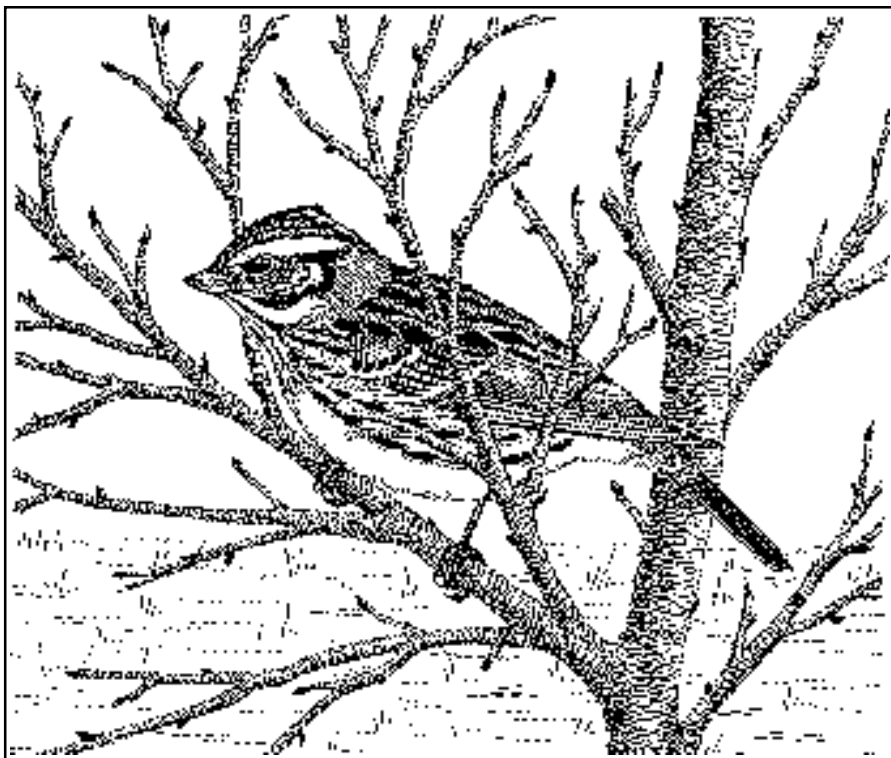




*Cheshire and Wirral
Ornithological Society*

BIRD NEWS

Number 13 Jan 92



Mediterranean Gulls * Recent Reports * Cyprus
Field Sport Conservation * Parkgate Birds * Dark Rumped Petrels
Conservation * Ringers Notebook * One Day Conference
Eastham Woods * Diary



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Articles, Letters and Comments would be welcomed by the Editor

Front cover - Rustic Bunting by Tony Broome

Editorial

SAVED! After the rather desperate pleas from Tony Broome and myself in the previous issue, and the obvious difficulties with the late delivery of Bird News, I am delighted to say there has been a good response in the form of letters and articles from both new and previous correspondents. I would like to take the opportunity through this editorial to personally thank N Butler, D Cogger, C Hancock, D Kelly, P Kenyon, J Oxenham, R Plummer, G Rhodes, P Scott, P Slater and J Turner. All your submissions will appear, although as I am writing this before the final drafting I suspect some items may have to be held over until the next issue. However, we do have three more Bird News to fill for 1992 so might I ask for your continuing support.

The new year has prompted us to consider what might be done to broaden the scope of Bird News. Whilst the original objective of providing a magazine written by CAWOS members on the Cheshire birding scene remains paramount, we feel a modest loosening of this remit might help. Contributions from "members only" will be maintained but other boundaries may be relaxed in moderation. For example it has been suggested that information from notable sites adjacent to the county might be appropriate. Or from what were key areas in the past which sadly have disappeared or deteriorated. In addition the occasional short report on a foreign trip might add some diversification and we include one such item in this issue. One further type of article which I have long considered both valuable and enjoyable would be a regular quarterly feature by someone commenting on their local parish. Again the main emphasis would be on their observations of bird life which could be enhanced by comments on general natural history and the local ecological scene. Is anyone prepared to consider doing this, who knows you may have the beginnings of another "Country Parish".

