

Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society

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BIRD NEWS

Number 121 November 2022



Species Spotlight: Curlew

Curlew Sandpiper Influx 2022

County Rarity: Pallas's Warbler

60th Anniversary of AW Boyd Memorial Observatory

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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.

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Front cover: Reed Warbler by Ray Scally

Other illustrations by Tony Broome, Phil Jones, Bill Morton, Ray Scally & Jane Turner

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 11th February 2023

Guest Editorial

Welcome to *Bird News* 121 for November 2022.

I find myself sitting down to begin writing this Guest Editorial on the day that the third Prime Minister of this Parliament met King Charles to formalise his appointment. Quite a lot has changed since the July issue of *Bird News*! It remains to be seen whether this new appointment will have any meaningful effect on the proposed 'bonfire of European Union regulations' many of which regulations are crucial to the protection of wildlife and green places in our country. Can we feel at all reassured that these EU regulations will be replaced by ones of the same or greater protective strength to safeguard wildlife and green places? The RSPB and County Wildlife Trusts certainly appear to have their doubts. Doubts occasioned presumably by the present state of many of our streams, rivers, beaches and coastal waters. Doubts heightened by proposals relating to extensive Freeports/Investment Zones with far less stringent regulations relating to planning among other things and relaxations to local planning stipulations concerning the environment. Things have reached a pretty pass when the RSPB messages its members about what it sees as an 'attack on nature' by the government.

Local to me the Danes Moss planning issue, highlighted in Jane Turner's July Guest Editorial, rumbles on. The two websites below contain background details provided by the 'Save Danes Moss' group on the interaction between the owners of local land and local and national politicians:

<https://savedanesmoss.com/planning-details/> or search 'Save Danes Moss planning details' and <https://macclesfield.nub.news/news/opinion/cheshire-east-council-appear-to-deny-the-proposed-danes-moss-development-is-on-danes-moss-151008> or simply search 'Macclesfield Nub News Cheshire East Council appear to deny...'

The Danes Moss petition mentioned by Jane in July remains active at: <http://tinyurl.com/2p8ndcz2> or search 'Danes Moss petition'.

Many years ago now Talking Heads sang "Don't worry about the government". One of my ways of taking their advice is to go birding. Luckily birding locally has been unusually and persistently good at Acre Nook which is one of the Chelford area sand quarries. Quarrying there ceased several years ago and last year Sibelco (the quarrying company) finally departed the area. As a leaving present they created a series of islands on the quarry floor, a substantial area of which was already flooded. Previously, to allow quarrying, water was continuously pumped out into the local river system. Now the pumps were gone and the water began to rise to what will be its natural level. Given the massive size and depth of the quarry there was never going to be enough material to create islands that would last very long. This October the last vestige of island disappeared under the water. However, during their existence the islands attracted breeding and passage birds. As it will, news of these birds attracted birders and the increasing number of birders found more birds. Summer 2021 brought the first confirmed breeding in the area of Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. A Black-necked Grebe attracted attention during the winter, while this spring brought Ring-necked Ducks and Garganey, passage terns of three species, Little Gulls, Kittiwake and, as the year progressed, a total of at least 21 species of wader including flocks of Avocets and Black-tailed Godwits. Two Spoonbills were brief visitors, an Osprey passed through, as did several Marsh Harriers, and Hobbies provided spectacular birding into October. Birding at Acre Nook has certainly provided a welcome distraction for yours truly. I hope CAWOS members have found similar welcome distraction at their local patch so far this year.

Cheshire and Wirral has nationally important numbers of Curlew using its estuaries and a small breeding population. There are, however, concerns over declining numbers across its range and conservation efforts are being made to support the species. Against this background this issue of *Bird News* includes a thorough and timely review by Richard Smith of its Cheshire and Wirral status past and present. In addition to the 'usual' features, this issue also includes news about Swifts in Warrington, a report on the Rostherne Mere NNR 60th anniversary celebration and 50 years of ringing Reed Warblers there – by one individual!

I commend this issue of *Bird News* to the CAWOS membership.

Steve Barber

CAWOS News

CAWOS Council has only met once in September since my last report. Our Chairman, Phil Hampson, suffers with severe back problems and has been waiting for an operation for most of this year. Meanwhile he is in constant pain and virtually housebound and has decided to step back from the Chairman's role until his situation improves with Tony Parker, the Vice-Chairman, taking over in the meantime. David Hiley will be setting up and running the Zoom sessions. We hope Phil gets a date for surgery soon which should help reduce his pain and suffering. Carolyn Bailey is taking on the role of Membership Secretary as planned.

Phil has written a note on membership numbers for this issue, also drawing members' attention to the pending increase in price for a Rostherne Mere NNR permit next year, so if that affects you please make sure your standing order is updated. The renewing membership form will be with this November issue of *Bird News*. CAWOS finances are stable with income covering outgoings which is mainly the cost for production of the annual *Bird Report* and fees for Zoom meeting speakers. We are still holding our programme of talks this winter via Zoom and discussing whether we should go back to indoor meetings in the near future. Covid is however still very common as I learned a couple of weeks ago, but having been vaccinated about 3 weeks before my symptoms were very mild.

The Zoom list of talks is complete for winter 2022-2023 and we hope you will continue to join and listen to the talks. We are only getting somewhere in the region of 30 people on-line and would encourage all members to participate. If you have heard a particularly interesting talk on birds, then please let Council know so we can invite the speaker to our meeting. Tony Parker and John Jones have taken on the role of organisers for the 2023-2024 sessions and are the persons to contact.

John Patterson, our Treasurer, has reviewed the Charity Commission requirements with regards to the annual audit of our accounts. A number of changes have taken place over the years since the CAWOS Constitution was written. CAWOS income and expenditure is below the threshold that requires an Audit. Council discussed this and John pointed out that he was concerned as it is important that our accounts are checked every year. This does not now have to be done by a professional accountant so a Society member will be invited to review the accounts for two years and then replaced, the person should NOT be an officer of the Society or Council member.

The 60th Anniversary of the AW Boyd Memorial Observatory at Rostherne Mere NNR was a resounding success with in excess of 80 people attending. Hugh Pulsford on behalf of CAWOS presented a painting of a Reed Warbler to mark Malcolm Calvert's 50 years of ringing Reed Warblers at Rostherne. The painting by Ray Scally was commissioned by CAWOS and the Rostherne Committee.

The 2021 *Bird Report* is well underway with all the compilers sections edited and half the proofread sections with the typesetter. Thanks to Mark Woodhead, the photographic editor for the *Bird Report*, who has received about 600 photographs; we can only accommodate 80 in the report so inevitably some photographers will be disappointed, but please keep the pictures coming. We are hoping to get the report out this year.

Conservation issues are always discussed and current issues are planning permission for houses close to Danes Moss CWT, Macclesfield and HS2 which continues to cause concern to a large area of the County.

Ted Lock

MEMBERSHIP

The membership has remained steady at just over 300, we lost about 3% who did not renew which is normal each year and to date has been covered by new members joining. This will be the last time I report on Membership. With the copy of *Bird News* is the Subscription payment slip for 2023, yes it is that time of year again. You will see from this document that we have a new

Membership Secretary, Carolyn Bailey - thank you Carolyn for taking this on. I have been doing membership for a number of years and a new person may bring new ideas. In 2023 we will be offering members the option of having the Bird News printed and posted as in the past, or a pdf version emailed. As with all organisations we have to work to keep the costs under control and by offering a pdf copy of Bird News we will save the ever increasing postage costs. It is up to the members to decide and we will be contacting everyone in the New Year and asking for their preference.

Another very important point is Rostherne permits - there is an article in this BN about the need to increase the permit cost. There are just under 60 people who pay for a Rostherne permit combined with the CAWOS Membership and it is very important that the Standing Order is amended to reflect this change. The new costs are: Adult - £12, Family - £17. When we increased CAWOS membership some years ago it was a nightmare to get everyone to amend the Standing Orders and this generated a huge spike in the workload of the Membership Secretary, in fact there are still some members who have not made the change in spite of numerous requests for them to do so. CAWOS CANNOT ask banks to amend a Standing Order; the customer MUST contact their bank and notify them of the change - that is how Standing Orders work. Please remember to do this and bear in mind the extra work that it will generate for someone who is processing the payments.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As I sit writing this I can look out of the lounge window at a blue sky and a breeze blowing. Summer has certainly gone! I think we can say we had a good summer in 2022, but, does that also apply to the birds? For the first time I have been at home all spring and summer and able to watch my bird feeders throughout. After spring I saw a distinct change in the species using the garden feeders. In winter and spring I had a variety of species largely centred on the tit family. Then almost overnight the tits disappeared, I have no idea why and it is only in the last two or three weeks that they have started to reappear. Was it because there was enough natural food? The garden Blackbirds also went and to date haven't reappeared. Of course the next Blackbird I see could quite possibly be a migrant from colder climes, but I will never know unless it had a readable ring. Now the Robins have started singing again. I am lucky in that I have good numbers of House Sparrows and Starlings. Over the years Swifts have always returned each year and we often get the fantastic sound of them flying low and calling on warm summer evenings, for me the best of the summer sounds. Having been positive about Swifts it is sad to say the same cannot be said about Swallows and House Martins. In the last week of September I had my first and only House Martins of the year fly over, just 3 of them and there have been no Swallows. These in years past were daily occurrences. But I have recorded my first Little Egret from the house.

This all led me to think about other changes. 20 years ago it never crossed my mind that I would ever see a Little Egret fly over my house, as I have this year. I was reviewing some of the data for the next Bird Report and was amazed at the numbers of Spoonbills, Great (White) Egrets and Little Egrets that are now being seen in the CAWOS area and particularly the Wirral area. Quite simply incredible.

There are full reports later in this copy of Bird News but I do have to mention Rostherne. In September the Rostherne Observatory celebrated its 60th anniversary and held a very successful event. At this event Malcom Calvert was presented with a wonderful painting by Ray Scally of a Reed Warbler in the reeds - thanks again Ray. This was a joint presentation from the CAWOS Council and Rostherne committee to mark Malcolm having ringed Reed Warblers for 50 continuous years at Rostherne. A truly magnificent achievement and amazing commitment.

Phil Hampson

A Thank You

I'd like to thank everyone for the good wishes since I sent the email explaining that I was stepping back, due to my health issues, until the AGM. Hopefully by then I will be able to return to my role. The Society is in good hands with the people on Council and I am there in the background if needed. Many thanks indeed, Phil

2021 CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL BIRD REPORT

We are currently editing the sections for the *Bird Report* and these will shortly be proofread then passed on for typesetting so we are on target to publish before the end of the year. I have to thank all the compilers for their hard work in writing their sections, Ted Lock for his attention to detail in checking and David Steventon for proofreading. We had over 500 photographs submitted to Mark Woodhead, we have now managed to edit these down to just over 100 and shortly we'll be doing another session to end up with the final 80 or so. This may all seem very simple but there are countless hours work from the group of people involved.

Sites to Watch

ROSTHERNE MERE NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

Newsletter Jul - Sep 2022

I'm writing this in late Sep and the temperature has dropped significantly in the last few days as autumn approaches.

