



BIRD NEWS

Number 95

March 2014



County Rarity: Wryneck ID & Status

Ringling Report: Scottish Siskins & Mealy Redpolls

The Great Storm of December 2013!

BTO Breeding Peregrine Survey 2014 - help needed

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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: Buff-bellied Pipit by Ray Scally

Other illustrations by Phil Jones and Ray Scally

Guest Editorial

Invited by the Editor to write the Guest Editorial for *Bird News* Number 95, I had a strong feeling that my main theme would be weather related, but I decided that I'd have a look back to the last one I'd contributed - well, I didn't want to repeat myself. My last GE turned out to be for the November 2012 issue; we'd just suffered a particularly wet spring and summer and, apparently, the autumn hadn't been a lot better and my opening paragraph bemoaned the weather, its possible effects on breeding birds and the inconvenience it caused to birders. So much for not wanting to repeat myself!

It's been just impossible to ignore the weather and its effects this winter. It's not been a long icy blast from the north or east such as has hit in recent winters, in fact I don't recall a single hard frost in this part of Cheshire and the car windscreen has hardly required scraping this winter. Rather, Britain has been battered by a succession of storms, driving in from the Atlantic, bringing torrential downpours and gale-force winds, even exceeding 100 mph at their worst. People have lost their lives and evidence of the human misery caused by the flooding, damage to homes, buildings, infrastructure and the inundation of farmland has been shown daily, seemingly throughout the winter, on our media screens. Faced with that lot I'm not going to bemoan any inconvenience to birding! I am though going to ask whether we, as a nation, are doing what we can to help ourselves both in the short and the long term. Only this morning I read a *Guardian* article with the emotive heading "How we ended up paying farmers to flood our homes" and it's by no means the only article I've seen recently questioning the effects agricultural policy at EU and national levels has on the ability of farmland to hold rainwater. The points made in these articles seem logical to me but I'm nothing like an expert on the subject. However, this is 'just' one example of a possible own goal and it makes one wonder how many more there might be hidden in agricultural and other policies.

A larger question behind the weather this winter is whether it is due to 'natural' short-term fluctuation and/or climate change, or global warming solely or mainly due to the effects of mankind on our planet. The problems regarding doing anything truly effective about the latter on a world-wide scale seem insurmountable as the time to take effective action continues to run out. Having said that, I know that soon I'll be off in the car a couple of miles down the road to do a bit of birding on the patch.

Cheshire and Wirral appears to have got off relatively lightly in terms of storm damage this winter. In this issue of *Bird News* separate articles by Ray Eades and Richard Smith put into context and describe the effects of the December storm-driven tidal surge on the north Wirral coast and the Dee Marshes. It reminds me that some of my best birding memories were courtesy of weather patterns. In the same area covered by these two articles these include, in January 1983, a Guillemot resting on the shooting range embankment after a massive tide had swept across the marsh and in October of the same year watching storm-driven petrels and associated species in the Mersey mouth.

The mix of other items in this *Bird News* includes information on Scottish Siskins in east Cheshire, the identification and Cheshire and Wirral status of Wryneck, another evocative article in the 'One Man's Birding' series and a plea for a volunteer to fill the important role of CAWOS Membership Secretary very shortly to become vacant. Finally, I'd like to draw your attention to two worrying items in 'Conservation News' from Warrington and Wirral which reinforce the need for vigilance and awareness of the planning process and its possible effects on wildlife in general and birds in particular.

Steve Barber

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 21st June 2014 - 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.

County Rarities

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

It's been one of those early September days when a reported White-rumped Sandpiper at Frodsham has turned out to be a Curlew Sandpiper and although the wader flock of two Spotted Redshanks, Little Stints and Curlew Sandpipers made good viewing, as you walk back to the car along the thick hedged ditch and mud track, it does feel something of a wasted trip out. You reach a bend in the hedge and a movement catches your eye, something has flicked up off the ground and is sitting low down in the hedge, it is obscured by the thick vegetation but your first impression was that it was too small for a Song Thrush, and too big for a warbler, and you start to think it could be a shrike, but it's sitting there, in the middle of a bush perched across a horizontal branch. You move closer to try and get a better view and through the vegetation can get a silhouette of a short-billed but long-tailed bird, doesn't quite fit anything size-wise you can think of. Closer you spook the bird which exits out of the other side of the hedge and along it, but luckily it flies over the top of the hedge and lands in the grassy edge some 30 yards further. This time the bird is moving about on the ground, in the grass you have eyes on the obvious combination of mottled barred and grey upperparts, finely barred underparts, a wash to the upper breast, a dark stripe through the eye and a very obvious dark band running down the back of the tail. This means you have found a Wryneck. The bird is foraging with a slightly raised long tail blending in surprisingly well with the grasses and vegetation and when it takes flight again, the obvious barred tail is very evident and the flight action is quite direct with little undulation as it again melts into the centre of the hedge rather than perching on top.

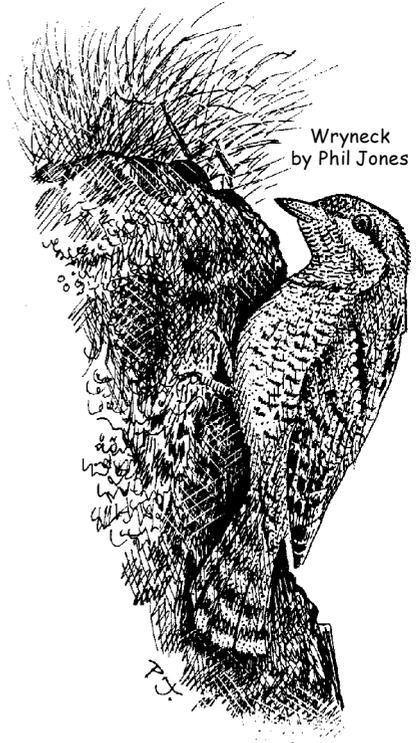
Wrynecks are not difficult to identify if seen well, but several species, such as juvenile Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush can be confusion species as can female Red-backed Shrike, the latter particularly in flight. Although classified as a woodpecker, Wrynecks spend most of their time on the ground foraging for ants and other insects, and never adopt that clinging to the side of a tree posture of other European woodpeckers, and just tend to perch crosswise on horizontal branches. They can be noisy if flushed, giving a harsh "teck" note as they fly away.

Hugh Pulsford

WRYNECK IN CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL

The Historical Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1875-1900 (Holloway, S. 1996) shows the county of Lancashire to have been the limit of the Wryneck's range in north-west England. In counties bordering Cheshire and Wirral, the *Historical Atlas* map shows it to have been 'occasional' in Lancashire, 'not breeding' in northern Derbyshire, 'extinct' in Denbighshire and Flintshire and 'rare' in Staffordshire and Shropshire. In Cheshire it was classed as 'not breeding' whereas it was 'occasional' in Wirral.

It would appear that even as long ago as the last quarter of the 19th century the Wryneck was contracting in range. *Birds in England* (Brown & Grice, 2005) quotes F.S. Mitchell from his *The Birds of Lancashire* (1885), where he wrote of its status in that county "once a common summer



Wryneck
by Phil Jones

visitor, now almost extinct". Brown & Grice go on to outline the gradual extinction of the Wryneck as a breeding bird in England by the early 1970s, with only occasional breeding subsequently, its English status becoming that of a spring and autumn passage migrant.

It might be tempting to think that, as it once was in Lancashire, so the Wryneck could also have been a common summer visitor to Cheshire. However, there seems to be little evidence to support that possibility. According to Coward and Oldham in *Birds of Cheshire* (1900) "the Wryneck is a scarce summer visitor to the north-west of England and has been but seldom observed in Cheshire". At that time two instances of nesting in the county were known; at Saughall Massie, date unknown but before 1854, and at Oakmere "about the year 1884". Coward and Oldham were unaware of any other occurrences within today's county boundaries. In 1910, when *The Fauna of Cheshire* was published, Coward gave details of two further sightings, the dates of which suggest passage birds. One was in a garden at Hartford Manor near Northwich in September 1899 (corrected in the *Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Committee Report* Mar-Apr 1922 from the originally stated July 1901) and on 9th September 1906 when one caught alive in a street lamp on the outskirts of Winsford, where it was thought to have been in pursuit of insects, was examined and released.

In his *The Birds of Cheshire* (1962) Hedley Bell summarised occurrences until 1906 and listed a further nine records. These appear to be a mixture of birds nesting and on passage. Presumed spring passage birds were at Oversley near Wilmslow on 12th April 1912, Mollington on 31st March 1938, Puddington on 6th April 1941, seen and heard calling at Crewe Hall on 9th April 1957 and at Ledsham on 21st April 1958. The only autumn bird was one at Lostock Gralam in September 1956 mentioned by A W Boyd in his *Guardian* 'Country Diary' with the comments "prodding for ants" in the flower bed of the railway station and "Wrynecks are a rarity in Cheshire nowadays". The breeding records are of a nest with eggs discovered at Upton near Macclesfield in May 1925, while *The Birds of the Liverpool Area* (Hardy, E. 1941) mentions nests with young at Thornton Hough in 1934 and at Bromborough in 1939. Boyd, after mentioning the 1934 record in that year's *L&CFC Report*, commented "rarely nests in the county".

Subsequent to the publication of Hedley Bell's *Birds of Cheshire, Cheshire (and Wirral) Bird Reports* have published a total of 26 Wryneck records with birds noted in 23 years. There are records in two years in the 1960s, six years in the 1970s, four years in both the 1980s and 1990s and in seven years of the present century. There have been single spring records in ten years with a date range from April 25th to June 15th. The 14 autumn records in 12 years have a date range from August 3rd to October 6th. Intriguingly, eight of the ten spring records were in the years from 1992, while 11 of the 14 autumn records were in the years from 1963 to 1984, although the other three have been in this century.

Two *Cheshire Bird Reports (CBR)* carry details of birds outside the presumed passage periods. The 1971 *CBR* has the following, repeated here in full: "We have received second-hand a report of a pair nesting at Chelford. This, said to be from a reliable source, would be a most important record if established. per R.R. Jackson." However, no further details appear to have become available to substantiate the record. The 1985 *CBR* has details of one in a garden apple tree at Pulford on the evening of June 27th and again early the next morning. The bird returned to the garden once again a fortnight later.

Except for the bird at Maw Green Tip on 5th and 6th May 2012, when it was heard singing, all the spring records are of one day stays only. In autumn birds remained at Red Rocks from 24th to 26th September 1976, Audlem from 27th September to 6th October 1978, Church Lawton from 8th to 11th September 2004 and Meols on 14th and 15th September 2010.