The role of Editor is perhaps one of responsibility rather than the sheer hard work taken on by other members of the production team. It has however been (kindly) pointed out to me that in striving to obtain copy and ensure publication I had not exercised equal care as to how a particular item might be received. Clearly on three occasions I have singularly failed to assess the potential for comments to cause offence. The most recent involves our past Publicity Officer, Paul Hill. In the last issue we appealed for a new publicity officer and although Paul had already resigned due to other commitments this was not mentioned and indeed his name still appeared as Publicity Officer under Offices of the Society in the same issue! No inference of failure by Paul was in anyway intended and we must take this opportunity to thank him for what he was able to do. A second problem involves my presumed castigation of all shooters in the "Fieldsports" lobby and this is illustrated in a letter within this issue of Bird news. The third and perhaps most serious faux-pas concerns perceived criticism of support from another body interested in Cheshire's birds, namely Bird Life North West. No one can pretend that the objectives of those responsible for CAWOS are identical to those running Bird Line NW. We do have the focus on the County's birds in common however. I must therefore apologise for any difficulty caused by particular comments in previous issues of Bird News and hope that in the fullness of time there may be further opportunity for co-operation with Bird Line North West.

In short then, like the famous car hire company, I shall have to try harder, but at least we are still here and for that I can only once again express my thanks.

Richard Gabb

Species Spotlight

MEDITERRANEAN GULL



Ask birdwatchers to name Cheshire and Wirral's speciality bird and most would come up with the society's emblem, Leach's Petrel. A good bet for second however might be Mediterranean Gull. This species, with a total world population of about 200,000 pairs, (based mostly in the Danube delta and the Crimean area of the Black Sea) used to be a major rarity in this country. So rare that it was included in the Hastings Rarity scandal, with 5 out of the first 9 records being completely fictitious.

Recently, a small population has established itself in NW Europe, with the result that it is now recorded regularly. These days a concerted flog through the Gull flocks on the North Wirral shore or the Mersey more or less guarantees a record of this distinctive species.

At first sight, the distribution of records shows no obvious pattern, with sightings in all months. Close examination shows a combination of passage in Mar-Apr and Jul-Sept with wintering and occasional summering individuals. Most records tend to be of adults or second year birds, possibly because smart pearly gulls with flashing white primaries (black tipped in 2nd years), coral red bills and dramatic black hoods/masks are difficult to ignore.

Though easily overlooked, juvenile and immature Mediterranean Gulls are relatively easy to identify, once they are noticed amongst Black-headed and Common Gulls. They are usually larger than Black-headed Gulls, but not always so. Similarly their bills are usually much stronger, with a characteristic downwards droop, though even this is variable. Perhaps the best single feature for picking out all but juveniles amongst roosting Gulls, is their cleaner, paler frosty-grey mantle and greater coverts (gives wing-bar at rest) though full body and noticeably long legs, which may be any colour from black through olive to red, also help. These legs give the Mediterranean Gull a surprisingly elegant, strutting gait, often with the head held low, hunched between the shoulders - another usefully eye-catching trait.

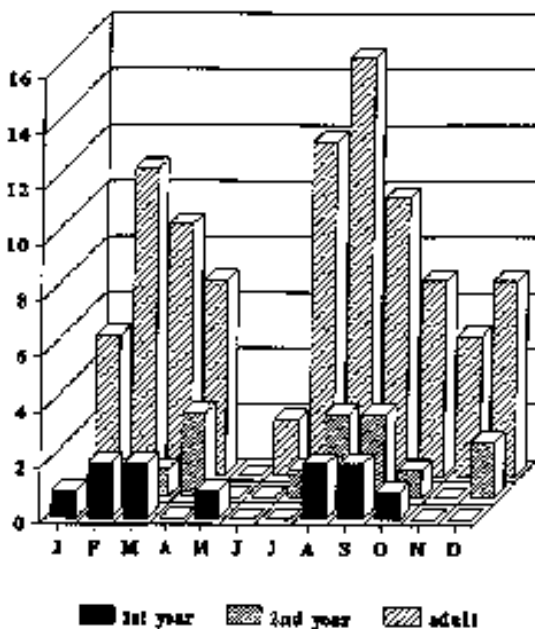
Having accomplished the difficult task of picking out a non-adult Mediterranean Gull, clinching the identification is relatively simple. In addition to the features already mentioned above, the wing pattern of juveniles to 1st winters is distinctive. Though superficially similar to 1st winter Common Gull, with blackish outer primaries and secondary bar, grey mid-wing panel and brownish lesser coverts, they are much cleaner and well defined. However, clear-cut, grey, elongated mirrors on the inner webs of the outer four primaries are diagnostic of Mediterranean Gull. Other features which help rule out Common Gull are the tail bar which is narrower and cleaner cut and the head pattern; either a full black hood and white eye-crescents or a bandit mask and coarse streaking, depending on the season, usually a bit of a give away.