The diversity of water birds using the mere is lower during the summer but numbers of geese were high with up to 630 Canada and 120 Greylag Geese visiting. Egyptian Geese bred in Tatton Park and were seen on eight dates with 10 dropping in on 6th Sep. Up to 29 Mandarins roosted in Jul. Four Common Scoters and a juvenile Black-necked Grebe visited in Jul. A Bittern was seen in Sep. Great White Egrets and Little Egrets were also logged. Waders included Curlew, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Common Sandpiper and Dunlin.

One of the amazing records of the quarter was the first proof of Cuckoo parasitism in a Reed Warbler nest since 1993! Captured wonderfully by Tony Tyler on 30th Jul.

It was a great summer for raptors with Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Marsh Harrier and Red Kite all recorded. Hobbies were a daily sight in Aug and Sep with adult and juvenile birds providing wonderful views and sounds, as the youngsters vociferously begged for food from shoreline perches.

Barn Owls bred with two chicks fledging. They were included in the Cheshire totals of 123 breeding pairs and 322 chicks, with only four failed broods, representing a very good year.

All three species of woodpecker were recorded with Great Spotted Woodpeckers seen frequently on the bird table and in front of the Observatory. A juvenile Green Woodpecker was spotted on nine dates and there was a single account of a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker in Sep.

It was a very poor summer for sightings of hirundines over the mere with few double figure counts for Swallow and House Martin. In contrast, it was a good year for several breeding summer migrants with many juvenile Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps seen in front of the Observatory.

Malcolm Calvert, in his 50th year of ringing, along with John Adshead, worked tirelessly in the reed beds and were rewarded in ringing 244 Reed Warblers of which 66 were adults, 129 juveniles and 49 nestlings, in addition to many other species. Juvenile Cetti's Warblers were also ringed proving breeding on the Reserve.

Kingfishers were seen on many dates and obligingly fished from posts in front of the Bittern Hide. Grey Wagtails bred along Rostherne Brook and an adult with two juveniles were seen in Sep.

Ravens were often spotted and heard flying low over the mere and margins with two mobbing a Peregrine Falcon on 22nd Sep.

Finally, it was wonderful to see 88 attendees including many permit holders at the 60th Anniversary of the opening of the A W Boyd Observatory at Egerton Hall, Rostherne where Malcolm received a well-earned reward for his 50 years' service to Rostherne Mere NNR and Ornithology!

Bill Bellamy

CELEBRATION OF THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF AW BOYD MEMORIAL OBSERVATORY, ROSTHERNE, 7th SEPTEMBER 2022



This event was held in the well-appointed Egerton Hall in Rostherne village and was attended by 88 permit holders, villagers, staff from NE and invited guests. Sandwiches, tea and coffee were provided and an excellent two-piece ceilidh provided musical entertainment as folk arrived. Rupert Randall, our NE Manager of the reserve, gave a welcome and provided some drone footage showing the new ponds and scrapes that have been created (over 30) that have settled well into the landscape, creating new habitats for birds, plants and insects and pond life. There followed a short talk about A W BOYD and the establishment of the Observatory as a memorial to him and his remarkable enthusiasm for the natural world, in particular of course, Rostherne Mere.

Very importantly we had arranged a surprise presentation to Malcolm Calvert, kindly presented by Hugh Pulsford on behalf of CAWOS and the BOYD committee. It was in the form of a beautiful painting by Ray Scally of a Reed Warbler [see the front cover of this *Bird News*] to celebrate Malcolm's 50 years of ringing. He gave a speech of thanks and was delighted with the painting. There then followed a period of catching up with friends and colleagues, including Tom Wall a former warden at Rostherne, before groups headed off to view the recently redecorated observatory and then onto the reserve to see the new ponds and scrapes. The day seemed to go quickly and was felt to be a success, aided by a lovely sunny day.

John Holland, Chair CAWOS Sub-committee Rostherne

HERE IS JOHN HOLLAND'S TALK:

Arnold Whitworth Boyd was born in 1885 in Altrincham and died in Northwich in 1959, aged 74. He was well known as a naturalist, ornithologist, local historian, with further interests in folklore, dialect and conservation. He attended Rugby School and Oxford University, served in WW1 attaining the rank of Major. He wrote several books one titled *The Country Diary of a Cheshire Man*. He was a long-time contributor to the *Manchester Guardian's* 'Country Diary' column, taking over a slot from his friend and fellow naturalist Thomas Coward on the latter's death in 1933. In 1950, he revised Coward's *The Birds of the British Isles and their Eggs*. He was assistant editor of *British Birds*. He lived most of the latter stages of his life in Antrobus. He made occasional radio programs about 'Cheshire Meres' 1936. Many of Boyd's books, diaries, other papers were later acquired by Liverpool University.

Boyd made a lifelong study of the birds of Rostherne Mere and it was he who was key in persuading Lord Egerton of Tatton to leave the mere to the nation as a national reserve. He was the first president of the Manchester Ornithological Society and it was that society that raised funds to build the observatory as a memorial to him. CAWOS and our subcommittee now manage the observatory.

The AW Boyd Memorial Observatory was opened on 21 July 1962, 60 years ago, by his nephew James Fisher who was also an ornithologist and broadcaster. This was some 13 years after Boyd's death. The observatory itself is quite sophisticated in its construction and was designed by a North Wales architect Sidney Colwyn Foulkes OBE, who designed several important buildings such as Aberystwyth Town Hall; he was a member of the council for the protection of Rural Wales and maybe this interest in landscape, and no doubt associated matters, were the reasons he became involved with designing the observatory.

So there we are, Arnold Whitworth Boyd a fascinating, enthusiastic ornithologist, whose dedication to the natural world has led to all of us benefitting and enjoying his very special Observatory.

THE AW BOYD MEMORIAL OBSERVATORY ROSTHERNE PERMITS

As most of you will have read in Phil Hampson's email to CAWOS members, we need to increase the subs for the Observatory to pay our electricity bill.

Phil put it so well that I repeat it here.

"We have c50 members who have a Rostherne permit for which payment is combined with their CAWOS Membership. We are all painfully aware of the increase in energy costs and that it is impacting everyone. The Rostherne Observatory is facing an unprecedented lift in the electricity bill from £200 to £1000 annually. The Rostherne Committee have therefore had to make the difficult decision to increase the permit costs by £2 per annum per permit type for 2023, bringing Single to £12 and Family to £17 and will meet the remainder from their reserves.

When we increased CAWOS membership subscriptions 3 years ago it proved to be a very difficult process and generated a huge spike in the time needed to record payments and issue many reminders, often multiple times, as many people did not change their Standing Orders, in fact there is still a small number who have still not changed their SO.

If you have a Rostherne Permit would you please amend your Standing Order by adding £2. It may seem inconsequential but each payment that hasn't been amended takes time to process, record and issue reminders."

The AW Boyd Memorial Observatory is classed as a business so there is no cap on our electricity bill unless the government decides to do so, but at the time of writing no announcement has been made. This £2 increase in subs will not cover the extra £800 but I am hoping that energy prices will come down to a more sensible level in the near future. However, we will need to monitor the situation and keep the option to raise or lower subs as necessary in the future.

Phil Dell, Treasurer, AW Boyd Memorial Observatory, Rostherne Mere NNR

RSPB DEE ESTUARY RESERVE

Recent Sightings

First published on the RSPB Dee Estuary Blog on 29 Sep 2022 – see <https://community.rspb.org.uk/placestovisit/deeestuary/b/deeestuary-blog/posts/reserve-round-up-autumn-2022>.

It's been one of our best years in a while for the autumn wader passage - aided by the dry summer meaning our water levels were lower than ever before, leaving lots of shallow water and exposed mud. The wader migration begins as early as late July, with Spotted Redshanks prominent in their black plumage, by now completely faded to their grey and white winter hue, and a few Wood Sandpipers showed well for a while in August. However, September is renowned as the best month, and we had a site record of 39 Curlew Sandpipers across Burton Mere Wetlands a couple of weeks ago and still a small number passing through at present. Three Little Stints have made themselves at home for over a week, alongside good numbers of Ruff and the odd Green Sandpiper. Meanwhile, we've been treated to excellent views of dozens of Snipe as they return for the winter, along with Black-tailed Godwits, plumes of Lapwings regularly drifting around and the first few Golden Plovers made an appearance from Border Hide last weekend.

Early autumn is a tricky time to identify ducks as they remain in eclipse plumage as part of their moult cycle, lacking their distinctive colour and markings, however, they'll be regaining their breeding colours as we reach the end of this month [September]. We had a family of Garganey loving life on Reception Pool into September, a likely sign they had successfully nested on the reserve again. They will be well on their way to Africa now, but we have all our winter ducks back now: Teal, Shoveler, Wigeon, Gadwall, and resident Mallard, Tufted and Gadwall can be found readily, whilst Pintail aren't ever-present, sometimes preferring the tidal estuary, but we've already had counts of over 100 on Bridge Pool.



Significant rainfall in late September has seen our water levels recover, bringing a nice selection of ducks, and Little Grebe back onto Reception Pool. The iconic Pink-footed Geese are now back on the estuary in force, and spending plenty of their time feeding on the wet grassland at Burton Mere Wetlands, as well as regular flights overhead from neighbouring farmland and the marshes. It's still relatively early in the season for them though and numbers will swell further as we go through October. Canada Goose numbers have dwindled significantly, whilst Greylag numbers are rising and there are still a couple of Egyptian Geese being seen regularly and occasional Barnacle Geese. For two days last week, a single Snow Goose joined the Pink-feet flock, but has gone missing in recent days.

As is typical in autumn, raptor variety has increased with the occasional Merlin sighting and a single ringtail Hen Harrier so far, but Kestrel and Marsh Harrier are a near constant presence around the scrape and wet grassland at present, with Sparrowhawk and Peregrine more frequent as duck and wader numbers rise. Great Egret are probably the most prominent of the family, but a solitary Cattle Egret can be seen amongst the grazing ponies, plus Little Egret and Grey Heron usually skulking on the fringes of reed and rush beds. Other highlights away from the wetlands include Green Woodpeckers on Burton Point field, Kingfishers regularly seen around the old fishery ponds but particularly on The Mere, resident Cetti's Warblers and returning Goldcrests and Stonechats.

On the wider reserve, the undoubted highlight of late summer was the influx of Spoonbills at Parkgate, growing from the handful that spent the entire summer up to a new record of 19 in total on the estuary, and up to six occasionally venturing to Burton Mere Wetlands. They've now departed for the winter, but are definitely now a regular summer presence and we're hoping they'll find somewhere suitable to nest on the reserve in the near future.

BURTON MERE WETLANDS IS GETTING A CAFÉ

It's been years in the making, but we're delighted to be nearing the delivery of the latest project we've been developing to offer more to Burton Mere Wetlands' loyal visitors - and hopefully plenty of new ones in the years ahead. Part of a national RSPB project, we are one of four reserves having a café installed (or in Conwy's case, an expansion and improvement of their existing one) through the second half of this year. Some of you may have seen the posters put up on site a month ago, and now we've finally crossed the 'T's and dotted the 'I's of the planning paperwork, we can announce the beginning of the work on the ground next week.

Inevitably with any building work, there will be some level of disruption at Burton Mere Wetlands over the next few months, but we hope this can be kept to a minimum due to the nature of the building being of modular construction, effectively built off-site and transported to the reserve in five sections to be installed. There is still a substantial amount of groundwork to do though by a variety of contractors and utility companies, including digging in a new septic tank, upgrading the electricity supply, relocating a telegraph pole and laying a concrete base for the café building to sit on. Before anything else, to create space for where the café will sit, the old brick toilet block close to the garden will be demolished.