Only four of the modern (post 1962) passage records could be described as coastal: the Red Rocks and Meols autumn birds mentioned above, Hilbre's only record on 27th April 1992 and one in the garden of a seafront house at Hoylake on 5th September 2003. Several other of the 'modern' records are from well-watched 'hot-spots'. The Sandbach Flashes area has fared well with records in another two springs following its first at Watch Lane on 11th May 1996, while there are single records at Woolston on 25th April 2001 and one singing at Inner Marsh Farm on 4th May 2005 which made its way into the *Birds in Cheshire and Wirral: A breeding and wintering atlas* (Norman, 2008) as a 'possible' breeder.

The only modern Wirral record not previously mentioned is of a bird on the Wirral Way at Parkgate on 28th August 1980. Otherwise, sightings have been fairly well spread across Cheshire. Of the 24 modern passage records at least eight have been in gardens. In addition to the Hoylake bird mentioned above, garden birds have been reported from Alsager on 28th April 1978, on an Appleton patio on 13th May 1999, the long-staying Audlem bird which fed on ants, Chester on 22nd August 1977, on a Knutsford patio on 28th April 2006, Nantwich on 4th September 1968 and one released from a greenhouse at Willaston on 1st September 1974.

Other sightings were reported from Danes Moss on 27th August 1984, Elton Hall Flash on 15th June 1997, Frodsham (SE of the swing bridge) on 24th August 1981, Nether Alderley on 8th May 1975, Norley on 3rd August 1963 (Hedley Bell, 1967 gives 8th Aug but 3rd is taken from the 1963 *L&CFC CBR* which is the earliest available source), Ridgeway Reservoir on 12th September 1981 and Withington (presumably Lower Withington) on 13th September 1976.

Evidence from the past shows that birders will need to be very persistent or fortunate and probably both to find their own Wryneck in Cheshire and Wirral.

Steve Barber

County Round-Up

Some of the records may be unauthenticated and therefore will require review by the Society's Rarities Team or the BBRC. This report covers the period from September to December 2013.

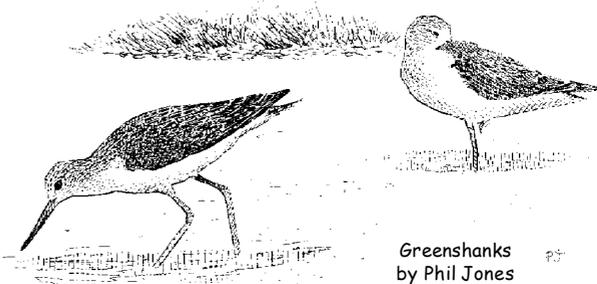
SITE REPORTS

Congleton area

A Great White Egret was near Congleton on Oct 30th, a Knot was at Astbury Mere on Nov 11th and a late Willow Warbler was reported from here on Dec 14th.

Crewe and Nantwich area

Eight Whooper Swans were at Sandbach Flashes on Nov 4th, a Barnacle Goose was at Elton Hall Flash on Oct 12th, 712 Wigeons were at Sandbach Flashes during Nov, 13 Goldeneyes were at Doddington on Dec 6th and 15 Goosanders were at Sandbach Flashes during Dec. A Gannet visited Elton Hall Flash on Oct 14th. A Great White Egret was at Watch Lane Flash on Nov 5th and a Glossy Ibis was at Sandbach on Nov 25th. A Red Kite was over Crewe Hall on Sep 10th, two Hobbies were at Sandbach Flashes during mid-Sep. A Stilt Sandpiper was at Elton Hall Flash on Sep 2nd and 7th, single Curlew Sandpipers were at Sandbach Flashes on Sep 29th- 30th and again on Oct 4th, two Greenshanks were at Sandbach Flashes on Sep 7th. Caspian Gulls were at Pump House Flash on Dec 21st and 29th, whilst a Black Tern was at Elton Hall Flash on Sep 10th. A Yellow-browed Warbler was in the Crewe area on Oct 4th and 5th, three Whinchats were at Maw Green Tip on Sep 7th and four Crossbills were at Fodens Flash on Dec 28th.



Greenshanks
by Phil Jones

Ellesmere Port and Neston area

54 Whooper Swans were at Burton on Dec 31st, c5000 Pink-footed Geese were here on Nov 30th, whilst an American Wigeon was present mid-Dec, three Garganeys were at BMW on Sep 8th with 400+ Pintails at Neston on Dec 22nd. A Bittern was at Burton on Dec 26th, with 62 Little Egrets on Nov 27th, one or two Great White Egrets were in the Burton area on several dates with a Glossy

Ibis at IMF on Oct 5th and Burton on Dec 14th, and a Spoonbill at Burton on Nov 27th. Raptors included: up to three Marsh Harriers at BMW on Oct 18th, three Hen Harriers at Parkgate on Nov 5th, an Osprey over BMW on Sep 26th, two Merlins were at BMW on Nov 8th and two Hobbies at IMF on Sep 25th.

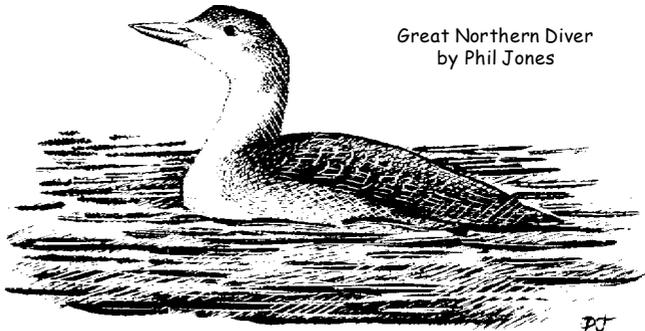
Notable waders included: three Avocets at BMW on Oct 3rd, seven Curlew Sandpipers here on Sep 29th, 3100 Black-tailed Godwits at Neston on Dec 5th, three Little Stints at BMW on Sep 8th, a Pectoral Sandpiper at BMW from Sep 29th to Oct 5th, and a max of 23 Greenshanks at Parkgate on Oct 1st. Elsewhere, a Yellow-browed Warbler was at Burton on Sep 30th, a Buff-bellied Pipit was at Burton from Dec 20th, remaining into 2014, Rock Pipits were at Burton on Sep 30th and Neston on Nov 12th and a Water Pipit was at Burton on Dec 19th. A Siberian Chiffchaff was one of five Chiffchaffs in the Burton area on Dec 13th. A very late Wheatear was at Burton on Dec 14th and again from 22nd. Two Tree Pipits were at Burton on Sep 30th and 10+ Twites were at Neston on Nov 4th.

Halton area

A single Whooper Swan was at Hale on Nov 4th, two Barnacle Geese were at Carr Lane Pools on Sep 3rd and Hale shore on Nov 17th, a Brent Goose was at Pickering's Pasture from Oct 17th-20th and Nov 30th. A Gannet appeared after gales at Pickering's Pasture on Sep 17th, whilst a Great White Egret was at Spike Island on Sep 23rd and Hale during Dec. An Osprey over Wigg Island on Sep 27th was the only raptor of note. Wader highlights included: 14 Curlew Sandpipers at Pickering's Pasture on Sep 22nd, 1550 Black-tailed Godwits here on Sep 5th and a Turnstone on 23rd, seven Ruffs at Carr Lane Pools in early Sep and eight Little Stints at Pickering's Pasture on Sep 23rd. A Ring Ouzel was at Hale on Sep 28th, a migration watch produced 1464 Fieldfares over Hale on Oct 19th and 1079 Redwings on 16th. A Rock Pipit was at Hale on Dec 17th, 1007 Chaffinches were noted S over Hale on Oct 18th along with 46 Bramblings, a Coues Arctic Redpoll was at Oxmoor LNR on Nov 21st, six Crossbills flew over Hale on Oct 19th, two Hawfinches were here on Oct 30th, finally two Lapland Buntings flew over on Oct 30th.

Macclesfield area

Three Whooper Swans were at Acre Nook SQ on Nov 13th, a Barnacle Goose and a Red-breasted Goose were at Withington on Dec 6th, four Egyptian Geese were at Rostherne Mere NNR on Oct 4th, 23 Mandarins were here on Nov 23rd, a Red-breasted Merganser was here on Oct 13th and 12 Goosanders were at Styperson Pool on Nov 10th. A Great Northern Diver was at



Great Northern Diver
by Phil Jones

Tatton Mere on Oct 9th, a Great White Egret at Rode Pool on Oct 25th and a Black-necked Grebe was at Rostherne Mere NNR on Oct 19th. A Goshawk was in the Macclesfield Forest area on Oct 25th. A Bar-tailed Godwit at Rostherne Mere NNR on Nov 16th was the only wader of note. A Bonaparte's Gull was observed roosting at Rostherne Mere NNR on Nov 7th. A Cetti's Warbler was at Rostherne Mere NNR on Oct 19th, two Waxwings were at Middlewood Way on Dec 3rd, and Fieldfares were at Rostherne Mere NNR on Oct 12th. 20 Bramblings were at Tatton Park on Nov 7th, three Common (Mealy) Redpolls were at Poynton on Dec 30th and 40+ Crossbills were in Macclesfield Forest on Oct 25th.

Vale Royal area

16 Whooper Swans were at Frodsham Marsh on Nov 23rd, a Garganey was at Neumann's Flash on Sep 22nd, a Scaup was at Frodsham Marsh on Nov 3rd and two Common Scoters were at Marbury CP on Sep 12th. A Bittern was at Marbury CP on several dates, three Great White Egrets were at Ince on Nov 17th and a Black-necked Grebe was at Frodsham Marsh on Sep 2nd. A Stilt Sandpiper visited Neumann's Flash on Sep 1st, 22 Curlew Sandpipers were at Frodsham

Marsh on Sep 3rd, a Little Stint was at Neumann's Flash on Sep 15th. A Black Tern was at Winsford Bottom Flash on Sep 6th. 32 Ravens were at Frodsham Marsh on Sep 28th. Two Twites were at Frodsham Marsh on Nov 23rd.

Warrington area

6790 Pink-footed Geese were over Woolston Eyes on Oct 26th and three Mandarins were here on Oct 16th. A Bittern returned to Moore NR on Oct 15th. Two Marsh Harriers were at Woolston Eyes on Dec 22nd and two Hobbies were here on Sep 24th. A Curlew Sandpiper was at Norton Marsh on Oct 3rd, 10 Black-tailed Godwits were at Woolston Eyes on Sep 28th and two Greenshanks were here on Sep 9th. A Ring-billed Gull was at Moore NR on Dec 1st. A Yellow-browed Warbler was at Glazebury on Nov 21st with another at Moore NR on Dec 19th, 3200 Redwings were noted on migration at Woolston Eyes on Oct 12th, a Great Grey Shrike was at Moore NR on Dec 15th, a Firecrest was at Woolston Eyes on Nov 9th and a Tree Pipit was here on Sep 3rd.

