of Green Sandpiper before July. There were only two 1966 sightings of Goosander away from the main flock at Doddington and only four of Gadwall. A flock of 200 Common Scoters was a Hilbre record count. Collared Doves were "still chiefly confined to the Wirral and the Sale area". And eerily in Cheshire there were no autumn records at all, in 1966, of Buzzard! A glimpse of a different, much missed world.

George B. Hill

EXTRACTS FROM THE CHRONICLE FILES, 100 YEARS AGO

On another historical topic, I was amused to see this note in the *Congleton Chronicle* of 9th June 2022, referring presumably to the same date a century before.

'Extracts from the Chronicle files, 100 years ago:

Bird lovers of the district are greatly interested in the report of the presence at Roe Wood, Mow Cop, of a nightingale, which is filling the night with its lovely song. Hundreds of people, it is stated, are visiting the locality nocturnally, are [sic] being greatly charmed by the Philomela's wonderful vocal powers. It is most unusual for the nightingale to migrate so far north, and it is many years since one took up residence in the district. (We hear, however, on going to Press, that the songster turns out to be a night jay).'

Long ago, I well remember my mother's cousin Tom, who recalled the bird, describing that actual event to me. He told me how he and much of Congleton town trod excitedly up and over Congleton Edge to hear the bird. Tom said that the crowd was extremely unimpressed - when all they heard was the thoroughly unmusical churring of what was undoubtedly a NightJAR....

George B. Hill

ALAN WARFORD 24th February 1947 - 3rd January 2022

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to our dear, dear friend Alan (Al) Warford for his expert help walking Rixton Moss with me over the years and for his true friendship. He is greatly missed.

Les Jones

Book Review

‘AN EYE FOR BIRDS’ BY BRUCE KENDRICK

I was recommended Bruce Kendrick's book, *An Eye for Birds*, as reminiscences of bird watching on the Wirral 1957-1962 by a friend who had not read it but felt that it was a subject I would be interested in. I have now read the book but I found it disappointing. It was not well researched, there were errors and a lot of the writing regarding conservation appeared to me to be a rehash of other people's ideas.

Given the title, I expected a reference to Eric Hosking's book, *An Eye for a Bird*. Eric Hosking visited Hilbre on many occasions and was very famous, he was one of the first nationally known wild life photographers. It was a surprise that Bruce Kendrick and his publisher had clearly never heard of Eric Hosking despite a chapter entitled Hilbre and references to the island throughout the book.

His first chapter, describing his 6-month stay in the children's hospital that was on the site where the Murrayfield Hospital is today, was believable, it grabbed my interest, I was on his side, the best part of the book in my view. My wife had a holiday job when she was at school working at that hospital about 13 years after Bruce was there. Her recollections confirm what he said.

His description of Hilbre did not have any of the authenticity of his first chapter. He could not remember the names of the bird observatory members he met on his first visit despite his claim that they had a big affect on him. I do not think he contacted the bird observatory to see if they could help. He will have had the date of his visit in his birding notebook so looking up the bird observatory day sheets from 1960 could have told him who was there. There were irritating mistakes throughout the book. In the Hilbre chapter he said that on bird rings there was an inscription requesting the finder to inform the British Trust for Ornithology that the ring was found. The actual request on bird rings asks people to inform the British Museum. This inscription has been on UK bird rings for a long time and was chosen in the days before the Internet as a recognisable address that people might be expected to reply to. In a chapter where Parkgate was mentioned he suggests that Nelson visited the place on many occasions, a common misconception. Lady Hamilton spent time there but there are no records of Nelson visiting at all.

He criticised people's tendency to anthropomorphic comments regarding birds but made all kinds of anthropomorphic comments himself. As an example he referred to a male blackbird singing as "serenading a female". Elements of the song probably are concerned with attracting a female but lots of it is to do with identifying his territory to other males, not a serenade at all.

He says a lot about science and conservation but I found none of it very convincing and with the obvious errors and omissions in the book I wondered about the accuracy of his claims.

The final surprise was that a book about birdwatching on the north Wirral did not mention Leach's Petrel.

John Elliott

Note: If YOU see anything of interest in your local paper, on the Internet, or even in the national press, relevant to Cheshire and Wirral, please bring it to the Editor's attention. Either scan in the article and email it, or cut it out and put it in the post. Please make sure the source and date are clear. Editor's contact details are on the inside front cover of *Bird News*.

CAWOS Programme

The 2022-2023 programme will be done by Zoom and intructions will be sent via email to the membership, so please make sure we have your up-to-date email address. Any other updates to this programme will be in the November *Bird News* and on www.cawos.org and again via emails to the membership.

7th OCTOBER 2022

'THE OUTER HEBRIDES' by Nigel Slater

A look at ten islands, from Lewis in the north to Vatersay in the south, covering history, archaeology, holiday potential and of course the wildlife, with eagles, seabirds, waders, wildflowers, otters.... all with stunning scenery.

4th NOVEMBER 2022

'ANTARCTICA, FALKLANDS AND SOUTH GEORGIA' by Mike Watson

A bird and wildlife talk that takes us to the 'great white continent'. Antarctica, Falkland Islands & South Georgia offer up a feast of seabirds, rare land birds (including a number of endemics) and marine mammals (seals, whales and dolphins. Antarctica is like no other journey on earth; it is about as close to visiting another planet as we are likely to get. It is the last frontier on our ever-shrinking planet, a place that so few ever see. An uninhabited continent of more than twelve million square kilometres almost entirely encrusted with ice - an awesomely silent but starkly beautiful frozen world.