In the weeks and months ahead, there will be the occasional day where the reserve needs to be closed to visitors, for instance to allow for the building to be delivered - not an easy task given the winding driveway through Gorse Covert. When this is required, we will give as much advanced notice as possible, to allow you to plan an alternative destination on those days. As ever, your patience and understanding of occasional disruption are appreciated, and we hope you're as excited as we are to enjoy your first frothy coffee, fresh cake, hot breakfast or light lunch here, nestled under ancient oaks, with views across the vast wetlands and the garden pond.

There is still a long way to go and a lot of work until the café opens; if all goes to plan, we'll be up and running ready for next spring. In the meantime, you'll be able to get a sneak preview of what ours will look and feel like if you visit Conwy, Frampton Marsh or The Lodge reserves during the winter when theirs are expected to be open.

Dan Trotman, Visitor Experience Manager, RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve

TATTON PARK

The job description of a ranger at Tatton is quite varied. The summer months are spent looking after the events and nearly a million visitors that visit the park annually which in turn bring in income. The winter sees us carry out more maintenance work and we have much more involvement looking after the deer. We also do get to carry out conservation projects and one which has been running for quite a while proved very rewarding this summer.

Many years ago, we released Barn Owls into the park which were obtained from Muncaster Castle. We enclosed them for the first few weeks, feeding them day-old chicks. Eventually they could fly free, and it was hoped that they may one day return to breed. For a few years now they have nested in the park in the boxes we have provided, but this year we have been lucky enough to have two pairs breed here. One box had two chicks and the other had four. All of which was a very pleasing and rewarding part of the job to say the least.

Great Crested Grebes have also had several broods this year and Spotted Flycatchers have nested near to the Mill Pool where an adult was seen feeding a fledgling. A Little Owl, another bird which has become rarer over the years, was seen in a traditional nesting location too. A White Stork seen flying around Melchett was later proven to be an escapee from Gauntlet Bird of Prey Centre. Another one of our duties as rangers is to monitor and maintain the water levels within the park as we must adhere to reservoir legislation, and we have regular inspections. On 13th August one of the sluices became faulty at the Mill Pool and most of the water had drained out of it. This brief period was enough to attract in two Green Sandpipers onto the mud.

Hobby numbers continue to increase in the area, and we have had a few regular sightings recently with one bird favouring the dead tree at the back of Melchett Mere as a vantage point.

A sure sign that winter was on its way is when the Pink-footed Geese can be heard above the parkland and sure enough two parties of approximately 50 birds were seen on two separate occasions in September. The first autumn sighting of two Stonechats perched by Melchett Mere in September was another indicator of the season's change.

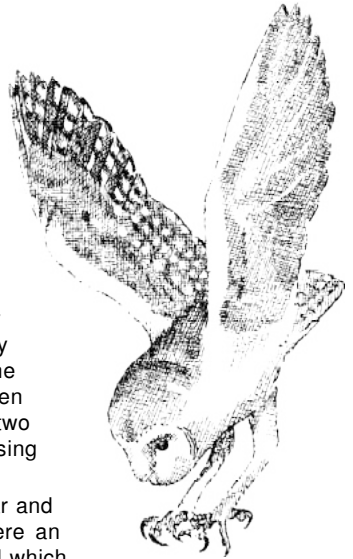
Winter is the time that wildfowl numbers and species increase on the two large meres. Wigeon, Shoveler, and Pochard have already been noted and will be joined by Goldeneye and possibly Smew. It is always worth scanning the meres, we are long overdue an inland diver record. The exotic Mandarin Duck is resident in the park and there was a large count of 40 on the River Birkin that flows through the park on 20th September.

In addition to the wildfowl, winter is a good time for the passerine species in the woodlands. Not only do they flock together at this time of year, but the lack of leaves makes them easier to see! There may even be a Firecrest or Lesser Spotted Woodpecker among the roving tit flocks. The avenue of beech trees along Rostherne Drive and Beech Avenue are good places to look for Bramblings feeding on beech mast.

Aside from the birdlife of Tatton, a visit to the park in the autumn means a chance to witness the deer rut which takes place until late November. At any time of year, you can see over 500 deer consisting of red and fallow deer species.

Right in the centre of the park, overlooking Melchett Mere, is the Allen Bird Hide. It is ideal for a rest break if you are on a long walk due to its central location, or there is a small car park close by in easy walking distance. It's a good place to shelter at this time of year. There is a noticeboard inside with general information and contact details of the local bird club, The Knutsford Ornithological Society.

Darren Morris, Park Ranger



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 May to August 2022.

SITE REPORTS

Chester area

A Quail was at Mollington on May 21st, Spotted Crake at Wimbolds Trafford on Aug 28th and Red Kites were over Chester on Jun 15th, Farndon on May 18th and Puddington on Aug 7th. Two Spotted Flycatchers were at Aldford on Jun 12th and two Pied Flycatchers at Hockenhull on May 18th.

Congleton area

Quail was at Holmes Chapel on Aug 31st, Dotterel at Congleton May 3rd to 4th, Red Kites were at Astbury Mere on Aug 31st and Congleton on Jun 29th.

Crewe and Nantwich area

Up to five Black-winged Stilts were at Doddington from Aug 11th to 25th, seven Ringed Plovers at EHF on Jun 5th, Whimbrel at EHF on Jul 26th, Knot at Sandbach Flashes on May 25th and 26th and Spotted Sandpiper at Doddington on May 14th to 15th. Three Common Terns were at EHF on Jul 31st and four Spoonbills on Jul 20th and 21st, two Cattle Egrets at Ravensmoor on Jun 25th. An Osprey was over at EHF on Jun 1st and Marsh Harrier there on Jul 10th and two Red Kites over Maw Green Tip on Aug 14th. 10 Garden Warblers were at Bickerton on May 7th, two Spotted Flycatchers at Wybunbury on Jun 28th and Aug 13th, Pied Flycatcher at Lawton Woods on May 22nd, two Redstarts at Crabmill Flash on Jul 29th and 16 Yellow Wagtails at PHF on Aug 16th.

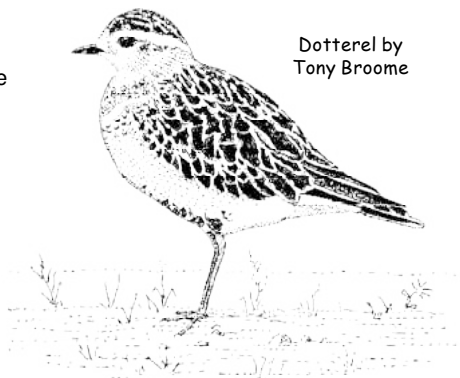
Ellesmere Port and Neston area

Wildfowl of interest included: 18,900 Canada Geese counted on the Mersey WeBS count on Jun 19th, four Pink-footed Geese at Parkgate, May 21st, 12 Egyptian Geese at BMW on Jul 30th and four Garganeys on Aug 7th. Three Quails were calling at Parkgate from Jul 16th to 21st, six Water Rails at Parkgate on Aug 9th with adult and juvenile Spotted Crakes at BMW on several dates in Aug. Waders of note included: 229 Avocets present on the Mersey WeBS count on Jun 19th, 15 Whimbrels at BMW on May 11th and four Bar-tailed Godwits on Jun 27th. 5,687 Black-tailed Godwits, two Curlew Sandpipers and Little Stint were noted on the Mersey WeBS count on Aug 14th, Sanderling at BMW on May 10th to 14th, 75 Dunlins on May 11th, Little Stint on May 11th and several dates in Aug, and four Wood Sandpipers on May 3rd to 6th.

A Little Gull was at BMW on May 3rd, at least seven Mediterranean Gulls on May 1st, two Sandwich Terns on Jun 29th, two Common Terns on Jul 10th and White-winged Black Tern on Jun 6th. 13 Spoonbills were at Parkgate on Aug 28th, a single Cattle Egret at BMW on several dates and eight Great White Egrets on Aug 19th. Ospreys were over BMW on May 6th and 31st and Burton on Jun 2nd and Aug 28th, three Marsh Harriers were at Parkgate on May 30th, Red Kite over the Burton area on various dates, an early Merlin at Decca pools on Jul 30th and two Hobbies at BMW on Aug 1st, 8th and 31st. Two Crossbills were at BMW on Jul 26th.

Halton area

Garganeys were at Hale on May 7th and eight Common Scoters there on Jul 6th. A Quail was calling at Hale on Jun 6th. Curlew Sandpiper noted at Hale on May 22nd to 26th with two Little Stints on May 2nd. 15 Kittiwakes were on the Mersey at Pickering's Pasture on May 22nd, two Little Gulls at Hale on May 22nd, two Caspian Gulls at Widnes on Jun 18th, a Spoonbill was at Hale on several dates in May. An Osprey was over Pickering's Pasture on Aug 29th, Red Kite at Hale on Jun 7th



Dotterel by
Tony Broome

and Honey Buzzard there on Aug 7th. Four Channel Wagtails were at Hale on Jul 8th.

Macclesfield area

Seven Egyptian Geese were at Acre Nook SQ on Aug 10th, Common Scoters were present at Acre Nook SQ on Jul 7th and Rostherne on 13th. A Quail was heard at Shutlingsloe on Jun 23rd, two Black-necked Grebes at Lapwing Hall Pool on Jul 5th to 26th with singles at Acre Nook SQ on various dates during the period.

15 Avocets were at Acre Nook SQ on

Aug 10th, Whimbrels at Chelford on May 2nd and Acre Nook SQ on May 12th and Aug 8th, five Turnstones at Acre Nook SQ on Jul 19th, Ruff there on May 10th, Sanderling on May 26th, five Dunlins on May 10th and two Wood Sandpipers Jul 3rd then 21st to 22nd.

Single Kittiwake was at Acre Nook SQ on Jun 3rd with two Common Terns on Jun 27th, Jul 9th and Jul 22nd and two Black Terns there on Jul 22nd. Two Spoonbills were at Acre Nook SQ on Aug 27th.

Osprey and Marsh Harrier were at Acre Nook SQ on Jun 3rd and a Red Kite was noted at various sites throughout the period. 11 Ring-necked Parakeets were at Poynton Pool on Aug 9th, a Ring Ouzel at Mow Cop on May 3rd, two Spotted Flycatchers at Macclesfield Forest on May 21st and Bosley on 22nd, three Pied Flycatchers at Tegg's Nose on May 24th, two Redstarts at Bosley on May 14th and 9+ Crossbills at Macclesfield Forest on May 15th.