Wirral area

Wildfowl included: five Whooper Swans were at West Kirby on Nov 22nd, 198 Brent Geese at Hilbre on Dec 25th, two Gadwalls off Hilbre on Dec 12th, 1300 Pintails at Thurston on Dec 21st, eight Eiders at Hilbre on Oct 26th, 3000 Common Scoters off Hoylake on Sep 21st, two Velvet Scoters off Hilbre on Nov 16th and three Goosanders at Hilbre on Sep 3rd. 17 Red-throated Divers were off Hilbre on Nov 7th and two Great Northern Divers were off Hoylake on Nov 3rd. Seabirds of note included: 62 Gannets off Leasowe on Nov 7th, 189 Manx Shearwaters off Hilbre on Sep 17th along with 109 Leach's Petrels, the only Storm Petrel off New Brighton on Sep 16th and 1200 Cormorants off Hilbre on Dec 19th. 21 Little Egrets were at Heswall on Sep 7th, two Great White Egrets were at Hilbre on Oct 30th and Heswall on Nov 2nd and a Slavonian Grebe was off Hilbre on Sep 18th. A Red Kite was over West Kirby on Oct 20th and two Merlins were at West Kirby on Nov 30th.

Waders included: 780 Grey Plovers at Hoylake on Dec 3rd, 18 Curlew Sandpipers here on Sep 8th, 1700 Black-tailed Godwits at Thurston on Sep 23rd, 680 Bar-tailed Godwits at Hoylake on Dec 22nd, 302 Turnstones at West Kirby on Dec 4th, 20,000 Knots at Heswall on Nov 30th, 800 Sanderlings at Hoylake on Oct 21st, 17 Purple Sandpipers at New Brighton on Dec 8th, a Semi-palmated Sandpiper at Hoylake on Sep 21st, Grey Phalarope at Leasowe on Sep 16th and 18th and 3600 Redshanks at Heswall on Oct 7th. Pomarine Skuas were off Hoylake on Sep 10th and Nov 3rd with another at Leasowe on Nov 4th, eight Arctic Skuas were off Hilbre on Sep 4th, two Long-tailed Skuas were here on Sep 16th and two Great Skuas on Oct 9th. 11 Guillemots were off Hoylake on Nov 3rd, a Black Guillemot was at Hilbre on Sep 5th and two Razorbills were at Hoylake on Nov 3rd. Two Black Terns were at New Brighton on Sep 9th, 15+ Little Terns were at Red Rocks on Sep 3rd, 1000 Sandwich Terns were off Hilbre on Sep 8th, 50+ Common Terns were off Red Rocks on Sep 3rd and a single Arctic Tern was at Hoylake on Sep 19th. 17 Kittiwakes were off Hoylake on Nov 3rd and a Little Gull was at Hilbre on Sep 20th.

A Turtle Dove was at Leasowe for several days from Oct 4th. A Yellow-browed Warbler was recorded from Hoylake on Sep 29th and Oct 19th with another at Leasowe from Oct 1st – 4th. 200+ Fieldfares and 1000+ Redwings were observed over Leasowe on Oct 11th. A Blyth's Reed

Snow Bunting
by Phil Jones



Warbler was at Red Rocks from Sep 30th to Oct 4th. A Waxwing was at Landican on Dec 3rd, a Firecrest was at West Kirby on Nov 10th and 24th. Two Whinchats were at Thurston on Sep 6th, Rock Pipits were at West Kirby on Dec 4th and Hilbre on 7th. Six Crossbills were at West Kirby on Oct 3rd and 11th and Snow Buntings were at Hilbre, Wallasey and West Kirby on various dates.

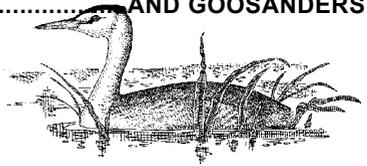
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Thanks/acknowledgments to: *Birdwatching* magazine, Rob Cockbain, James Canovan, Dee Estuary website, Macclesfield RSPB, Moore NR website, SECOS, WECG and everyone else who passed records on.

One Man's Birding

AND GOOSANDERS

Nantwich Lake lies between the main Whitchurch road, which runs alongside it, and the River Weaver. I have heard one respected local naturalist angrily describe its creation as an act of vandalism, since it involved the destruction of a very rare inland salt marsh. Popular though it is with dog-walkers, duck-feeding families and the public generally, the rather humdrum selection of waterfowl which use it offers scant recompense for this loss of habitat.



This winter, though, it has proved popular with a little group of Goosanders (hard to say how many; never more than half a dozen together, but the gender balance in the group changes daily). Clearly visible from the road, across the width of the lake, they are quite hard to see from the river side, where they are partly screened by a thin plantation of trees. The birds have taken to spending the day here, only a few yards from the well-used footpath with its steady traffic of people, pushchairs and dogs, but unnoticed by most passers-by and completely undisturbed. That seems fairly typical of our local Goosanders, these last few years.

Growing up on Wirral, I was familiar with Red-breasted Mergansers but rarely saw their elegant cousins. Indeed, only one occasion sticks in my mind. For some reason, Tony Land and I (then still at school) decided to sit out a tide on Little Eye, without benefit of a hide. Perhaps not surprisingly, nothing remains in my memory except the sight of a pair of Goosanders flying past. Now, in the south of the county, the position is reversed; mergansers are a rarity (I'm not sure I have ever seen one locally), while Goosanders have become increasingly common. Being common, though, does not mean that they are birds one simply notes and walks past; they are among the most attractive of waterfowl, and remain one of my favourites.

Partly it is a matter of plumage. The drakes in particular, with their creamy white underparts, black backs, glossy, dark-green heads and blood-red bills show a beautifully balanced contrast. By comparison, a male merganser is too showy – too complex a pattern, a bit overdone, not such good dress sense. Overhead, that distinctive cigar shape makes them easily recognisable. On the water, Goosanders have an almost confident and self-composed air; their low profile and long waterline make for smooth sleek lines, and, watching a group of them on one of the local meres, I find myself constantly thinking of a flotilla of warships, destroyers or frigates perhaps, cruising along in a swift but unhurried and determined way.

Over the last few years, though, I have encountered them at least as frequently on the river as on more open waters; a walk along Nantwich riverside rarely fails to produce two or three. The Weaver at Nantwich is never more than a few yards wide, but some Goosanders at least seem happy to spend the winter here. I was once surprised to find one sitting contentedly among the resident Mallards on the near bank, as I walked my dog, perhaps twenty feet away. (Not that the Mallards are always so friendly – the first Goosander I saw this winter was being vigorously harried by a group of the ducks, apparently resenting its presence in a favourite backwater). On another occasion, I made a complete botch of photographing two redheads which had settled in on a narrow stretch just above the weir. I can't recall how far away they were, but close enough for me to ask a fisherman the length of his carbon pole – which more or less spanned the width of the waterway (and they took no more notice of him and his pole than they did of me and my camera).

Of course, the Goosanders won't be around much longer. Although they now breed in the county (and not too far away, I believe), they are strictly winter birds locally. After weeks of rain and high winds there is at last some sunshine to enjoy; the Mallard flock at the reservoir is thinning out, Chaffinch and Blackbird have joined the earlier singing birds, there are pussy willows out along the river. Not yet spring, but signs of it: goodbye Goosanders – at least until they return again to enliven the grey days at the end of the year.

Bob Anderson

Ringling News

Ringling plays an important part in developing our knowledge of birds. In this new feature we invite ringling groups (or individual ringlers) 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 ringled or recovered, and news of other events (or incidents).

Future contributions from other groups and/or individuals will be welcomed; contact Bob Anderson 01270 623044 or email Robert@andersons.myzen.co.uk.

SOUTH MANCHESTER RINGLING GROUP

Scottish Siskins and Mealy Redpolls from who knows where!

To date, we are aware of 70 Scottish Siskin reports within the South Manchester Ringling Group, comprising 60 recoveries of our birds and 10 controls of birds ringled from Scotland. Overall, 69 birds were involved, one having been recaptured twice.

We seem to have birds from pretty much all places north of the border (using former administrative regions of Scotland):

Dumfries & Galloway	6 birds	ranging from Lockerbie to Glentroot Forest
Borders	1	Peebles
Central	2	
Strathclyde	13	ranging from Kilkerran to Barcaldine
Fife		Dunfermline
Grampian	8	ranging from Aberdeen to Forres
Tayside	4	ranging from Scone to Loch Tay
Highland	35	Dalwhinnie to Shebster near Thurso (almost as far as one can go on the Mainland)

The distances from point of ringling to recapture range from 195km to 566km and one can see that our birds really are Scots at heart. The place names read like a gazetteer with a particular accent creeping in as one tries to get one's tongue round them except, of course, the distilleries' names that tripped off much more readily.

There are two 'twin' movements which suggest the possibility that some birds were paired in their winter quarters:

E458939	05/04/92	5m	Handforth	
R	21/04/92		Baravullin, Oban, Strathclyde	405km NNW
E458935	04/04/92	5f	Handforth	
R	27/04/92		Baravullin, Oban, Strathclyde	405km NNW
<i>and</i>				
P425772	24/02/02	6m	Wilmslow	
R	12/07/02		Breakachy, west of Inverness, Highland	482km
R	08/08/02		Breakachy, west of Inverness, Highland	482km
P425773	24/02/02	5f	Wilmslow	
R	08/08/02		Breakachy, west of Inverness, Highland	482km
	5 Bird of previous year		6 Age unknown but older than 2 years	
	m male; f female		R denoting caught by ringer	

Of the birds ringled last winter by the group (see *Bird News* No.91) some 12 recoveries so far, have been received and included above where applicable. Some movements were very quick as we have noticed before for example, seven days to get from Alderley Edge to Moray - 475 km. The predominant Scottish connection involves about 50% of the various recoveries we have had over some 30 years, with many local movements of course, but also an interesting number to/from the Continent.

'Hot off the press' is the ringing of four Common (Mealy) Redpolls in gardens where they have been joining the Lesser Redpolls at feeders. This seems to be unprecedented and we have heard of other groups being successful with birds caught, not to mention sightings of several birds together.

Clive Richards and Malcolm Calvert

MID CHESHIRE BARN OWL CONSERVATION GROUP

2013 was bad, very bad, for Barn Owls. So we are hoping for a good turn around in 2014.

But the start of the year has not been very auspicious. Barn Owls are not waterproof, like almost all other native birds, therefore their survival and ability to hunt for food depends greatly upon favourable weather conditions. Otherwise they will just sit in their roost holes or boxes and quietly starve to death.

So the weather is a very important factor – but so far this year, what with the incessant wind and rain, the situation does not look promising. At least in Cheshire we have not suffered as badly as other parts of the UK (how birds in the flooded areas of Somerset and the like will survive poses a very serious problem). As ever, we can only wait and see how things develop in the short term – surely the weather cannot continue like this for much longer!!