2nd DECEMBER 2022

'SCOTLAND AND ITS NATURAL HISTORY' by Steve Lovell

A tour of Scotland to view its scenery and the astonishing array of wildlife that lives there.

6th JANUARY 2023

'SKYDANCERS' by Keith Offord

Sixteen species of harrier are found throughout the world, and are spread as far apart as Australia and South America. They are, arguably, one of the most elegant groups of raptors and, typically, they sail low over open country on wings held in a shallow V shape as they search out their prey. They are also known for their spectacular display flights early in the breeding season. This talk explores this fascinating group of birds with particular emphasis on our own Hen Harrier which Keith Offord has studied and worked with on the uplands of Wales since 1974.

3rd FEBRUARY 2023

'THE PROS AND CONS OF ARTIFICIAL FEEDING OF WILD BIRDS' by Dr Alex Lees

Dr Alex Lees of Manchester Metropolitan University who will be reviewing the pros and cons of artificial feeding of wild birds - it puts some species at an advantage to the detriment of others.

3rd MARCH 2023

AGM followed by 'SHETLAND TO SCILLY: BIRDS OF THE BRITISH ISLES' by Ashley Grove

A journey all the way from Shetland, right down to The Isles of Scilly. Basically a good excuse to show you some of Britain's wonderful bird life. Over 130 species make an appearance during the lecture, which is rounded off by a montage of more images to music.



This section of *Bird News* was temporarily suspended because the majority of indoor events have been cancelled due to Covid-19 OR some of the affiliated societies are holding zoom meetings with speakers (eg CAWOS) OR a mixture (eg MRSPB). If you need any clarification please check with each society on their website or ring the contact number below.

However, we will restart the Diary section in the next issue of *Bird News* (November). Any interested societies please contact me (see the note below).

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

ADNHS Altrincham & District Natural History Society <http://mpettipher.me.uk/altnats>
Meetings Jubilee Centre, The Firs, Bowdon, Altrincham 7:30pm, contact Jacky Johnson 0161 928 7896

CAWOS Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society www.cawos.org
Meetings St Vincent's RC Church Hall, Knutsford 7:45pm, contact Sec. Ted Lock 01625 540468

CRSPB Chester RSPB Members' Group www.rspb.org.uk/groups/chester
Meetings Christleton Parish Hall, Christleton, CH3 7AS 7:30pm, contact Norman Sadler 01244 335670

HPRSPB High Peak RSPB Members' Group www.rspb.org.uk/groups/highpeak
Meetings Senior Citizens' Hall, Marple 7:30pm, contact Tim Walters 0161 449 0299

KOS Knutsford Ornithological Society www.10x50.com
Meetings Jubilee Hall, Stanley Road, Knutsford 8pm, contact Sec. Karina Stanley 07532 833083

MCOS Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society www.midcheshireos.co.uk
Meetings Cuddington & Sandiway Village Hall 7:45pm, contact Andrew Aldridge 01477 534873

MRSPB Macclesfield RSPB Members' Group www.rspb.org.uk/groups/macclesfield
Meetings Macclesfield Community Centre, Macclesfield 7:45pm, contact Ray Evans 01625 432635

NCRSPB North Cheshire RSPB Members' Group www.rspb.org.uk/groups/north_cheshire
Meetings Appleton Parish Hall, Appleton at 7:45pm, contact Sec. Dot Seed 07917 567395

NNHS Nantwich Natural History Society
Occasional meetings throughout the year, contact Sec. Roger Crow, 01270 618416

SECOS South-East Cheshire Ornithological Society www.secos.org.uk
Meetings Eitley Heath Church Community Centre at 7:30pm, contact Mike Tonks 07484 306147

WGBG Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group <http://wgbwcopy.wikidot.com/wgbg>
Meetings Wilmslow Guild at 7:30pm, contact Brian Dyke 01625 525936

Will **affiliated societies**, who wish to advertise meetings of relevance to CAWOS, please send their programme to:- **Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QG** or, *preferably please*, by email: sheilablamire@kawos.org

SITUATIONS VACANT

NON-EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBER

“THE SOCIETY NEEDS YOU”

For further information, please contact:

Phil Hampson chairman@cawos.org 01625 260059

Due to ill health FRESHPAK has unfortunately had to suspend trading. They have supported CAWOS for many years (about 25 years!), advertising both in the Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report and in Bird News.

If you know anyone who might want to advertise in future Bird News please let me know and I'll contact them with all the information.

Sheila Blamire at sheilablamire@cawos.org Tel: 01565 830168

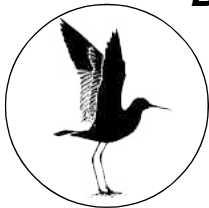
Index

Page 1-2	Guest Editorial	Page 16-17	Conservation News
Page 2-4	CAWOS News	Page 18-20	Species Spotlight
Page 4-7	Sites to Watch	Page 20-25	Notes and Letters
Page 8-10	County Round-Up	Page 26	Book Review
Page 11	County Rarities	Page 27	CAWOS Programme
Page 12	Projects and Surveys	Page 28	Diary
Page 13-15	Ringling News		

*** 'THE OUTER HEBRIDES' by Nigel Slater ***

ZOOM MEETING on 7th OCTOBER 2022

Binoculars & Telescope Sales



Low Prices, High Standards.

FOCALPOINT OPTICS LTD

Birdwatching at its Best

Phone Focalpoint on 01925 730399

Part Exchange & Repairs Welcome

Opening times

10am - 4pm Mon - Sat

Optics----- ✓
Repairs--- ✓
Books----- ✓
Clothing-- ✓
Bird Art--- ✓
Part Ex--- ✓



Email: focalpoint@dial.pipex.com / Website: www.fpoint.co.uk