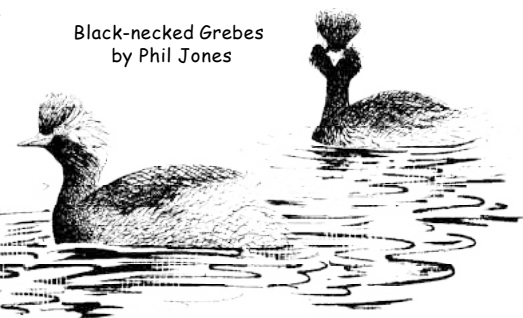
Vale Royal area

Three Garganeys were at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 13th and 27th and four Common Scoters at Marbury CP on Jul 4th. Quails were at Kingsley on Jun 2nd and Flaxmere Moss on Jul 7th, a single Black-necked Grebe was at Marbury CP on several dates. Seven Avocets were at Neumann's Flash on May 30th and Jul 9th, an early Golden Plover on Aug 8th and eight Whimbrels at Ashton's Flash on May 8th. 13 Bar-tailed Godwits were at Frodsham Marsh on May 6th, Sanderling Jul 21st and three Little Stints at Neumann's Flash on Aug 23rd. A Pectoral Sandpiper was at Frodsham Marsh on Jul 17th to 21st, two Wood Sandpipers at Neumann's Flash on Jul 1st with two Spotted Redshanks at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 13th and 27th.

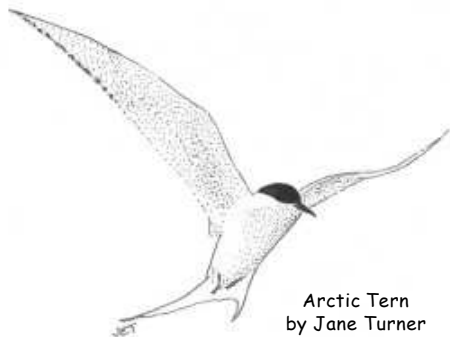
Little Gull was at Frodsham Marsh on May 8th, three Common Terns at Marbury CP on Jul 18th with Arctic Tern on May 2nd. Bittern was at Pick Mere on Jul 9th and Cattle Egret at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 29th. Two Ospreys were at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 29th with singles noted at several other sites, Red Kites noted at several sites during the period with possible Black Kite at Whitley Reed on Jun 3rd. Eight Garden Warblers were at Marston on May 12th, six Whinchats at Frodsham Marsh on May 1st and a Channel Wagtail at Whitley Reed on Jun 25th.

Warrington area

Five Garganeys were at Woolston Eyes on Jul 30th and Aug 9th, a max 1015 Gadwalls here on Jul 12th with at least 13 broods of Pochards noted. 484 Swifts were over Woolston Eyes on May 12th,



Black-necked Grebes
by Phil Jones



Arctic Tern
by Jane Turner

Black-necked Grebes at Moore NR and Silver Lane Pools on Jul 12th with at least 18 broods noted at Woolston Eyes. A White-tailed Lapwing was briefly at Woolston Eyes on May 31st and Jun 1st otherwise a Grey Plover was here on Aug 20th, two Ruffs on Jun 30th, Sanderling on May 14th, 34 Dunlins on May 12th and two Wood Sandpipers on Jul 21st. Five Common Terns were at Woolston Eyes on May 7th with nine Arctic Terns on May 3rd and Spoonbill on May 28th. A pair of Marsh Harriers bred at Woolston Eyes, two Hobbies were at Risley Moss on May 15th and Woolston Eyes on Aug 2nd. 25 Tree Pipits recorded at Woolston Eyes during Aug.

Wirral area

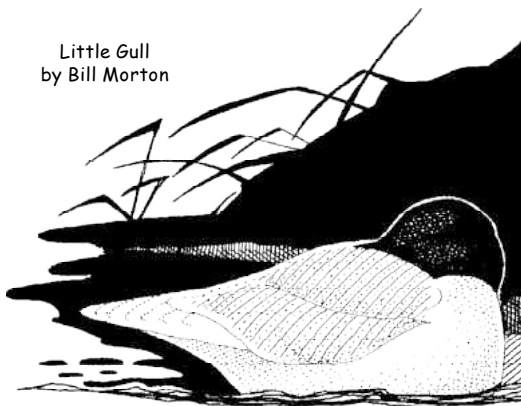
A Garganey was at Leasowe on May 2nd and 3rd and Common Scoter at Woodside on May 29th. Three Quails were at Heswall on Jul 17th and 18th. Waders included: 211 Whimbrels at Heswall on May 5th, 1060 Curlews at Heswall on Jul 10th, 5030 Black-tailed Godwits at Caldy on Aug 17th and 123 Turnstones at West Kirby Marine Lake on Aug 23rd. Single Curlew Sandpiper was at Heswall on May 15th then Hoylake, Leasowe and Meols May 16th to 17th and Hoylake Aug 31st, 80 Sanderlings at Hoylake on May 16th and Little Stint at Hoylake on Aug 15th. 120 Kittiwakes were at Hilbre on May 12th, Little Gull at Heswall and Meols on various dates and 15 Mediterranean Gulls at Thurston on Jul 11th. 750 Sandwich Terns were at Hilbre on Aug 23rd, six Little Terns on Jul 20th and 100 Common Terns on Jul 24th, six Arctic Terns were off Meols on May 4th, two Roseate Terns at Leasowe on Jul 29th and Black Tern at Hoylake on May 16th and six Arctic Skuas at Hilbre on Jul 20th and 25th.

Three Guillemots were off Hilbre on May 12th, a Red-throated Diver on Aug 7th, possible Balearic Shearwater on May 12th, 160 Manx Shearwaters on Jul 25th and c300 Gannets on the same day. 138 Little Egrets were at Heswall on Aug 21st. Ospreys were over Leasowe on May 5th; Meols on May 21st; New Brighton on May 30th and Wallasey on four dates, three Red Kites were over New Brighton on Jul 17th. A Willow Tit was at Hoylake on Jun 24th, Ring Ouzel at Leasowe on May 2nd, two Spotted Flycatchers at Hoylake on May 16th, Pied Flycatcher at Leasowe on May 11th and Black Redstart at Barnston on Aug 2nd. Elsewhere at least six Whinchats were at Leasowe on May 5th, Channel Wagtail at Leasowe on May 9th and 21st, seven Rock Pipits at Hilbre on Jul 23rd and two Crossbills at Hoylake on Aug 23rd.

Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 2SG
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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.

Little Gull
by Bill Morton



Note: the copy date for the next issue is 11th February 2023 - 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.

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*.

County Rarities

PALLAS'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus proregulus*

It's late autumn and your attention is drawn to a mixed tit flock coming towards you. There is always the hope that they will have picked up passengers like Chiffchaffs, Treecreepers, Goldcrests and perhaps something rarer. Then you catch a subliminal glimpse of a mossy-green bird with wing-bars and striking white underparts. Just as you are thinking "could this be a Firecrest" it hovers and flashes a yellow rump at you and you know instantly that you are looking at the smallest *Phylloscopus*, a Pallas's Warbler. Exactly this sequence of thoughts went through my mind when I was lucky enough to be visited by a Pallas's Warbler whilst standing in my kitchen unpacking shopping. Some birds take long and painstaking observation to 'nail' the identity, others are nearly instantaneous. This minuscule warbler is definitely in the latter category!



With longer observation you might see the gold fore-supercilia, which when viewed face on give rise to one of its Asian names - Golden-faced Warbler and of course the distinctive central crown stripe. Yellow-browed Warblers can also show a weak crown strip, but to me they always look more like a Chiffchaff in shape and less mossy-green and white than Pallas's. There are other similar species in SE Asia, but in a European context, the yellow rump is diagnostic. As well as being barely bigger and much the same 'all head' shape as a Goldcrest, (i.e noticeably smaller than a Yellow-browed Warbler), Pallas's Warblers feed in just the same manner as a Goldcrest - restless, mobile and hovering frequently, especially under leaves as they pick off aphids.

Unlike Yellow-browed Warbler, whose call is incredibly loud, high pitched, distinctive, and almost always announces its presence before you see it, the call "djeeet" of Pallas's Warbler doesn't carry so far, is surprisingly low pitch for the size of the bird, and easily overlooked as a contact call of a finch.

Jane Turner, County Recorder

PALLAS'S WARBLER: CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL STATUS

First recorded on 25th November 1980 when a bird was trapped and ringed in a Bidston Hill garden. At that time, reports of Pallas's Warbler were of sufficient rarity nationally to be considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) which accepted this record for Nov 25th and 26th. There were no further appearances until 1988 when BBRC accepted the record of a bird at Moreton on Oct 28th.

By the time of the next sightings, Pallas's Warblers were occurring with enough frequency nationally to be considered mere 'scarcities' and reported on annually in *British Birds* 'Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain'. Single (and different) birds on Hilbre on 31st Oct and visiting a Hoylake garden from 9th to 11th Nov 1997 were much admired. Birders were able to get over to Hilbre to see the bird and, according to the *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report* commenting on the Hoylake bird, "the generosity of the householders allowed c60 birders to enjoy often excellent views".

There was another lengthy passage of time before 2005 saw the first (and, so far, only) Cheshire, rather than Wirral, record. On Jan 29th an alert birder at Crossley near Congleton tracked down a bird making a call unfamiliar to him and identified a Pallas's Warbler. The bird remained in the area of a hedgerow below a railway embankment where it was seen by a good number of birders until at least Feb 19th, although the County Report and the BB 'scarce migrant report' has Feb 9th as the last date.

Quite remarkably, the next sighting, on Nov 7th 2010, was of a bird caught at the same site, by the same person who caught Cheshire and Wirral's first in 1980!

The only subsequent record is at Heswall Sewage Works, where a bird present from 2nd to 13th Jan 2016 was loosely associating with wintering Chiffchaffs.

Birds visiting 'mainland' Britain are found in variable numbers annually, the large majority along the east coast in late autumn. The brevity of the above list shows how infrequently individuals are found in Cheshire and Wirral. Nationally, decadal means of the number of records from 1970 to 2019 have been 9, 39, 83, 90 and 57 respectively. Against the background of an increasing number of records, 1980 and 1988, the years of our first two records, both had the second highest annual totals nationally in that decade at 22 and 63 respectively. In 1997, when C&W had two records, the BB 'scarce migrant report' for the year noted "an unprecedented number in Britain" with 170 records nationally. The Jan/Feb 2005 wintering bird followed the second highest total on record nationally, 199 in 2004. In both 2010 and 2015, when the Heswall wintering bird of early 2016 presumably arrived in the country, the numbers of records nationally were 79 and 76 respectively, both comfortably exceeding the decadal mean.

The Cheshire and Wirral status of Pallas's Warbler appears to be 'very rare late autumn vagrant and even rarer winter visitor' and an appearance in the county appears, in the main, to be dependent on the arrival of above average, possibly exceptional, numbers on the east coast.

Steve Barber

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 (VERY) LATE REPORT

A few weeks ago, when I was searching in the British Newspaper Archive for a local history research project, by chance I came across this record of a late Swallow, in the *Glossop Record* of Saturday 19th November 1859: "On Saturday last, the 12th inst, a swallow was seen flying about Walker Brow stone quarries, in the township of Kettleshulme, near Whaley Bridge, appearing as lively and buoyant as if it had been the month of July. How it had survived the late inclement weather is a mystery, as others of its tribe have migrated about seven or eight weeks ago."

Although Kettleshulme is in Cheshire, the Walker Brow stone quarries are now in Derbyshire, at approximately SK002804, since the county boundary was moved from the River Goyt westwards in 1936. It is my understanding, though, that historic records remain with the boundaries that existed at the date of the observation, so this will remain a Cheshire, not a Derbyshire, record.