Finally, and 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: john.mycock@birse.co.uk

HILBRE BIRD OBSERVATORY (HiBO)

December 2013 to January 2014 Ringing Review

In December 2013 and January 2014 it rained. The rain was accompanied by high tides and gales. There was a massive tidal surge in December, the tide height was recorded as 1.5 metres higher than predicted, this knocked over walls on the island and filled the seawatching hide with water. Fortunately, nobody was taking advantage of the excellent seawatching conditions at the time, consequently the only damage was to the fabric of the hide itself which HiBO has now fixed.

The birds on the island were keeping a low profile and no new birds were caught in December or January. One of the wintering Blackbirds was re-trapped but the excitement of rare birds elsewhere on Wirral was not repeated on Hilbre. However, despite the difficulties, ringing-related activity continued on the island.

The winter flock of Brent Geese continues to set records for numbers of birds and the observers on the island were able to keep track of two colour-ringed birds, one an old friend that is known to have been ringed in Canada. The Brent Goose project (co-ordinated by the Irish Brent Goose Research Group) has been very successful thanks to people all round the world sending in their colour ring sightings. Another Hilbre regular bird, known as the 'Widnes Herring Gull', has been seen frequently as well. Again the key to success for this colour-ringing project is birders reporting their sightings.

Liverpool has always been a good place to find Black-headed Gulls from Scandinavia, as has Wirral. The stormy weather has forced at least three colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls to turn up regularly at West Kirby Marine Lake, one is known to be from Sweden and one of the others is a returning wintering bird from Norway. There have been many Danish birds in Liverpool so we need to find one from Finland to complete the set.

This winter returning Hilbre-ringed Turnstones have been seen at nearby West Kirby Marine Lake, as well as along the north Wirral coast as far as New Brighton.

There appears to be no end to the bad weather in sight, but as always we look forward to the spring and by the time you read this we will already be dreaming of the first Wheatears returning and may have already had a 'spring' Stonechat on the island.

John Elliott, on behalf of Hilbre Bird Observatory

CHESHIRE SWAN STUDY GROUP

Since my last report in November, the Swan Study Group has ringed a total of 29 Mute Swans including 5 adults, 20 Cygnets, one second-year and 3 third-years. There were also two controls and two retraps.

The maximum counts of flocks of Mute Swans since February are as follows:

- Acre Dell Pools, Congleton: 50 on 10th Nov; 52 on 9th Dec; 54 on 12th Jan.
- Astbury Mere, Congleton: 11 on 10th Nov; 9 on 8th Dec; 17 on 12th Jan.
- Burleydam Pool, nr Whitchurch: 11 on 25th Nov; 15 on 15th Dec; 16 on 19th Jan.
- Comber Mere, nr Whitchurch: 32 on 10th Nov; 21 on 15th Dec; 15 on 19th Jan.
- Trent and Mersey Canal, Middlewich: 45 on 30th Nov; 46 on 8th Dec; 47 on 28th Jan.
- Nantwich Boating Lake: 26 on 12th Nov; 19 on 17th Dec; 21 on 28th Jan.

Interesting Movements:

Canada Goose C17 (G) ringed as a male gosling on 30-10-12 at Baddiley Meres, near Nantwich seen on 2-11-13 at West Park, Wolverhampton, West Midlands = 59kms.

Canada Goose AACD (R) was ringed as an adult male on 2-7-13 at Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria seen on 25-11-13 at Acre Dell Pools, near Congleton = 139kms.

Greylag Goose C29 (G) ringed as a male gosling on 5-8-11 at Baddiley Meres, near Nantwich seen on 11-1-14 at Martin Mere WWT = 66kms.

Greylag Goose C48 ringed as a male gosling on 26-7-12 at Baddiley Meres, near Nantwich, found shot dead on 2-12-13 at Frodsham Marsh = 30kms.

The *Cheshire Swan Study Group Report* for 2013 will be available in March on our website. Paper copies are available on request.

Sightings of all swans, geese and Mallards should be sent to David Cookson (contact details below) 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).

NB. Please note that if you need any more information see our new blog/website: <http://cheshireswanstudygroup.wordpress.com>

David Cookson, Group Leader, 70 Rope Lane, Rope, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 6RD. Tel: 01270 567526. Email: Cheshireswans@aol.com

Projects and Surveys

BTO BREEDING PEREGRINE SURVEY 2014 – Survey Support Opportunities

The BTO is organising a survey of breeding Peregrines in 2014 and seeks volunteer support. The objective of the survey is to estimate the number of occupied breeding territories in the UK. The survey method involves several different components: systematic surveys of randomly selected 5 x 5km survey squares; surveys of nest sites previously known to be occupied; other breeding season observations – casual records.

Breeding Peregrines have been reported in the Cheshire and Wirral recording area from a variety of natural and man-made nest sites in recent years and there would appear to be scope for some expansion, in particular at man-made nest sites.

More information about the survey is available from the BTO website at <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/peregrine-survey>

A fair degree of experience and a good knowledge of the survey areas will be required for some components of the survey, but contributions would be welcome from anyone who is interested in providing support to the survey.

Anyone interested in taking part should contact: **Mark Eddowes, 19 Holmfield, Buxton, SK17 9DF Email: markeddowes@cawos.org Tel: 01298 214144 / 07964 745977**

Notes & Letters

Bird News is always keen to hear from CAWOS members. Please send us any notes of unusual avian behaviour or amusing anecdotes that you think your fellow birders will be interested in. Also, we are always interested in your views on any of our articles or on the newsletter itself. Ed.

THE GREAT STORM OF DECEMBER 2013!

I awoke on December 5th hoping the marsh at Parkgate would be covered by the high tide that day, but the atmospheric pressure was high locally and, although there was an intense low pressure system further north, it was, I thought, the wrong side of the country to have a large effect on the tide height in the Irish Sea. Well, I certainly got that wrong!

First, a few facts and figures. High tide was at 12:24hrs (Gladstone Dock, Liverpool) and the predicted height was 9.9m. The atmospheric pressure at midnight on 4th was a very high 1030 mbar, on my barometer that's between set 'Fair' and 'Very Dry'. But crucially the pressure then plummeted and dropped 18 mbar in just twelve hours, reaching its lowest point of 1012 mbar at midday on 5th, ie at high tide. That sudden drop in pressure resulted in the wind increasing from Force 5 (20 knots, a fresh breeze and gusting to 25 knots), to Force 9 (45 knots, a strong gale and gusting to Force 10/55 knots, a full-blown storm). The wind reached its peak at 08:00hrs and continued to blow at that force all morning, ie as the tide was coming in. The wind direction was from the west throughout this period.

All this resulted in an exceptionally high storm surge of 1.25m, giving a total height of 11.15m. According to historical records I've seen this equals the highest ever recorded at Liverpool which was on February 27th 1990; on that day the swimming baths at New Brighton were so badly damaged they had to be demolished. Nothing quite as dramatic as that happened on Dec 5th 2013 but there was still plenty of damage as well as some spectacular sights.

At New Brighton the whole of the promenade area was flooded from the Wallasey lifeguard station to Fort Perch, including the car park at the latter site which effectively became part of the stormy sea. With the wind in the west, West Kirby was particularly badly hit and the promenade became a raging torrent and many garden walls along the seafront were demolished by the waves. On Hilbre there was much erosion of the sandstone and Little Eye was noticeably smaller after the storm. The Old Baths car park at Parkgate had to be swiftly evacuated as the tide started to pour over the sea wall, whilst at Burton Denhall Lane was flooded and the tide was so high that even the fence posts were covered out on the salt marsh.

But what effect has all this had on the birds and other wildlife? At Parkgate we had great views of about 12 Water Rails and it would have been a great opportunity to do a coordinated count of this secretive species along the length of the marshes as they were flushed - but I wasn't the only one to be surprised by the height of the tide and the heavy rain squalls meant few birders were about. As the rodents on the marshes will have been wiped out by the high tide there will be little food left for Short-eared Owls, but surprisingly there have been good numbers of the owls recorded on subsequent tides so they must have to resort to feeding inland during the night. I would expect the rodents to recolonise the area during the summer so by next winter things should be back to normal. A surprise was the lack of a seabird wreck with not a single dead bird reported from the shore, presumably this was due to the fact that the storm was short lived and that the wind was from the west and north-west rather than from the south where most seabirds spend the winter. Wader numbers were already relatively low this winter due to the mild weather and the storm appears to have had little effect on these.

One of the consequences of the storm surge was the large amount of tidewrack left all along the English side of the estuary which a large number of small birds found particularly attractive. This included Cheshire and Wirral's first over-wintering Wheatear and at least one Siberian Chiffchaff; in addition there were Meadow, Rock and Water Pipits, Chiffchaffs, Stonechats, Linnets and Pied Wagtails. Then there was a certain mega-rarity which was a first for the north-west of England. This was a Buff-bellied Pipit at Burton present from December 21st to the beginning of February at least, attracting large numbers of twitchers, particularly over the Christmas holidays.

Sources of Information:

1. National Oceanography Centre, see noc.ac.uk/news/storm-surge-hits-uk-coastline
2. Reigate Grammar School Weather Station, see: rgsweather.com/2013/12/08/storm-surge-december-2013-battle-won/
3. B. Stephenson*, Pers. Comm., Jan 2014.

Photographs of the storm can be seen at www.deeestuary.co.uk/news0114.htm

Richard Smith

*I understand that B. Stephenson is Richard's 93-year-old Aunt. Her husband (Richard's Uncle) was chief engineer at Mersey Docks and Harbour Board and kept records of the big high tides, as well as press cuttings. Amazing! Editor

THE STORM SURGE OF DECEMBER 5th 2013 AT MOORSIDE LANE, PARKGATE

The night of 4th December 2013 was windy, with a fresh wind from Wales and heavy showers rattling our windows, and when we got up in the morning, my wife and I discussed the advisability of taking our usual dog-walking session along Parkgate Parade. We routinely submit morning lists for BirdTrack when ambient conditions include wind below Force 5, visibility above 500m and no continuous or heavy precipitation. Conditions in our garden seemed at least Force 7 with heavy showers, and we had decided to take the dogs along the Wirral Way and avoid Parkgate Parade when the phone rang.

It was Diana Pool, our neighbour and the mother of Colin Poole, the renowned conservationist who has been based in the Far East for many years. She kindly invited us to watch the tide from her bungalow which fronts the estuary. Sadly, the dogs still needed a walk, so Val undertook that duty, and I donned anorak and boots and walked the 400m to Heron Court.