David Atkinson

GREY HERONS NESTING AMONG BULRUSH

Recommend this article written by David Norman, Richard Castell, Andy Harmer and John Marchant, published in *British Birds* 115, August 2022, 452-455.

Abstract: Grey Herons *Ardea cineres* typically nest colonially in trees, although ground-level nesting is known from across the species' range, primarily within beds of Common Reed *Phragmites australis*. A herony of between six and ten nests in a bed of Bulrush *Typha latifolia* in Cheshire, active from 2013 onwards, is one of extremely few examples of a colony documented in such habitat.

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 July to early October 2022

The summer and early autumn of 2021 was a record for Hilbre in lots of respects: numbers of birds ringling, variety of species and number of visits made to the island by observatory members. There was a small reduction in number of visits by members in 2022, 6%, but a massive reduction in numbers of birds ringling, 71%. The scarce/rare birds found in 2021 did not materialise in 2022, although a Yellow-browed Warbler did turn up at the start of October. Yellow-browed Warbler was missing from the ringling list in 2021 despite Hilbre appearing to be a magnet for these Siberian vagrants in the recent past. Despite no Yellow-browed Warblers, 2021 was a special year for number and variety of birds arriving on Hilbre and the increase in ringling numbers that year was probably just a consequence of that increase.

A juvenile Stonechat was caught in July which was almost certainly a bird undertaking post-juvenile dispersal, unlike the juvenile Song Thrush, Blackbird, Wren, Rock Pipit and Linnets that were the results of successful breeding on the island. The Rock Pipits have now bred successfully on the island for several years without interruption. This species has an interesting breeding record on Hilbre when looked at from the point of view of past records. The earliest records, from 1900, implied that they were on the island group all the time, the records from 1941 supported this to some extent but the 1980s had no records. The more recent past has seen a period of two years where there was breeding, and then a gap of a few years before the current successful breeding period has taken place. The work on the island will continue to try to establish the factors that control this on and off breeding approach.

2021 was the best ever year for Linnets breeding on Hilbre; 131 Linnets were ringling that year with 38 being ringling in the period July to early October. In 2022 only six Linnets were ringling in that same period. These numbers on first inspection look disastrous, however, they are difficult to reconcile with the recent observations of large flocks of Linnets, of the order of 70 birds, being recorded regularly on the islands. It will be important to assess the situation next year.

Like other birdwatchers, the observatory members see the recording of colour-ringed birds as very important. In 2022 a colour-flagged Sandwich Tern was seen on Hilbre in August which turned out to have been ringling in Cemlyn Bay, Anglesey. Hilbre is a mecca for Sandwich Terns in the summer and it is always interesting to get information where they come from. Another colour-ringed sighting in August was a Cormorant, we are still waiting for the data on this bird.

It seems fitting to finish this record of a disappointing summer on Hilbre with one more disappointment, a bird that got away. On 1st September a white budgerigar was recorded on the island but we could not catch it!

John Elliott, on behalf of Hilbre Bird Observatory

MID-CHESHIRE BARN OWL GROUP

Barn Owl breeding for 2022 is coming to an end and it's good to be able to report that things are looking quite good. Current figures are very similar to last year (giving an estimate of around 150-160 breeding pairs overall in Cheshire). That also means we've had around six years of consistent breeding activity. But we shouldn't get complacent. Barn Owls main prey (voles, shrews, etc) have, or should have, 4/5 year breeding cycles. I repeat 'should' have such a cycle, but that seems to have been disrupted of late. So we shouldn't be surprised if we get a poor year any time soon.

Details of this years breeding activity has also highlighted larger brood sizes and less failed broods - good news all round. Further good news for Barn Owls (so far), but perhaps not so good for other bird life, is that we have found no obvious signs of bird flu deaths within the Cheshire Barn Owls. Fingers crossed in this respect, because we have no obvious controls over this desperate disease at the moment.

There are other disruptions in the coming years for Barn Owls in Cheshire which we do have some degree of control over; these relate to the HS2 railway and the HyNet hydrogen pipeline. We have contact with both which, if/when these go ahead, will mean the closure (some temporarily and some permanently) of many of our boxes (probably over 300). But at least we will have a say where the equivalent number of mitigation boxes will be sited.

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

CHESHIRE SWAN STUDY GROUP

Since my last report in June we have ringed a total of 40 swans including 33 cygnets one of which was a Polish cygnet, 4 second-year and 3 adults.

With Avian Influenza confirmed at Congleton, Doddington and Middlewich and elsewhere, the Swan Study Group ceased ringing again in mid-September.

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

- Acre Dell Pools, nr Congleton: 42 on 3rd Jun and 20 on 4th Sep.
- Bottom Flash, Winsford: 113 on 26th Jun, 126 on 8th Jul and 30 on 21st Sep.
Swans were moved here from Spike Island due to lack of water there.
- Comber Mere, nr Whitchurch: 9 on 14th Aug and 9 on 11th Sep.
- Doddington Mere, nr Nantwich: 70 on 21st Jun, 77 on 26th Jul, 86 on 23rd Aug and 90 on 13th Sep.
- Sankey Valley CP, Warrington: 15 on 17th Jul, 16 on 14th Aug and 13 on 11th Sep.
- Spike Island, Widnes: 16 on 21st Sep.
- Woolston NR, Warrington: 18 on 11th Sep.

Movements:

CNP3(G) was ringed as a female cygnet on 7-10-06 at Bowden Hall pool, near Alsager. Seen on 16-5-21 at Acre Dell pools near Congleton = 8kms. Also seen on 23-5-22 on the river Clwyd, Rhyl = 84kms.

CSH3(G) was ringed as a male cygnet on 12-8-21 at Wychwood GC, Weston, Crewe. Seen on 13-12-21 at Spike Island, Widnes = 40kms. Also seen on 23-5-22 on the river Clwyd, Rhyl = 79kms.

CPX2(G) was ringed as a female cygnet on 30-9-20 at Hankelow Mill, near Audlem. Seen on 23-5-22 on the River Clwyd, Rhyl = 75kms.

CSA7(G) was ringed as a female cygnet on 19-11-20 on the Trent and Mersey Canal at Middlewich. Seen on 23-5-22 on the River Clwyd, Rhyl = 72kms.

Longevity Report

CL11(G) ringed as a third-year male on 5-7-05 on the River Dee in Chester seen 22-9-22 at Sandymoor, Runcorn = 20kms, aged 20 years.

Website: <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 Tel: 01270 567526 Email: cheshireswans@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 have enjoyed the good weather this year, makes a change from our usual summers, some days made going for a walk with the binos an effort. Here at Weaverham we have had a mixed year bird wise. Starlings, Blackbirds, House Sparrows, Greenfinches, Robins, Blue and Great Tits have all managed to fledge young and Long-tailed Tits have also done very well. No Goldfinch fledgelings this year although the rearing cycle coincided with the hottest spell. We have two pairs of Ravens in the area one with three juveniles and the other pair with four juveniles; I feel they must have nested at the TATA site at Winnington. Buzzards are bunching up early this year; some days there have been ten riding the same thermal over the village, much to the Ravens' distaste.

A gamekeeper friend in the Breckland area of Norfolk has reported a good year with wild Grey Partridges, although he has a good population of Red-legged Partridges, chicks have been few and far between. He has also had a good year with Stone Curlews and Nightjars, lucky so and so. He states the Pinkfeet are starting to mob up on the coast around the Wash; he thinks they may be early to reap the benefit of the thousands of acres of cabbage and cauliflowers being left to rot as they have no one to pick them.

I have noticed large numbers of Pinkfeet flying both west and east at a really good height, many being heard before managing to find them in the sky.

Before you say to yourselves "here he goes again" CORRECT "here he does go again" - we still have four areas that are without a Conservation Rep. I am thinking of getting Jane to place conservation reps on the rarities list and putting up a box of doughnuts as a prize for any person who sees one. The same four people are the only names we see in *Bird News* who fight the cause for the society. I am aware that everyone is feeling the financial pinch and does not have much spare time. This task does not take up much time a week just keep an eye on the local papers for any issues and to be a contact point for other members, who they can contact if they see something that causes concern. If something is flagged early enough it then gives everyone who needs to be aware to get involved before the planning application is approved by the local authorities, by which time it is usually too late. As we are all aware unless someone stands up to be counted it is all over and too late, the old saying "to be forewarned is to be forearmed" is very true. It is all very well saying after plans have been passed, why wasn't that objected to if no one tells us in the first place. The Society needs the heads up. Someone has to stick their head above the parapet, and I am prepared to do that, I spent all my working life sticking my nose in where it was wanted, I am still prepared to do that but we need members to let us know what is going on in their own areas. As we all know if a piece of land is big enough to build a small hen shed on someone will want to build four houses, and if no one objects plans will be passed.

Whilst you are out and about please keep an eye open for poisoned baits being left out for corvids and raptors. If you do see something that does not look right, go with your gut instinct BUT PLEASE do not touch suspect baits or dead animals and birds - report it to the Police, some of these poisons are absorbed through the skin and will not just make you ill they will KILL. Leave it to the POLICE to deal with. They have trained personnel.

I promise that I won't moan again if someone is prepared to stand up and be counted. I hope you all have a good winter and get that lifer you need on your list. As for Christmas, guesses what I want. Answers on a plain piece of paper and sent up the chimney.

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

VALE ROYAL AREA

I was hoping to give an update on the Rudheath Lime Beds application, but there is no further news as we go to press. I understand that they are currently trying to discharge conditions. The landowner has excavated two pools on adjacent farmland outside the red line boundary. I understand that this is in addition to the RSPB approved mitigation which will be developed post works. The new pools are not prime habitat, however, they are attracting some interesting species, Wood Sandpiper and Green Sandpiper to name two!!

Roy Leigh, Vale Royal Area Representative

WARRINGTON AREA

I am trying to get a large estate just to the west of Woolston designated as a Site of Local Importance to Nature Conservation (SLINC) based on its extraordinary population of breeding Swifts. At the time of the County Swift Survey that I organised in 1995/6 it was one of the best sites for breeding Swifts, only rivalled by a similar estate in Crewe. Since then, as we all know, Swift numbers have crashed across the UK. On the Westy estate, however, the numbers are very high and when I visited this summer it was like going back 30 years so numerous were the Swifts. A man called Carl Green, who used to live on this estate, has been monitoring the numbers there for a while and also making and erecting Swift boxes. I joined him there on a couple of occasions this summer and over 100 Swifts were screaming above just three or four streets with others seen over other parts that we didn't have the time to visit. In early July Swifts were entering many nest holes feeding young and Carl's final count of occupied nests exceeded 50. Some houses held up to five breeding pairs. Given that this was only in a few streets the breeding numbers on the rest of the estate are almost certainly much higher. Carl and I engaged with many local residents, most of whom love the Swifts, many agreeing to have nest boxes on their properties. Why this estate stands out from much of the country is not entirely clear but the houses built in the 1930s have eaves that Swifts like with only small numbers having uPVC soffits and facias that exclude Swifts. The other factor could well be the abundant insect numbers over Woolston Eyes where large numbers gather to feed.

I have prepared a submission to send to Cheshire Wildlife Trust to consider, with others, local designation for the Westy Estate and its extraordinary population of Swifts. The initial response has been positive. Apparently, the people who make decisions about local designations only meet quarterly, the next one being in December, so we shall have to wait until then before we hear anything.

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
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Wirral	Richard Smith, March Wall, King's Drive North, Caldy, Wirral, CH48 1LL. Tel: 0151 625 2320 Email: richard@deestuary.co.uk

Species Spotlight

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

The Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* is in trouble with long-term declines right across its range, but particularly in the British Isles. In Ireland, the loss of 95% of breeding Curlews since the 1970s is a shocking statistic. But the United Kingdom is still a vitally important area for this species and currently holds 58,500 breeding pairs, which is a quarter of the total population, as well as 125,000 wintering birds. Thus the UK is of very high global importance for Curlews, and I quote Brown et al. “the Curlew should be considered the UK’s highest conservation priority bird species”. That was written in 2015 and a lot of research and work in the field has been carried out since, see the Reference and Further Reading Sections below for details.

Here in Cheshire and Wirral we still have a small population of breeding Curlews but it is our two estuaries which are of National Importance for this species and whose combined total approaches that for the whole of The Wash. In addition, there are several hundred Curlews which appear to spend the whole of the non-breeding season inland. So what follows is a summary of the status of the Curlew in Cheshire and Wirral whilst putting it into a national and historical perspective, plus some details of their movements to and from our area.

Breeding

The Cheshire and Wirral Atlas (published in 2008) says “In the last century, the Curlew has waxed and waned as a breeding bird in the county, but is now definitely waning”, and that is undoubtedly still true today. There was a time, from around 1940 to 1965, when breeding Curlews increased significantly and they could be found in much of central and south-west Cheshire as well as the eastern hills, but since then there has been a steady decline. The Atlas states that the number of tetrads with confirmed or probable breeding had dropped to 67 from 149 twenty years previously, and the number of breeding birds to 180 from around 300 pairs previously. The map in the Atlas shows that most of the remaining breeding birds can be found all along the eastern hills with all the confirmed breeding tetrads close to the Derbyshire border, in addition the map also showed there were still a few pairs breeding in the south of the county close to the Welsh and Shropshire borders.

The current status of breeding Curlews in Cheshire is unclear as records in recent *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Reports* have been sparse, to say the least. The last survey work mentioned was undertaken by Natural England in 2015 “.... survey located three breeding pairs at Sparbent and four pairs at Tagsclough Hill. Display and singing were also noted at: Cat & Fiddle; Danebower; Lyme Park CP; Macclesfield Forest.” Reports since then typically only mention two or three breeding records annually and this surely vastly under records the true figure.

The birds breeding in Cheshire are on the south-west edge of much larger numbers. It is estimated that 30,000 pairs breed in England of which the large majority are to the east and north of our eastern hills, namely in: Peak District National Park; Forest of Bowland; Yorkshire Dales National Park; North York Moors National Park and North Pennines AONB [Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty].

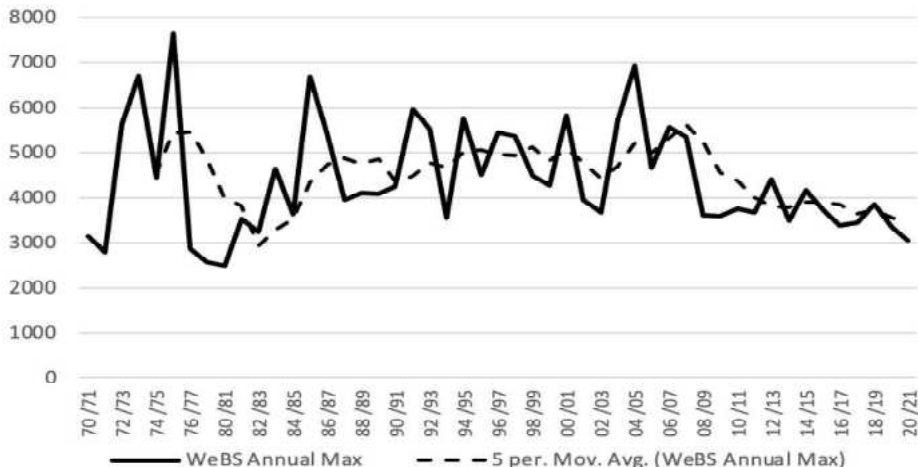
Two bits of good news to finish with. Firstly, is another quote from the *C&W Atlas*: “the breeding population of the South Pennine Moors SPA, of which the Cheshire moors are a part, showed a 31% rise between 1990 and 2004-05”. Secondly, is some data from the BTO *BBS 2021 Report* showing trends for England. The 25-year trend does show a 29% decline but for the 10-year trend there is an **increase** of 2% and for the two-year trend there is an increase of 6%. Thus it would seem that breeding numbers in England have now stabilised, unfortunately the trends for Scotland and Wales continue to show substantial declines with, for example, a 10-year decline of 43% in Wales.

Dee and Mersey Estuaries

In 2019/20 the Dee Estuary was the third most important site in the country for Curlews with a max count of 3,360 - just ahead of the Thames Estuary on 3,148 and below The Wash with 6,903

and Morecambe Bay with 8,577. Over the 50 years of WeBS (Wetland Bird Survey) the top four order of sites of importance hasn't changed, apart from the Thames and the Dee swapping third and fourth places every few years.

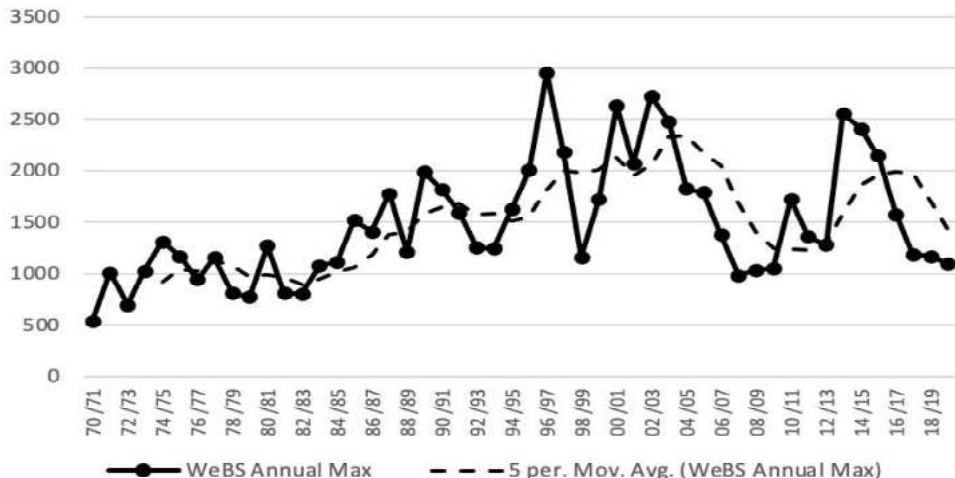
Dee Estuary WeBS Curlew Annual max 1970 to 2021



Despite quite big variations in the year-to-year maximum the trend shown in the above graph is similar to the national trend. After an initial drop in numbers in the 1970s the shooting ban in 1981 led to a sharp increase through the 1980s, followed by a plateauing out. Nationally, a decline set in right at the beginning of this century, whilst on the Dee a decrease in counts wasn't really apparent until around 2008. The decline in numbers is thought to be due to two factors - firstly it reflects the poor breeding productivity over the past several decades* and, secondly, it is thought that some continental breeding birds are short-stopping due to the milder winters, and it seems that Curlew counts on the Waddensea have remained steady, or even increased, during the period of decline in the UK.

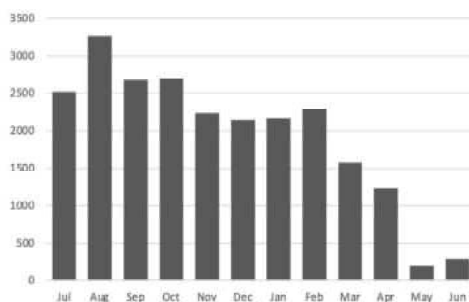
* the decline in breeding productivity, particularly very poor chick survival, is thought to be mainly due to habitat change because of intensive farming. Adult survival appears to be good.

Mersey Estuary WeBS Curlew Annual Max 1970 to 2019

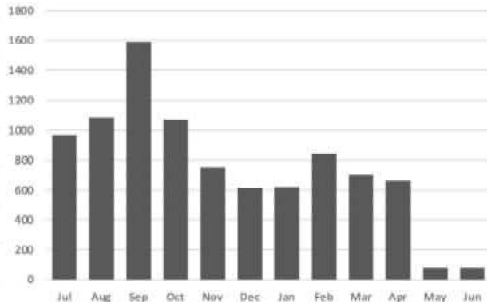


The Mersey Estuary has always had less Curlews than the Dee but most years counts are still of national importance. The current five-year average (2019/20) is 1,502 and higher than the Great Britain threshold of 1,200. Year-to-year counts on the Mersey tend to be more erratic than on the Dee but the overall trend is similar, apart from an unexpected peak from 2013 to 2016. One thing that is obvious and worrying for both estuaries is the downward trend of the past few years.

**Curlew average monthly distribution
2014/15 to 2018/19 Dee Estuary**



**Curlew average monthly distribution
2014/15 to 2018/19 Mersey Estuary**

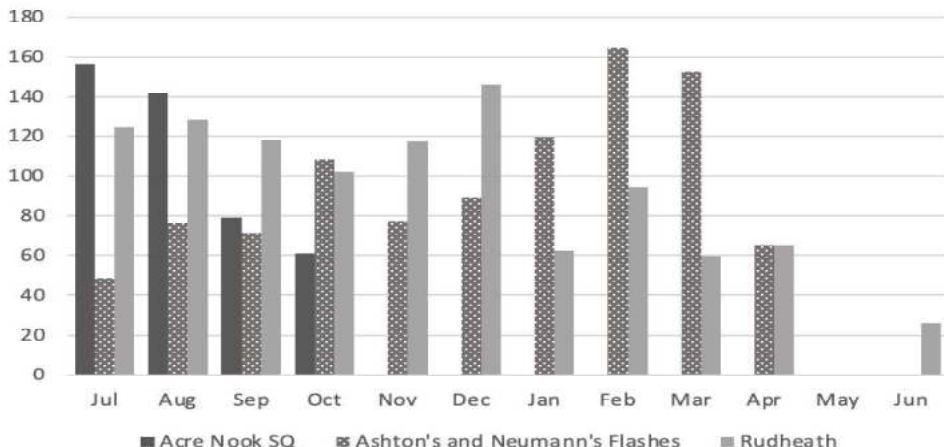


The average monthly distributions for both estuaries are similar to each other and to the national average distribution. There is a double peak, one in autumn and another in late winter, and the mid-winter dip is likely due to birds moving either west to Ireland or further south before returning in February. However, these charts showing the average do disguise some quite big year-to-year differences, particularly on the Mersey. For example, in September 2014 2,436 were on the Mersey, whereas less than half that number were present in September 2018 (1,171). April counts are even more variable with 1,460 in April 2016 but only 106 in April 2019. As British breeding birds will be on territory in April these Curlew will be continental breeders which presumably are passing through quite quickly and thus the peak passage is not always picked up by the WeBS count.

Inland Roosts

It was Dennis Elphick, writing in the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* in 1979, who first drew our attention to the fact that several hundred Curlews spend their whole time inland in the middle of Cheshire during the non-breeding season. Having recently moved into the area he was intrigued by the flocks he saw feeding in the fields and eventually tracked down where they were roosting.