The weather conditions seemed worse than I was expecting from memory of the previous night's forecast, but the barometer was well above 1000mb, and I was wondering if the wind would help the tide to exceed prediction. I was not optimistic that the tide would reach the sea wall, because the wind seemed to be coming not from the south-west, but more to the west and I had always associated real surges with approaching low pressure systems, strong SW winds and the barometer falling well below 1000mb. Arriving at Heron Court, Diana ensconced us in the enclosed patio, behind sliding glass doors and an excellent view over the salt marshes. The wind seemed an unrelenting Gale Force 8, from just south of west. However, it was the gusts which surprised me, gusting at easily Force 9 regularly, and occasionally Force 10. The light was poor, with total overcast, a low cloud base, continual rain and droplets of rainwater or salt spray. The visibility was only moderate, perhaps 400m, but the spray and droplets were very detrimental to optics. The glass windows soon became blurred by windblown water, my spectacles and binoculars kept steaming up. Our attempts to walk outside were met with storm force squalls which forced us to shelter in the lee of a wall and made use of binoculars almost impossible, but we stayed outside for almost half an hour in storm conditions.

However, it was evident that something was happening. Birds were pouring upstream towards Burton a constant stream of ducks, wading birds and geese. The tidal waters started to fill the creeks, and a flock of 200 Pink-footed Geese landed on marsh amongst uneven ground marked by many dead stems of sea couch grass. I realised that this area was the former ridge of small sand dunes which marked the edge of the marsh in the 1950s, and the geese were sheltering from the violent squalls in small dry hollows, whilst smaller birds poured upstream, mostly hidden by the gloom, and difficult to identify or count.

Nowadays, the flood tide seldom reaches Parkgate, and when it does it takes a



Pink-footed Geese
by Ray Scally

circuitous route, going upstream towards Denhall, then turning north and filling a gutter to approach the former Port. This process was filling up the creeks from the south, yet high water was still a long way off, and water started to cover the marshes. At half an hour to High Water, we observed a wall of water approach from the south at perhaps 2 miles per hour. It was about 20cms high, and its arrival transformed the situation. Rapidly, all the vegetation was covered in water, the marshes became the sea, and waves developed. The Pink-footed Geese took to the air, and it was then that we realised something else had happened. The flocks of birds had changed direction! They were now trying to leave the estuary. Having flown upstream to find refuge on the upper salt marshes, they were trapped by wind and tide. Landing on the storm-lashed seas of Parkgate, Neston or Burton was out of the question, and with one accord the birds turned and flew close inshore, battling into the wind in a confused mêlée of species and individuals. I tried to make a count, but it was very difficult to hold a pen and write, so resorted to doing a mental score, which is not at all reliable.

A Hen Harrier flew very close past, only 30m away, its flight laboured, and it like the other birds really seemed to be fighting for its life. The dense flock was incredibly close, less than 50m at times, but almost all birds within 100m. I went home to check on my family, and stopped at Neston reed bed, sheltering under the sandstone wall at the north side. To my surprise, the whole reed bed was underwater, the reed stems covered in water and the seed heads blown down by the wind to just above the water surface. A bird was sheltering from the storm by perching on a large tree trunk which moved in the debris. It was a Brent Goose, a surprise addition to my list for Neston reed bed, which stayed put for ten minutes until displaced by a Heron.

The surface of the water was by now covered in a dense mat of floating debris, which damped down the violent spray, and rose and fell with a sinuous movement which revealed the power of the water underneath. Plastic debris which had lain on the extensive salt marshes for years was skimmed off the top of the floating mat and blown inland. Once home, and having checked that all was well, I returned to the south end of Parkgate Parade, passing several fences and branches which had blown down and were blocking the road.

The situation on the Parade was exceptional. The waters were almost level with the top of the coping stones, and every wave sent spindrift and foam through the drainage gaps and onto the road. A procession of cars drove slowly through the shallow water, and the C22 bus managed to get through on its way to Chester. However, the birds were less interesting here at high water, which had made some 11m above datum. The flock was still struggling north, but in smaller numbers and further out into the estuary. Obviously, I had missed the movement of Water Rails and rodents as the tsunami of salt water overwhelmed their world, so I returned home again, and wrote up my notes.

A list was entered to BTO BirdTrack, of birds flying north-west trying to leave the estuary, obviously with the caveats of difficulties of observation. In an hour estimated totals were: Pink-footed Goose 900, Canada Goose 20, Brent Goose 4, Shelduck 8, Wigeon 200, Teal 1000, Mallard 60, Pintail 800, Cormorant 2, Little Egret 6, Grey Heron 4, Hen Harrier 1, Merlin 1, Oystercatcher 1000, Lapwing 200, Dunlin 500, Snipe 15, Black-tailed Godwit 2100, Black-headed Gull 20, Lesser Black-backed Gull 2, Herring Gull 2, Great Black-backed Gull 1, Carrion Crow 4, Skylark 60, Starling 5. These numbers must be far lower than the true total of birds involved.

What happened to those birds? The good news seems to have been that there were very few casualties. The birds were obviously and literally fighting for their lives. Happily, their efforts seemed to have paid off. Searches for casualties over the following days, and weeks failed to reveal any. Did they land somewhere? On fields inland perhaps? Were any seen on the Hoylake Langfields or Hilbre Island? Without doubt, we had been privileged to witness a dramatic event of great ecological significance. As the tide ebbed the sole evidence was a vast bed of organic debris dumped at the sea wall and at the high water mark, filled with bits of wood and plastic, to confirm that we had not imagined the whole thing, but the Irish Sea had briefly claimed the Dee Marshes as its own once more.

Ray Eades

Acknowledgements: my sincere thanks to Mr and Mrs Poole and my wife for their hospitality and support.

MARSH AND WILLOW TITS

It was very interesting in the article about Willow and Marsh Tits in the 2013 *Bird Report*.

In this it states "... birds appear to have gone from, or be on the point of disappearing from, other once 'traditional' sites such as Dane's Moss ...". How true this is! In 241 visits between 1975 and 1979 inclusive and 143 visits between 1980 and 1985 inclusive, Willow Tits were present on at least three quarters of visits (maximum of 2 birds on any visit). The last few years have produced one record per year at best (though admittedly in many less visits), with none at all in 2013.

The main change in habitat between 1970s/1980s and the last few years is the removal of much scrub this century, but I would not have thought this sufficient to account for the severe decline. At Bagmere the alder carr seems to have altered very little. Looking back at my records for 1984 to 1986 inclusive (68 visits) I only recorded Willow Tit 3 times, all in 1984. The year 2000 produced 8 records, with 3 in 2001 (before foot-and-mouth prevented further visits), 5 in 2002 and none in 2003, since when I have been lucky to record one a year. Again I failed to record the species in 2013.

I am not sure what these fluctuating records for Bagmere show except, as with Danes Moss, the severe decline in recent times.

John Oxenham, Somerford, Congleton

GOLDEN EAGLE

***Macclesfield Courier*, March 30th 1811**

part 2

I was fascinated to read the extract from the *Macclesfield Courier*, submitted by John Oxenham, which appeared in the November *Bird News*. I find the note of particular interest, not least as an illustration that details of remarkable occurrences of birds appeared in all sorts of periodicals in the 19th century and must have made research for a county avifauna a difficult task. However, despite this note appearing in a Cheshire paper and the body of the unfortunate bird being placed in a Stockport (then in Cheshire) museum, Heaton Norris, where the bird was obtained, lies to the north side of the River Mersey and so was at that time in Lancashire and has never subsequently been in Cheshire. I can find no reference to this bird in Coward & Oldham's *Birds of Cheshire* (1900) or the second edition of Mitchell's *Birds of Lancashire* (1892).

Coward & Oldham (1900) ran their rule over three potential Cheshire Golden Eagle records, none of which passed muster due to lack of identification evidence, either written or in the form of an existing stuffed body. One of these three claimants is the Somerfield Park (now known as Somerford Park) bird mentioned by John Oxenham. Helpfully, Coward & Oldham reference this to *Zoologist* 1845 (series 1. vol 3. page 1022) where the following undated note (but probably Spring 1845) from J.W. Barlow (probably a misprint for T.W. Barlow) also mentions one of the other two contenders:

Occurrence of the Golden Eagle in Cheshire. *A fine specimen of this bird (Falco chrysaetos, Linn.), was captured last month at Somerfield Park, Cheshire, the seat of Sir C.P. Shakerley, Bart. Its appearance created much surprize (sic). After many ineffectual attempts made by the keepers to get within gun-shot, it was ultimately taken in a trap. It has since been stuffed, and is now in Sir Charles Shakerley's possession. I have ascertained that one was taken some year's ago, at Eaton Hall, near Chester, the seat of the Marquis of Westminster, but am not aware of any other appearance of this bird being on record; indeed, from the peculiar flatness of this county, and the absence of those rocky fastnesses which are the favourite haunts of the Raptors, they form a very small portion of our Fauna.*

For the sake of completeness, the third contender was a note in Morris' *History of British Birds* (1870 edition) which Coward & Oldham (1900) quoted as saying simply "another was captured in Cheshire" and giving no further details.

Two other references to Golden Eagle in Cheshire and Wirral are worth a mention here. In his *The Birds of Cheshire* (1962) Bell mentions an undated record of Golden Eagle flying south-west over Chester referred to in Seton Gordon's book *The Golden Eagle* (1955). The *North-Western Bird Report 1971-85* mentions "a good description to me (Eric Hardy) Chester-Pulford, with long

experience buzzard, 11/4/85. Falconers with birds at Stalybridge & Wrenbury had not flown in area that month". Ron Harrison and Steve Barber asked Hardy about this report during preparation work for their *A Checklist of the Birds of Cheshire and Wirral* (1987). Unfortunately, Hardy had received details verbally and was unable or unwilling to pass on details of the source of the report.

Golden Eagle remains absent from the Cheshire and Wirral list. It is to be hoped that when, eventually, it takes its place on the list it will be due to the appearance of a free-flying, multi-observed, photographed individual rather than the discovery of a sad victim of past or present prejudices.

Steve Barber

DEE ESTUARY CONSERVATION GROUP

Following the note in the previous *Bird News* No 94 of "the possible dissolution of the Dee Estuary Conservation Group" (Richard Smith, reporting on Tidal Dee Catchment Partnership), it is now possible to report some tentative news. The DECG may intend to keep going for some further time. Following concern about the non-listing of Hilbre Island as a Marine Conservation Zone, and an application to establish an Underground Coal Gasification site within the Dee Estuary SSSI (could these two news items be linked, one wonders ?) sufficient concern has been raised to try to keep the DECG as a going concern. To this end, a meeting of member organisations and Trustees has been called. This meeting was scheduled to take place at 19:30 on February 27th and the venue will be Inner Marsh Farm RSPB. Hopefully, positive news will be found in future issues of *Bird News*.

Ray Eades

NANTWICH NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Despite rumours to the contrary, Nantwich Natural History Society is still in existence, though now organised in a different way.

Early in 2013 the then committee, faced with falling attendance at indoor meetings and with problems in filling committee places, took the decision to end the programme of meetings which had been running since the Society's inception in 1979. However, a new and smaller committee has now been formed, and the NNHS will run primarily as a society for fieldworkers, to maintain and publish local natural history records (which was a main part of its initial purpose). There will be no programme of meetings, though there will be occasional informal get-togethers: the first took place in The Vine Inn in Nantwich after the Society's annual New Year bird count, and another is booked following the spring count at the beginning of May.

After many years of excellent service, Charles Hull has retired from the post of bird recorder, though we are delighted that he is still continuing to organise our annual winter and spring bird counts. His replacement is Chris Driver, who will be happy to receive records from the Society's recording area (Grid squares SJ54, SJ55, SJ64 and SJ65). Usual details of species, date, time, location (6-figure grid reference); additional notes about behaviour, habitat, gender, etc, and photographs would always be helpful. Contact: **Chris Driver on 01270 626662 or email chris.driver@bryndona.demon.co.uk**.

An annual membership fee of £5 covers access to the Society's hides (though possibly with some limits with regard to part of the Cholmondeley estate); a copy of the annual report, available by email or on disc, and occasional newsletters. Anyone wishing to join the Society should contact the secretary: **Mike Holmes, 4 Tenchersfield, Nantwich, CW5 7GR Tel: 01270 611577 Email: mabj@nantnats.fsnet.co.uk**

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

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 all had a good Xmas and New Year. As I write this it is raining again. I hope you will all spare a moment's thought for the unfortunate residents down south. I hate to think how long it will take them to recover from the deluge of water they have had over the last couple of months; I know we all moan about the weather but again we have come off very well.

I am not sure if it is the weather causing it but here at Weaverham we have a distinct lack of birds. Up to Xmas I refilled my feeders every day. I have not put any seed out for the last three weeks. We have Blackbirds, Woodpigeons, Collared Doves and Jackdaws, but nothing else. House Sparrows may attend in ones and twos, but that is all. There are not any groups flying about either. Hope it improves as spring progresses. One thing we did notice on 10th January, a pair of Collared Doves were carrying sticks into a larch tree some two doors down, a bit early even for Collared Doves.

Whilst you are out and about please keep an eye on all raptors on your respective patch. Whilst egg collectors are now few and far between, raptor persecution is once again rearing its ugly head. It would seem to come from the shooting side of country life. Before we all think that any gamekeeper or shoot manager is destroying raptors, please remember that 98% of gamekeepers and shoot managers are as much into conservation as we are, they are doing a fantastic job and are very passionate. It is the rogue 2% that are causing the problems. Poisoned bait seems to be the common method used. Usually a chemical used for pest control in agriculture. Do remember if you find baits left out DO NOT touch them. The chemicals used are deadly and many can be absorbed through the skin, they do not make you ill they KILL. Any sightings of baits left out need to be reported to the Police and if vehicles are seen in the vicinity registration numbers as well. PLEASE do not put yourselves at risk. As I have stated many times before, if you report an incident to the Police they must generate a working log and this will be given an incident number that relates to the time and date it is reported. Please make a note of this number and the date. If you do not get a satisfactory result, or the feedback you are satisfied with, let me know and I will chase it up. Police resources in Cheshire are stretched at this moment in time with budget cuts and reductions in manpower levels; this does not provide an excuse for the lack of action Wildlife Crime is experiencing. There are not enough officers who are dedicated to Wildlife Crime in our county. There are a few who have been designated as Wildlife Crime Officers, but they have to run this post alongside their own workload. As a result of internal pressure, any Wildlife Crime gets a brief look and it is marked off. THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE. Every other force in the country has dedicated Wildlife Crime Officers who give all new officers input during their training. They then have these dedicated officers to liaise with afterwards, but not Cheshire. I will, in the very near future, try to get this sad state of affairs explained by our new Police Commissioner. Watch this space for an answer, but do not hold your breath.

Please keep an eye on the developments of the HS2. I do, however, feel that this may be put back a bit due to the disaster with the weather, but from George Osborne's comments it will go ahead. Also keep an eye on any building projects in your area. If you have any concerns let your Conservation Reps know and any shortfalls in the Environmental Surveys can be raised. I feel that the main risks apply to old buildings that are being renovated and converted. A lot of these are slipping through without any provisions for the wildlife they contain ever being raised during planning.

Let's hope this weather improves before our spring visitors get here, or they will all be using their return tickets sooner than expected! Any problems with conservation issues let me know; if I cannot help I will find someone who can.

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

WARRINGTON AREA

I have to report the very disappointing decision of the planning inspector to grant the appeal of the clay pigeon club at Rixton Moss against the previous refusal of planning permission by Warrington Borough Council. As you know, many conservation groups, including CAWOS, opposed this scheme which is situated very near to Risley Moss, Rixton Claypits and only a few kilometres from Woolston Eyes. Several people spoke at the Appeal against the application, including Helen Lacy from Warrington Council, who was subjected to a four-and-a-half hour grilling by the applicant's Barrister! It remains to be seen what the effect of this decision will be on the area's wildlife but it is unlikely to be good.

Brian Martin, Warrington Area Representative

WIRRAL AREA

Underground Coal Gasification on the Dee Estuary: In January 2013 Cluff Natural Resources plc was granted an Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) licence in a large area of the Dee Estuary (including Hilbre Island) and the most western part of the Wirral foreshore. This is a worrying development as the UCG process, which involves igniting coal underground, makes fracking seem like a benign environmentally friendly activity in comparison! Trials in Australia and the USA have resulted in contamination of groundwater with the carcinogenic chemicals Benzene and Toluene. On top of that is the infrastructure required to bring the gas ashore which then needs extensive processing before the mixture of gases extracted can be used. However, the granting of a licence does NOT mean the project has got the go ahead. At the moment (early 2014) a technical assessment is being made which could take some time as I understand that no UCG is currently taking place in the world on a commercial basis outside Russia. Only after this preliminary assessment is complete will we know what is being proposed. When a planning application is eventually forthcoming an extensive Environmental Assessment will have to be undertaken. The Dee estuary and north Wirral foreshore is one of the most heavily protected sites in the country (SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar site) so I find it incredible that any licence has been granted in the first place and, in my opinion, the likelihood of this actually going ahead here is remote in the extreme.

Red Rocks Nature Reserve: It is with regret that I have to report this reserve has been badly damaged in an attempt to restore an area which used to be sand dunes over 50 years ago. This SSSI is specifically cited for migrating birds yet the small woodland which was their main habitat has been cut down. In addition, the site also holds both Red- and Amber-listed breeding birds whose habitat has also been, or is due to be destroyed. The prime cause of this destruction is lack of any consultation with either CAWOS or local naturalists. This land is managed by Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

Richard Smith, Wirral Area Representative

CONSERVATION REPRESENTATIVES

Chester	Neil Friswell, 8 Oaklands Crescent, Tattenhall, Cheshire, CH3 9QT. Tel: 01829 770463 Email: neil.friswell@btinternet.com
Congleton	Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role
Crewe & Nantwich	Colin Lythgoe, 11 Waterloo Road, Haslington, Crewe, CW1 5TF. Tel: 01270 582642 Email: colin.lythgoe@uwclub.net
Halton	Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2SG. Tel: 01925 726986 Email: tonyparker@cawos.org
Macclesfield	Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role
Vale Royal	Roy Leigh, 8 Hall Drive, Marston, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 6DT Tel: 01606 892032 Email: roysleigh@aol.com
Warrington	Brian Martin, 45 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2PF. Tel: 01925 264251 Email: brianmartin1940@hotmail.com
Wirral	Richard Smith, March Wall, King's Drive North, Caldy, Wirral, CH48 1LL. Tel: 0151 625 2320 Email: richard@cawos.org

CAWOS News

Welcome to the new members: Mr & Mrs Adderley, Mr R Barber, Mr D Breeze, Mr R C Budenberg, Mrs J Bunn, Mr and Mrs Franklin, Mr J Green, Mr A Hitchmough, Dr K A Leeming, Mr J Lowes, Mr D J O'Connor and Mr R Wray-Davies.

The membership now stands at 275 (318). I would like to take this opportunity to thank Susan Canovan for her role as Membership Secretary over recent years. Susan has done a great job sorting out the membership and chasing up those who have not paid, such that we still have a healthy number of members, but of course we would always like more. Susan will be stepping down after the AGM in March once she has got on top of the membership for 2014. We are still urgently looking for a replacement and despite several adverts in recent issues of *Bird News* and approaches to individuals have not managed to interest anybody in the position. The job requires somebody to keep our computerised membership list up to date, the busy time is during the first quarter of the year collecting and recording re-joining and new members. The only other task is putting *Bird News* in envelopes and addressing them three times a year. So if this is something you could find the time and energy to do then please get in touch with our Chairman Clive Richards. **A desperate last call!!**

Council has met twice since the last *Bird News*, in November and January. The major issue under discussion at both meetings has been succession planning and recruitment. As you may have read in my previous reports and will read in my report to the AGM, we currently have a number of vacancies for Council and non-Council positions. We have 3 vacancies for non-executive members of Council and for a vice-chairman. Ideally, new Council members should be from parts of the county such as the west, Wirral and the south-east which are not represented on Council, but we cannot be too fussy at this stage. We need a distributor for the annual *Bird Report*, a technical editor for the *Bird Report* and a records secretary for the database. As I mentioned in my last report we are glad that Phil Hampson, a computer expert, has offered his services and he has continued to work with Geoff Blamire and rECOrd with regard to getting our database interfaced with Rodis. A trial run with some of our data has now taken place and there are still a few issues to be resolved before moving to a larger scale trial run. But progress is being made.

Some photographs of the 25th Anniversary celebrations have been posted on the CAWOS website if people are interested, many thanks to Sheila for these.

The annual *Bird Report* for 2012 was sent out earlier in the year and as expected it was to the usual very high standard with some excellent coloured photographs, for example of the Little Swift, the first record for Cheshire. Council's thanks go to all those involved in getting the records in, compiling the data, writing the reports and for the photographs making the report an excellent read.

David Lindsay gave Council an up-to-date account on Rostherne Mere NNR, telling us that 110 single permits had been issued during the year together with 31 family permits. The accounts currently stand at about £2,500 including money raised from the sale of the telescope. Natural England has created a new footpath down to Church Meadow through Observatory Wood, and the five rowan trees donated by CAWOS to celebrate their 50th anniversary have been planted. While discussing reserves, CAWOS had been asked if it was prepared to manage Hatton's Hey Reserve in mid-Cheshire; after discussion, due to lack of resources (people) meant that it is unable to contemplate taking this on at the present time. If anyone was to approach Council with a proposition based on a "Friends of Hatton Hey", then Council would be prepared to listen.