**Curlew Inland Roost sites – Cheshire
Average of monthly max 2014/15 to 2020/21**



This wasn't easy as the Curlews had chosen a lime-bed complex used by ICI which was not visible from adjacent roads and permits had to be sought to get in. The site the Curlews were using 40 years ago was Rudheath Lime Beds and it is still used by them today, along with several other locations including the nearby Neumann's and Ashton's Flashes, and Acre Nook Sand Quarry near Chelford.

The bar chart shows the average monthly distributions for the past seven years for these three sites. It is interesting that the sites seem to have different distributions from that of Acre Nook SQ only used from July to October. That may be suggesting that it is particularly attractive to local birds (i.e. those breeding on the Pennines) as a first stop after breeding, which then move on before winter - but we don't really know.

Max counts this century have been: 292 at Acre Nook SQ on 19/09/2006; 420 at Ashton's and Neumann's Flashes on 28/11/2010; 266 at Rudheath Lime Beds in December 2020. Numbers are likely to be under estimates as many Curlews using these roosts are likely to fly in after dusk and fly out at first light when few, if any, birders are present to count them.

Movements and Migration

I used to assume that all of the Curlews I was seeing on the Dee Estuary were birds which had flown down from the fells of the Pennines where they had bred. But that was until the past few years when we have recorded two Curlews colour-ringed in Finland and it turns out that large numbers migrate to this country from the continent, and in particular Finland where the breeding population is thought to be stable, perhaps increasing, at around 80,000 pairs. This migration is confirmed by the new *Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas* (Ref. 10) which shows a very strong north-east to south-west movement and this is particularly noticeable between Finland and the British Isles.

Cheshire and Wirral Curlews

Numbers and locations of where birds have been ringed and/or found:

7	Lancashire and Yorkshire
1	Shropshire
6	Finland
3	Denmark
2	Sweden
1	Germany
1	Russia

As shown in the table above there have been a total of 21 Curlews which have either been ringed in Cheshire and Wirral and found elsewhere, or ringed elsewhere and found here. That is over a period of around 60 years so is a very small sample but, compared with figures for the whole country, it seems to give us a surprisingly reasonable guesstimate of where our birds come from. Seven from Lancashire and Yorkshire are likely to be birds breeding on the Pennines, and one is from Shropshire where a smaller number of birds breed. For the whole of the British Isles birds from Finland comprise almost 40% of the total ringing recoveries and for Cheshire and Wirral those from Finland comprise 46% of 'foreign' birds - a good correlation given the small sample. The breeding population in Denmark is small so those Curlews recorded there were probably ones which were flying to, or from, Sweden or Finland. Germany does have a sizeable population so one from there is not unexpected. Russia also has a large number of breeding birds, although most fly much further south of the British Isles to spend the winter and the one recorded near Smolensk in April 2002 (ringed in Lostock Gralam in Feb 1981) is one of the only 17 from the UK which have been found in Russia.

Another way of trying to understand where our Curlews come from is to look at the monthly distributions, particularly for the larger number which visit the Dee Estuary. Females leave the nesting area in June leaving males to look after the young, but we don't see any significant arrival of returning birds until right at the end of June and into July - and these are just as likely to be those from the continent as from northern England. It is said that some British breeding birds move south for the winter, although ringing evidence for that is rather sparse. Certainly a lot move further west to Ireland. The Curlew map in the *Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas*

indicates that most of the ringing returns in Ireland come from breeding areas within the UK (particularly the Pennines) so that suggests UK breeding birds are more likely to migrate to Ireland rather than continental breeding birds. By March, most British breeding birds will be on territory so those Curlews recorded in March and April on our estuaries will be moving further east to breed, mainly to Finland. A look at the Dee Estuary distribution for April, likely to be all Continental breeders, shows over half the number present in February - so a reasonable estimate of the ratio of British to Continental breeders on our estuaries would be approximately 1:1.2.

Final Comments

There's no doubting that the situation in some areas of the Curlew's range is pretty dire - the island of Ireland being an extreme example. Steep declines in lowland England as well as in Wales and Scotland are also very worrying. Poor chick survival is the main driver of this decline and currently a lot of research is being carried out in order to find out the precise causes in order to reverse it. In the meantime the chicks are being given a helping hand by schemes such as head starting although that can only ever be a temporary solution.

However, there is some cause for optimism. Curlews breeding in northern England seem to be maintaining their numbers, whilst in Finland, the most important country for this species, breeding numbers may actually have increased in recent years. Ringing shows that these two areas are the source for most of the birds which spend their time in Cheshire and Wirral from July to April so, hopefully, we can enjoy the sight and sound of these magnificent birds for many years to come.

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2. David Brown, *et al.*, The Eurasian Curlew - the most pressing bird conservation priority in the UK?, *British Birds* November 2015 (vol 108).
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5. Records database maintained by CAWOS.
6. *Breeding Bird Survey Report 2021*, BTO. <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/breeding-bird-survey-report/breeding-bird-survey-2021>
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8. Kleefstra R, *et al.*, *Migratory birds in: Wadden Sea Quality Status Report (2022)*, <https://qsr.waddensea-worldheritage.org/reports/migratory-birds>
9. Dennis Elphick, An inland flock of Curlews *Numenius arquata* in mid-Cheshire, England, *Wader Study Group Bulletin* 26: 31-35 (1979).
10. *The Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas (2022)*, <https://migrationatlas.org/>
11. Call of the Curlew Website, Conserving breeding Curlews in southern and lowland Britain, <https://www.curlewcall.org/>

Further Reading:

For those wanting to know more about Curlews and what is being done to try and reverse their decline I can't recommend these two websites too highly. Graham Appleton's Wadertales Blog is a mine of information about waders generally - just put in the search box the species name you want to read about. There have been several articles about Curlews written in 2022.

The Curlew Recovery Partnership was launched in 2021 and is an umbrella organisation providing co-ordination and support to those engaged in Curlew conservation and has been set up with financial support from Defra. Their website is crammed full of information about Curlews and the work being done to help them.

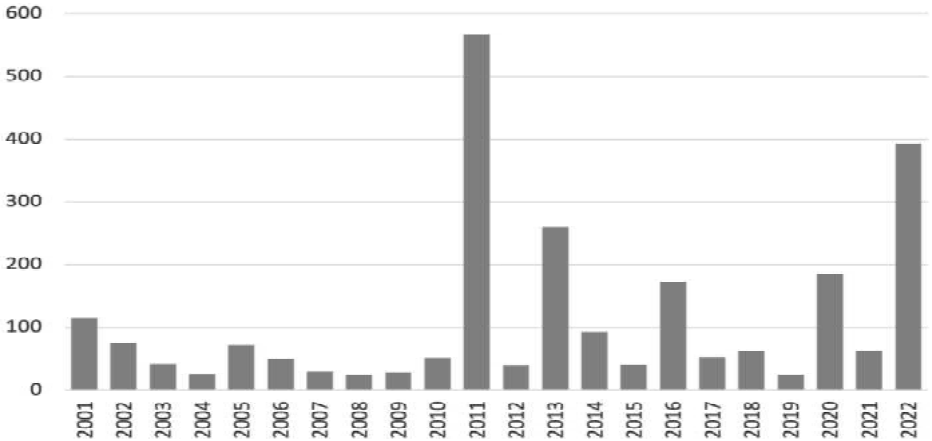
1. Graham Appleton, Wadertales Blog: <https://wadertales.wordpress.com/>.
2. Curlew Recovery Partnership England: <https://www.curlewrecovery.org/>.

**Richard Smith (article first published on the Dee Estuary Birding website
<http://www.deeestuary.co.uk>)**

CURLEW SANDPIPER INFLUX 2022

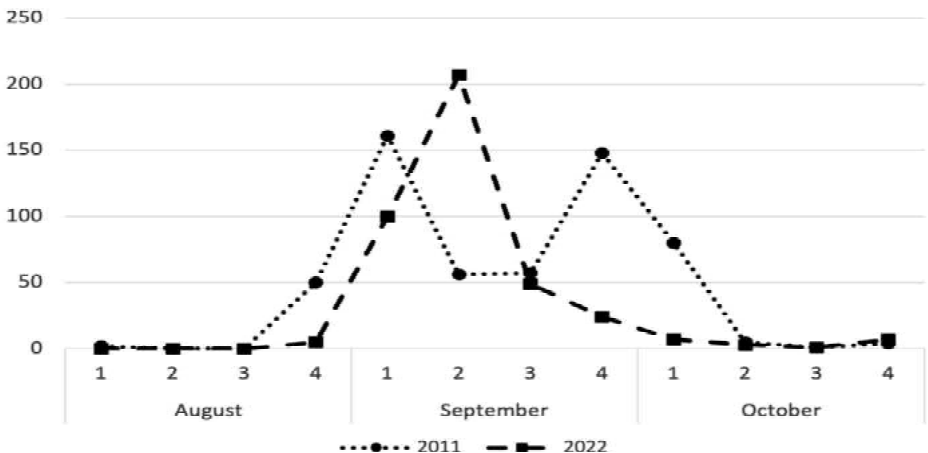
September 2022 saw one of the biggest influxes of Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* into the Dee Estuary this century. It started slowly with no birds recorded until one on August 27th at Oakenholt followed by singles at Hoylake and Burton Mere Wetlands (BMW) on the last day of that month. But then a fresh easterly wind started blowing and within a couple of days there were eight at Hilbre and seven at BMW, reaching 15 at the latter by September 5th. Numbers kept on increasing so that by the 11th there were 39 at BMW (a record high for that site) and the total for the estuary that day was 50. Numbers stayed high at BMW all the following week and there were still 11 there on the 18th. Five were at Oakenholt on the 25th but after that there were just ones and twos, mostly at BMW.

**Curlew Sandpiper totals of daily records 2001 to 2022
Dee Estuary/North Wirral**

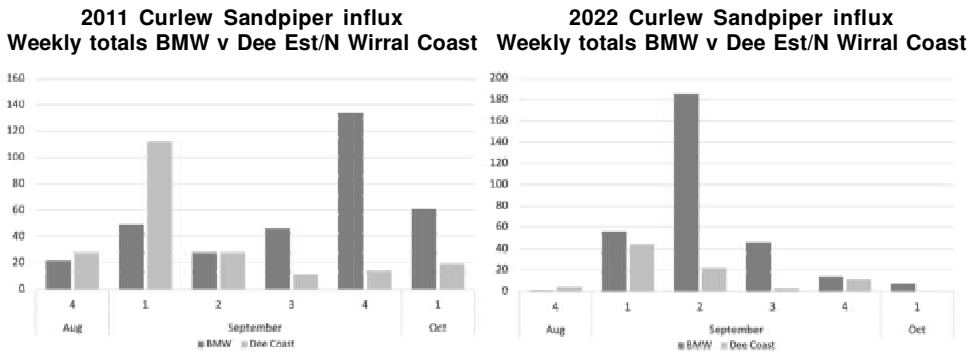


The past twelve years have been good for Curlew Sandpipers and, as you can see from the bar chart, the two best years were 2011 and 2022. Intriguingly, the weekly distribution for these two influxes was quite different with a double peak in 2011 and only one sharp peak this year.