On our western border the long-standing Dee Estuary Conservation Group has been struggling for a number of years and a proposal was put forward for the dissolution of the DECG. At the last minute four people came forward and offered to take up the key positions of chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer, with the secretary Ray Eades being the CAWOS representative. An AGM of the DECG is scheduled to take place on Thursday February 27th 2014 at 7.30pm at Burton Point Farm (the RSPB Inner Marsh Farm Office, off Station Road, Burton, CH64 5SB) for those members interested.

Ted Lock, Secretary

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 7th MARCH 2014

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2013

2013 was my fourth year as Chairman, and, once again, a small and dedicated team each with roles to fulfil worked hard. I believe that CAWOS has managed to once more demonstrate its capabilities and values to members and non-members alike.

Council Members attended five meetings paced through the year and there have been a wide range of matters to consider. Unfortunately, we were not always quorate which is a reflection on the time people have available and diary clashes. We continue in our aim to make decisions relevant to the Society's objectives and its members, maintaining our core jobs for the recording of birds in the county and to remain financially viable, with birds as the core consideration with recording habitat protection.

Two critical points continue to dog the Society, namely succession and the continuing need to resolve the future of the database. Long-known succession worries have been a constant source of concern and we continue to rely on too few and the tenure of those holding office now is gradually expiring. I am exploring ways to bring in new blood. With regards to the database and the intended transference of records to rECOrd, this is reaching a position that was to be hoped-for some time ago, viz initial testing. Certain issues are cropping up and I am glad to leave this to the people who understand such things better, namely Geoff Blamire and Phil Hampson who has joined our database team going forward. Many thanks are due for the time they spend on this on our behalf.

I hope that our programme of indoor meetings has been well received, although attendance fluctuated over the two part-seasons. The hope and intention though, of course, is to provide a short season of subjects that offer variety and range with informative and entertaining aspects on a particular species, a location, or branch of learning.

In January 2013 we heard from Keith Offord about the skills of birds in flight and how their ability to fly has enabled their geographical distributions, varieties and truly fascinating adaptations. Next in February, the subject was the Pitta Mission with Chris Goodie looking at the 33 known species. These so-called "Jewel-Thrushes" are a highly secretive, terrestrial family, some on the verge of extinction.

The AGM last March was followed by Alan Roberts, one time CAWOS stalwart who works for the National Wildlife Crime Unit, which liaises with other organisations in the fight against illegal trade in wild animals, and this indeed was the subject of his talk.

The October talk by Mike Leach was on the subject of hummingbirds, one of the most iconic bird groups in the New World, with extreme statistics and flying abilities alongside astonishing colours. In November our original speaker was ill so rather than cancel the meeting, Sheila Blamire offered to step in at the last moment relating a trip to Northern Botswana. We were treated to a remarkable talk – extremely entertaining and engaging, with some dramatic photographs, with technical support from Geoff.

The final meeting of 2013 was 'Birding Colorado's Rocky Mountains and High Plains', by Mike Watson who has much experience of the spring 'grouse' birding circuit, and how the State lies at the crossroads of USA's differing avifauna.

The *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report* for 2012 stands out amongst our regular publications and this year has again reached excellent standards. I stand by the strongly held opinion that it is credit to all those involved with its production, resulting in a report that is second to none. Our thanks should go out to the editors, Sheila Blamire, Colin Schofield and Richard Smith, together with Hugh Pulsford our County Recorder and likewise all the work of the compilers who dedicate so much time and effort must be acknowledged with gratitude. Yet again help is sought to spread the production work more evenly. Well done to those involved.

Bird News has been mailed to members four times during 2013 and once again this is due to Sheila putting in further time with Geoff to make the publication what it is. One can pick up any edition and see the high standard has continued - an all round good read as I put it. Contributors' short pieces combine to make a unique blend, I think, with the light-hearted and more serious alongside, to make the issues something to look forward to. It has to be added that Situations Vacant is a regular feature unfortunately.

We continue to run the AW Boyd Memorial Observatory with Natural England and the small dedicated sub-committee members take care of the day-to-day needs. Obviously, their regular attendance at the 'Obs' is an essential and necessary part of making sure all runs well but I believe it has its enjoyment too. We have met with Natural England and have a good dialogue. Five Rowan trees, purchased by the Society, were planted by NE's Rupert Randall and volunteer Bill Bellamy to mark a longer-lasting commemoration of the 50th Anniversary in the winter following the 2012 celebration.

Susan Canovan has, for a further year kept our membership details and subscriptions under control and I am very grateful for her continued help in this key role. We hope very much that we can find her replacement soon.

John Patterson, as Treasurer, has demonstrated his skills in the financial reporting and control of the accounts. His efforts over the year have been much appreciated by Council as a whole.

I thought that the CAWOS' 25th Anniversary event held at Neston went off very well, and although in the planning, I had initial concerns about the day, I soon became confident because bookings came in very quickly, as did offers of help. The speakers willingly gave their time and committed to the event. Thanks are due to the many people who assisted. We have actually been asked to organise another - maybe we can after an appropriate period. A mention must be made of the commemorative issue of *Bird News* which picked out notable events recorded in some of the ninety or so printed so far, and made apparent the changes that have occurred over the years. Thanks Sheila.

Several Council Members are stepping down at this point – long-standing members too. Our Secretary refers to them also but I would like to add my heartfelt thanks for the time and commitment they have given for the benefit of the Society. Steve Barber in particular has been on Council for many years and I should like to make mention of his wisdom and knowledge that have fed into decisions over that time.

I will repeat one last sentence from last time - I have the utmost regard for everyone who helps our charity. To share some of the tasks more evenly and over time, would see a fairer and more sustainable situation develop, I hope we can achieve this. Our aims are worth it.

Clive Richards, Chairman

SECRETARY'S REPORT 2013

I would like to start by thanking Susan Canovan, our Membership Secretary, who is stepping down from this position after this AGM. Susan has worked hard chasing up members for their subscriptions over the years such that the Society still has a healthy membership list. Trying to replace Susan has been challenging to say the least and despite several notices in *Bird News*, and approaches to individuals, we have not been able to find a successor to date. Our membership numbers as a consequence of Susan's efforts have only shown a slight drop which is good considering the current financial climate. Currently this year we have 275 paid up members with 65 not as yet paid. The total is very close to last year's of 285. I would also like to thank all Council members for their help and support during the year. Can I also thank David Norman (Chairman Atlas sub-committee) and Sheila Blamire (Chairman Publications sub-committee) for their valuable contributions to Council. We also welcomed David Lindsay who was co-opted onto Council as the Rostherne representative. Last but by no means least can I thank Mike Hems for maintaining our website.

Council lost 3 non-executive members at the last AGM and Brian Dyke stepped down as vice-chairman but agreed to stay on as a non-executive member. Michael Miles joined Council and has made a valid contribution during the year. Council however still needs a vice-chairman and 3 non-executive members for the coming year as Steve Barber will be stepping down. Steve has played a valuable role on Council for many years and contributed in a major way to County *Bird Reports* and the Rarities Team during this time. He will be missed on Council for his contribution to the discussions. He and his wife Gill will be continuing to contribute to county birding.

Council met on 5 separate occasions during the year and as usual had rather long agendas. Progress in transferring our database of bird records from the past and for the future to eCORd, the county biodiversity recording group, has again been slow during the past year. Some of our data has been used to test the transfer of data to their system and a few issues still need

resolving. There is still willingness on both sides to try and make this happen but time is running out for CAWOS with Sheila and Geoff Blamire wanting to retire this year from handling records and Sheila is stepping down as technical editor of the annual *Bird Report*. Some good news is that Phil Hampson, an experienced computer systems expert, has offered his services and is working with Geoff Blamire to take on the role, but will require some support. So we face a challenging year ahead for data storage and retrieval. The issue of Technical Editor for the *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report* is still not resolved. After the publication on-line of the Atlas, the remaining action has been to complete the final report for the Heritage Lottery Fund and settle the finances; this is almost complete and will draw a line under this project. Once again on behalf of Council I would like to thank David Norman, Peter Twist, David Cogger and all those members and non-members from across the county who contributed the data to make this such a successful project. With the loss of Mark Eddowes last year, we lost our Chairman of the Monitoring and Surveying sub-committee; the position is still vacant. The major project last year was the placing of nest boxes for Pied Flycatchers in Flash Wood in the eastern hills, the outcome being reported in *Bird News* in November. Conservation is an ongoing issue, the wind farm at Frodsham has started to be developed and Council has been keeping a watch on other local issues. Looking ahead HS2 will be coming to our area and it is my view that we will need to provide information to other societies such as the RSPB and CWT, who are better resourced and have experience of trying to gain mitigation on these issues. The annual *Bird Report* continues to be reported to a very high standard and Council wishes to thank the editors, compilers and all those who contributed to the 2012 report. Sheila has continued to produce the *Bird News* with the usual range of interesting articles with 4 issues this year.

Finally, the highlight of the year was our 25th birthday celebrations in November at Neston; we had a good attendance and some excellent talks on birds in Cheshire from a range of speakers. Some photographs are on the CAWOS website for those interested, with a picture of the celebration cake, which was very well received as was the special edition of *Bird News*.

So it has been a challenging year and will continue to be so in the coming year. We are struggling to attract people to join Council and to take on other jobs such as Membership Secretary, *Bird Report* distributor and we need somebody with bird experience and computer expertise for the database. So if anybody thinks they could help please contact me or our Chairman, Clive Richards.

Ted Lock, Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT 2013

I have pleasure in submitting the Annual Audited Accounts of the Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society for the year ended 31 December 2013, which shows a surplus on the year of £417.

Membership subscriptions for the year of £4,842 (inclusive of Gift Aid) remain stable when compared to the previous year. However, annual subscription rates have remained unchanged for some time and, given the continued upward pressure of printing costs and postage, it is inevitable that subscription charges may need to be reconsidered at some point.

Once again, providing information from our database has given us a useful income of £1,025 in the year but, as always, this is no prediction of future income levels.

The 25th Anniversary event of CAWOS cost us £559 net of income. This was much less than the forecast net cost of £1,000.

Our income was boosted by the higher level of bank interest resulting from the move of our reserves from the Charity Aid Foundation bank account to Virgin Money. Total interest received in 2013 on all funds was £635 compared to £65 in 2012.

General overhead costs remain under control as does the net cost of our indoor meetings which amounted to £281 for the year. The only major item of general expenditure was the update of our publishing software which accounts for most of the increase to Repair and Renewal costs.

I am able to report that the amount of grant that we need to repay to the Heritage Lottery Fund has now been determined at £1,561 and this amount is shown as an expenditure item in the Atlas Fund account. As a consequence, this account shows a loss on the year of £1,297.

Finally, I would like to thank our Auditor, Norman Scott, for his continued assistance and I am pleased to report that he is willing to continue to carry on in this role next year.

John Patterson, Treasurer

SITUATIONS VACANT

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY - VERY URGENT!!!

Susan Canovan has been Membership Secretary for the last 5 years and intends to retire at the AGM in March 2014. It is hoped that a volunteer(s) will come forward soon so that they can work in harness with Susan, ready to take over completely in April 2014. Below is an attempt to give some idea of the workload involved; anyone interested should in the first instance contact Clive Richards (see below) for more details.

JOB DESCRIPTION

- send out reminders to members about the payment of subscriptions (usually one in the November *Bird News* and one with the *Bird Report* in January).
- collect subscriptions, either at meetings or those received in the post, to pay these into the bank and to inform the Treasurer of the amount paid in (Oct-Feb the peak period). There is a computer programme for the collation of members' details.
- respond to all applications from persons wishing to join the Society (it takes approx 10-15 mins to process an application).
- keep a record of the 'numbers of current members' and to inform Council through the Secretary of any significant changes.
- keep Gift Aid records and to pass them on to the Treasurer for forwarding (they are automatically kept by the computer programme and printed off).

CAWOS COUNCIL - VERY URGENT!!!

Also, Council requires a Vice-Chairman and three members *with immediate effect*, plus, some senior Council members are due for retirement in a year's time and we need to find new blood to replace them.

For further information, please contact:

Clive Richards Email: cliverichards@cawos.org Tel: 01625 524527

“THE SOCIETY NEEDS YOU”

Diary

APRIL

- 1 ADNHS 'BATS' by Tony Parker
- 6 MRSPB North Wirral coast, ring 01625 432635
- 8 MRSPB 'WESTERN CANADA' by Tim Melling
- 11 SECOS AGM AND MEMBERS' EVENING
- 11 MCOS AGM AND MEMBERS' EVENING
- 12 KOS Woolston Eyes NR, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 13 SECOS Seaforth, ring for details
- 13 NCRSPB World's End, meet at World's End car park at 7am
- 15 ADNHS 'IN CELEBRATION OF CLOUDS' by Hugh Beggs
- 16 CRSPB AGM (starts at 7pm) followed by 'THE BEAR NECESSITIES' by John and Tracy Langley
- 21 HPRSPB 'THE WOOD' by Paul Hobson
- 25 KOS AGM followed by 'BRAZIL: ATLANTIC FOREST & THE PANTANAL' by Sheila Blamire
- 25 WGBG AGM followed by 'BIRDS OF THE FALKLANDS' by Tom Gibbons
- 25 NCRSPB 'A BEWILDERMENT OF BIRDS' by Rev. Hugh Linn
- 26 CRSPB Aber Valley, ring Margaret Bain 01244 380447 for details
- 26 CADOS World's End/Glyndyfrdwy, ring Ron Shewring 0151 339 0696 for details
- 27 WGBG Rutland Water by coach, ring for details
- 27 MRSPB Rutland Water by coach, with Wilmslow Guild
- 27 HPRSPB Whisby, Lincs, ring 0161 427 6194
- 27 MCOS Cannock Chase, meet at Cadet Buildings car park (SJ999174) at 9am
- 27-5 KOS Anniversary trip to Coto Doñana and Extremadura, Spain (fully booked)

MAY

- 6 MCOS Loggerheads CP/Cilcain, meet at Loggerheads car park at 10am
- 7 NCRSPB Cilcain/Loggerheads, meet near Pentre Farm (SJ172647) at 10am
- 11 WGBG Ynys-hir RSPB Reserve by coach, ring for details
- 11 MRSPB Ynys-hir RSPB Reserve by coach, with Wilmslow Guild
- 11 SECOS Ynys hir RSPB Reserve, ring for details
- 11 MRSPB Consall Nature Park, ring 01260 275248
- 13 MRSPB AGM followed by MEMBERS' IMAGES AND VIDEOS
- 15-18 MCOS Norfolk weekend, ring for details
- 16-18 CADOS East Anglia weekend, ring Don Pawlett 01244 677477 for details
- 17 KOS Manifold Valley, Pennines, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 17 CRSPB Great Orme, ring Peter Stevenson 01352 716886 for details
- 17 NCRSPB Coombes Valley/Churnet Valley RSPB, meet at Coombes Valley car park at 9:30am
- 18 HPRSPB Leighton Moss, ring 0161 427 4649
- 19 HPRSPB 'LAMMERGEIERS OF THE SPANISH PYRENEES' by Ashley Grove
- 20 ADNHS Evening walk, Styal Woods, ring for details
- 21 NCRSPB Marshall's Arm LNR, Hartford, meet at Stones Manor Lane (SJ651722) at 7pm
- 23 KOS Goyt Valley, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 6:30pm
- 30-1 MRSPB Weekend in mid-Wales, contact Graham Palmer 01625 420179 for details

JUNE

- 3 ADNHS Evening walk, Gib Wood in Wythenshawe Park, ring for details
- 5-8 NCRSPB Speyside long weekend, ring for details
- 7 ADNHS Hilbre, ring for details
- 8 SECOS Anglesey, ring for details
- 8 MCOS Conwy Valley, meet at Conwy RSPB car park at 9am
- 14 KOS Leighton Moss RSPB, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 14 HPRSPB Llandegla Forest (for Nightjars at dusk) ring 01457 765397
- 15 NCRSPB Llangynog, Powys, meet at village car park (SJ054261) at 9:30am

- 17 ADNHS Evening walk, Tegg's Nose Country Park, ring for details
- 18 NCRSPB Gowy Meadows, meet at lay-by in Thornton-le-Moors (SJ442746) at 7pm
- 21 CADOS Anglesey, ring Alun Harley 01925 269430 for details
- 27 KOS Llandegla Forest, Wrexham, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 6:30pm
- tbc CRSPB Rhydymwyn, ring Norman Sadler 01244 335670 for details

JULY

- 1 ADNHS Evening walk, Pennington Flash, ring for details
- 2 NCRSPB Great Orme, meet at Llandudno Pier (SH783830) at 9:30am
- 3 NCRSPB Bowls and Supper Evening
- 6 CRSPB Anglesey South Stack & Cemlyn Bay, ring Roger Nutter 01829 782237 for details
- 6 HPRSPB Bempton Cliffs, ring 0161 427 4187
- 12 CADOS Fermyn Woods, ring David King 0151 327 7212 for details
- 13 KOS Parkgate/Burton Mere Wetlands, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 15 ADNHS Annual Barbecue
- 16 NCRSPB Rixton Clay Pits, meet at car park (SJ687902) at 7pm
- 25 KOS Mobberley evening walk, meet Mill Ln, Mobberley (close to The Bull's Head) at 6:30pm
- 26 ADNHS Silverdale/Hutton Roof, ring for details

AUGUST

- 5 ADNHS Evening walk, Marbury/Anderton, ring for details
- 16 NCRSPB Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB/Frodsham Marsh, meet at BMW car park at 10am
- 19 ADNHS Evening walk, Dunham Park, for bats, ring for details
- 30 CADOS Migrants (field visit), ring Roger Wilkinson 01244 381343 for details

SEPTEMBER

- 1 HPRSPB AGM, followed by a short talk by a group member
- 7 HPRSPB St Aidan's RSPB Reserve, Leeds, ring 0161 427 0881
- 9 MRSPB 'WILD MERSEY' by Bill Morton
- 9 ADNHS 'WILD FLOWERS OF NORWAY'S FJORDLAND & GOL PLATEAU' by Jack Swan
- 14 MRSPB Wildlife & Outdoor World Extravaganza at Pikelow Farm
- 15 HPRSPB 'A DIGITAL LANE' by Mike Lane
- 19 NCRSPB Talk on Speyside – tbc
- 20 CADOS North Wirral, ring Nick French 01829 271945 for details
- 21 KOS North Wales, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 9am
- 21 NCRSPB Fairhaven Lake /Marton Mere, meet at Fairhaven Lake at 9:30am
- 26 KOS 'NORTH NORFOLK HERE I COME' by Jim Almond

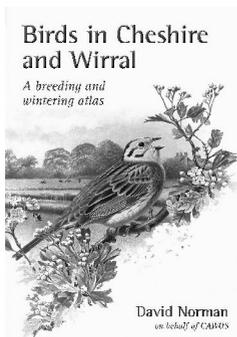
AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

- ADNHS Altrincham & Dist. Natural History Soc, mtgs St Peter's Assembly Rooms, Hale 7:30pm, contact Hon. Sec. Claire Jours 0161 9284513
- CADOS Chester & Dist. Ornithological Soc, mtgs Caldy Valley Community Centre 7:30pm, contact Prog. Sec. Nick French 01829 271945
- CAWOS Cheshire and Wirral Orn Soc, mtgs St Vincent's RC Church Hall, Knutsford 7:45pm, contact Clive Richards 01625 524527
- CRSPB Chester RSPB Group, mtgs St Mary's Centre, Chester 7:30pm, contact Chris Kay and Peter Stevenson 01352 716886
- HPRSPB High Peak RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Senior Citizens' Hall, Marple 7:30pm, contact Peter Griffiths 0161 427 5325
- KOS Knutsford Ornithological Soc, mtgs Jubilee Hall, Stanley Road, Knutsford 8:00pm, contact Tony Ellis 01565 632501
- LOG Lymm Ornithological Group, mtgs Lymm Village Hall 8:00pm, contact Prog. Sec. Hilary Unsworth 01925 860155
- MCOS Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Soc, mtgs Cuddington & Sandiway Village Hall 7:45pm, contact John Drake 01928 561133
- MRSPB Macclesfield RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Senior Citizens' Hall 7:45pm, contact Ray Evans 01625 432635
- NCRSPB North Cheshire RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Appleton Parish Hall, Appleton 7:45pm, contact Olive Giles 01928 733405
- NNHS Nantwich Natural History Soc, mtgs RSPCA, Stapeley Grange at 7:30pm, contact Sec. Mike Holmes 01270 611577
- SECOS South-East Cheshire Orn Soc, mtgs Ettiley Heath Church Community Centre at 7:30pm, contact Sec. Colin Lythgoe 01270 582642
- WGBG Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group, mtgs Wilmslow Guild HQ 7:45pm, contact Sec. Judith Rees 0161 980 5034

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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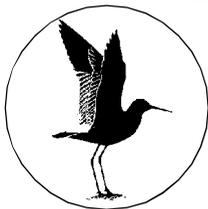


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Note: the copy date for the next issue is 21st June 2014

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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