**Curlew Sandpiper weekly totals 2011 and 2022
Dee Estuary/North Wirral**



Most years it is very noticeable that the first arrivals are found mostly on the coast with many at Hoylake as well as at West Kirby and Hilbre. After a week or two more birds are found at BMW and this is what happened in 2011 with the first peak consisting mainly of birds around the coast whereas for the second peak more were at BMW. 2022 was different with a large number of Curlew Sandpipers found at BMW throughout the passage and nearly 80% of records came from there. This is illustrated in the two bar charts below:



Juvenile Curlew Sandpipers arrive here after travelling west across the Arctic coast of Europe and down the west coast of Norway or through the Baltic. We get large influxes here both when there's been a good breeding season and also when a low pressure system in the Baltic blows them westwards. Different weather patterns may well account for the different weekly distributions above. In 2011 there was a light south-westerly wind here during the time when the birds were arriving in late August and early September and it is likely birds were arriving from the north having crossed westwards from Norway to Scotland. They would then be travelling down the coast when many arrived at Hoylake. Whether the same birds then made their way to BMW after a couple of weeks or a second wave arrived from the east is not clear. In 2022 there were only small numbers on the coast and it would appear the strong east winds at that time blew birds westwards across the country rather than from the north and thus they ended up at the east end of the estuary which is where BMW is. One reason for the build-up in numbers at BMW is that it is a good feeding area where birds tend to linger for several days, whereas on the coast they are more likely to pass through quickly.

Historical Records

A delve into the old bird reports and bird books has revealed some fascinating records. Although not on the Dee Estuary I've included Frodsham Marsh in this search as that site traditionally was the best in our area for the second half of the 20th century:

- The largest flock ever to be recorded on the Dee Estuary appears to have been around Shotton Lagoons and the nearby marshes in 1959. Like many old reports it's a bit vague on the exact numbers present but I quote T. Hedley Bell "In certain years large flocks appear..... and in 1959 when between 100 and 200 were seen in August and September at Shotton and the surrounding saltmarsh".

- Every few years there is a major influx into the UK and 1969 was one of those years, thought to be the biggest ever at that time. On the Dee Estuary the birds were very localised being almost exclusively at West Kirby at high tide and Meols at low tide where they "frequented areas of very fluid black ooze". 55 at the end of August had increased to 100 by September 14th which was the peak count. Small numbers lingered at Meols right through to November. Just one or two were seen elsewhere that year.

- Since the first *Cheshire Bird Report* was published in 1964 there has never been a year when no Curlew Sandpipers have been reported on the Dee Estuary. But there was only one in 1968, at Meols, and just singles in 1986 and 1989.

- The 1972 influx was very different and seemingly unprecedented! I can't find any reference to what happened anywhere except in the 1972 *Cheshire Bird Report*. What occurred was so unusual I would have thought it was worth at least a note in *British Birds*, but nothing. The influx started off with just ones and twos along the coast at the end of August, just like most years. But then:

Numbers then snowballed at the Weaver Bend (Frodsham Marsh) where there were 111 on 29th and 170 on 31st. Unlike previous 'invasions' a high proportion of the birds were adults, many with dregs of summer plumage and others in complete winter plumage. Rapidly fluctuating numbers subsequently appeared throughout September with 159 on September 9th and 80 on September 24th. Numbers were so variable with changes to the ratios of young to adult, summer to winter plumage so marked that it was evident that the birds were moving through rapidly. Movement ceased abruptly at the end of the month.

There are several remarkable things about this influx.

1. The max count of 170 on August 31st is the highest ever recorded for Frodsham Marsh (and for the whole of Cheshire and Wirral) since the first *Cheshire Bird Report* in 1964.
2. It was very local with only one or two Curlew Sandpipers recorded elsewhere in Cheshire and Wirral. Nationally I've not been able to find any indication of anything unusual. The Wetland Bird Survey for 1972 indicates a good passage nationally but nothing out of the ordinary.
3. The most remarkable occurrence was the large numbers of adult birds. Read any report or article on Curlew Sandpipers in the UK and they all say the same thing: Small numbers of adults are recorded at the end of July and beginning of August whereas juveniles are first seen at the end of August and through September and October when **adults are largely absent**. Nobody **ever** says in some years good numbers of adults are also seen!

A look at old weather maps indicate a high pressure system over the British Isles over the last 10 days of August 1972 with low pressure over the Baltic which then intensified over the Black Sea. Presumably there must have been a strong air flow from the south-east which diverted the birds from their normal migration route.

Winter records of Curlew Sandpipers are almost unheard of in this country but one or two do turn up occasionally including one at Meols on December 12th 1980. Records in March are also very unusual and presumably are birds returning early from Africa. Two were at Red Rocks on March 29th 1987 and one at Point of Ayr on March 6th 1992.

1988 saw another major influx into the country and was the subject of an article in *British Birds* (Sep 1989). September 10th saw the peak here with 134 at Frodsham Marsh, 50 at Point of Ayr and 45 at Heswall. 72 were at Heswall on September 14th.

1991 wasn't a major influx year but we did see the biggest flock ever recorded at Hilbre with 60 on September 9th.

Before the new sewage works was built at Heswall the mud there seemed to be particularly attractive to Curlew Sandpipers (better not ask what they were feeding on). 1996 saw large numbers there throughout September and early October peaking at a very high count of 108 on Sep 28th.

The migration in 2000 occurred early with high numbers concentrated within a five-day period from August 29th to September 2nd. During this period 70 were at Frodsham Marsh, 33 at Heswall, 30 at Hoylake and 25 at Parkgate.

More recent influxes have been detailed in Newsletters on this website [www.deeestuary.co.uk], referenced below:

References

1. Latest Sightings, Dee Estuary Birding, <http://www.deeestuary.co.uk/lsight.htm>.
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5. P.I. Stanley and C.D.T. Minton, The unprecedented westward migration of Curlew Sandpipers in autumn 1969, *British Birds* 65: Sept 1972.
6. J.S. Kirby, K.K. Kirby and S.J. Woolfall, Curlew Sandpipers in Britain and Ireland in autumn 1988, *British Birds* 82:9, 399-409.

7. Richard Smith, The Curlew Sandpiper Influx (2011), <http://www.deeestuary.co.uk/news1111.htm>
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**Richard Smith (article first published on the Dee Estuary Birding website
<http://www.deeestuary.co.uk>).**

Looking back.....

OSPREY 1998

First published on www.10x50.com

In birdwatching circles Tatton's Red Kite a couple of years ago is still famous because of its eighteen months stay. Remarkably this year, this has been equalled by an Osprey which spent the summer with us. Ospreys have been seen at Tatton in the past but always very briefly, the last one some years ago, even had a bench erected in its honour at the viewpoint from where it was seen. This summer's bird's favourite perch was the exact same branch as the previous ones. It was first seen catching a fish on Tatton Mere on 3rd June 1998 and later perched in a tree, eating its catch on the farmland.

Over the next few days it developed a daily routine, catching fish on Tatton mid-morning, mid-afternoon and early evening always approaching the mere from the east end of the park and eating its catch on the dead branch in the tree on the farmland behind the Old Hall. The best views were from the 'osprey bench'. Later in its stay it spent most of its time at Rostherne Mere only coming to Tatton to fish. Some spectacular views were had by many observers over the course of its stay. Its presence was phoned daily to Birdline and a steady stream of birdwatchers made their way to the bench. Most were lucky to see the Osprey; even a *Liverpool Daily Post* reporter running a story on the bird got some superb photos. The most impressive views though were those when it was fishing, flying along the length of Tatton Mere, pausing about 30m above the water, then plunging down, wing held back, feet outstretched. Sometimes it was fully submerged before flapping clear of the water with a fish gripped in its talons. Often it appeared to struggle with the weight of the fish; indeed Ospreys have been known to drown, pulled under by large fish! Most of the fish caught by the Tatton bird were roach weighing 1 - 2 lbs.

In the 1950s Ospreys returned to breed in Scotland at the famous Loch Garten site, protected by the RSPB. One and a half million people have been to view the birds at their eyrie. Now Scotland is graced with over 100 pairs of breeding birds and it is only a matter of time before they breed in England. The RSPB are currently involved in a release scheme at Rutland Water. Young chicks which have little chance in the wild are taken from the Scottish nests and re-introduced at Rutland in release pens. Here they are fed until able to fly, then set free ready to migrate to Africa for the winter. It is hoped these birds will return to Rutland to breed in later years.

Ospreys are not fully mature until about three years old so it is thought the Tatton bird was an immature which had not quite made it to Scotland. We know it is not a Rutland bird due to the lack of rings on its legs. Finally a quote from the *New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991* ".....observations in England, Wales and Ireland may involve passage birds, but evidence of birds summering in new areas is ever increasing and the habitat is often the forerunner of breeding attempts".

Darren Morris, Tatton Ranger

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 on www.cawos.org and again via emails to the membership.

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.



DECEMBER 2022

- 6 CAWOS 'SCOTLAND AND ITS NATURAL HISTORY' by Steve Lovall (Zoom)
- 9 SECOS 'FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA' by Gary Jones
- 10 KOS Leighton Moss RSPB, ring for details
- 11 SECOS Moore Nature Reserve, ring for details
- 15 KOS CHRISTMAS PARTY

JANUARY 2023

- 6 CAWOS 'SKYDANCERS' by Keith Offord (Zoom)
- 13 SECOS 'MYSTERIES OF BRITISH SEABIRDS' by Michael Potts
- 14 KOS Marshside RSPB and Martin Mere WWT, ring for details
- 15 SECOS WWT Slimbridge, ring for details
- 27 KOS Talk to be confirmed

FEBRUARY 2023

- 3 CAWOS 'THE PROS AND CONS OF ARTIFICIAL FEEDING OF WILD BIRDS' by Dr Alex Lees (Zoom)
10 SECOS 'THE HISTORY OF BIRDS IN ROCHDALE' by Dave Winnard
11 KOS Tatton Park, meet at Dog Lodge lay-by, off Mobberley Rd, at 9:30am
15 KOS 'GORDON YATES FILM NIGHT'
19 SECOS North Wales Coast, ring for details

MARCH 2023

- 3 CAWOS AGM followed by 'SHETLAND TO SCILLY: BIRDS OF THE BRITISH ISLES' by Ashley Grove (Zoom)
10 SECOS 'A SWIFT RECOVERY?' by Louise Bentley
12 KOS Pennington Flashes, ring for details
24 KOS 'CRANE SPOTTING' by Ashley Grove
26 SECOS RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands, ring for details

APRIL 2023

- 21-24 SECOS Weekend trip to Dorset, ring for details
22 KOS Great Orme followed by Conwy RSPB, ring for details
28 KOS AGM followed by 'SOUTH AFRICA' by Sheila Blamire
-

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
Currently held by Zoom, starting at 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@cawos.org**

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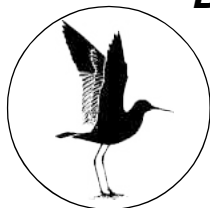
For further information, please contact:

Phil Hampson chairman@cwos.org 01625 260059

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 11th February 2023 - *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.

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'SCOTLAND & ITS NATURAL HISTORY' by Steve Lovell

ZOOM MEETING on 2nd DECEMBER 2022

***** 'SKYDANCERS' by Keith Offord *****

ZOOM MEETING on 6th JANUARY 2023

**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