Juvenile Mediterranean Gulls can come as a bit of a surprise since they have clean white heads and neatly scalloped chocolate and cream mantle feathers. The wing pattern however remains distinctive.

As pointed out earlier, Mediterranean Gulls are most frequent on the Wirral coast but they can turn up anywhere. I remember one swimming with Gentoo Penguins at Chester Zoo!

Jane Turner.

**MEDITERRANEAN GULLS IN CHESHIRE
1985-1990**



CONSERVATION AND FIELD SPORTS

When I joined the Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society, I thought I was joining an organisation which would be of benefit to birdwatchers and conservation. I did not envisage that I was joining an anti-shooting club. This scepticism is drawn about by comments such as "duck numbers have increased greatly with much of the saltmarsh now out of the Dee Wildfowlers control" (BIRDNEWS NO. 9, JAN 1991). Also, whilst the act referred to in the Editorial column of BIRDNEWS NO. 10, APR 1991, of the shooting of a coot flock is to be deplored, it is wrong to tar everybody with the same brush. It is completely out of order to compare shooters with the likes of Saddam Hussain. Shooters in this country do a great deal of conservation work, which is more than can be said of some birdwatchers. The estate which the editor mentions in his article might not exist if it were not for fieldsports in this country.

Paul Slater, 45 Greenway Road, Speke, Liverpool L24 7RY

(No inference that "fieldsport" participants have a similar mental outlook to such a dictator was ever intended, although clearly Mr Salter has chosen to make this connection. I would welcome other views on the pros and cons of "Fieldsport Conservation"! Editor)

Recent Reports

Some of these records may be unauthenticated and require review by the Society Records Panel or BBRC. Records refer to the period early September to early December.

Red-throated Divers were seen in small numbers from the usual coastal watchpoints while inland one was at Doddington briefly in early December and at Melchett Mere (Tatton Park) for over a week from Dec 3rd. A **Black-throated Diver** was seen from Hilbre on Oct 11th and another sat out a gale on the car park at New Brighton on Oct 17th. An immature **Great Northern Diver** was on the Weaver Estuary for a few days early in November while an adult was on the Weaver in the centre of Northwich around the same time. Two **Red-necked Grebes** were on the Mersey off Stanlow on Oct 27th and one was on the sea off Red Rocks on Nov 23rd. Very small numbers of **Manx Shearwaters** were off the coast during gales in late September. **Leach's Petrels** were thin on the ground with single-figures only, off New Brighton, Dove Point and Red Rocks. The only report of **Bittern** was from Rostherne on Dec 7th and 8th.

Two **Mute Swans** were unusual visitors to Red Rocks on Nov 6th. A small movement of **Bewick's Swans** was noted at Rostherne on Oct 29th while in November around 15 were on Ince Bank and 22 at Inner Marsh Farm. Two **Whooper Swans** were at Rostherne on Sept 29th with four there on Oct 24th, two were at Farmwood Pool on Oct 19th, five at Red Rocks on November 1st and odd birds at Inner Marsh Farm later in the month. Skeins of overflying **Pink-footed Geese** were reported from several sites and over 100 birds grazed on fields at Rostherne on Nov 24th. A flock of 360 feral **Greylag Geese** at Rostherne in September may be the largest recorded in Cheshire. Up to 30 **Brent Geese** were near Hilbre from late October into November. A **Red-breasted Goose** at Inner Marsh Farm from early October attracted admirers despite its dubious origin.

A **Ruddy Shelduck** was at Frodsham Marsh in late October and a female **Mandarin** at Melchett Mere and Rostherne in October and December. **Wigeon** returned to their traditional inland wintering sites with up to 200 at Rostherne and Catchpenny Pool in October and December respectively and 120 at Sandbach Flashes in November. The Rostherne **Gadwall** flock peaked at 196 in October. Up to 430 **Teal** were back at Sandbach Flashes in October while numbers at Woolston were reduced, presumably due to drainage; a flock of around 350 was at the Neumanns Flash in November. One or two **Garganey** remained at Frodsham Marsh during September and one was at Rostherne on Oct 16th.

Fiddlers Ferry held up to 11 **Scaup** in October when up to six were also on the Weaver Estuary. An aythya hybrid at Rostherne in late November raised false hopes of **Lesser Scaup**. A female **Eider** was off Red Rocks on Nov 23rd. Two drake **Velvet Scoters** flew out of the Mersey on Nov 4th. Three **Long-tailed Ducks** were involved in sightings at Rostherne from mid October into November, in the same period up to three were reported from Red Rocks, West Kirby Marine Lake, Carr Lane Brick Pit, the Weaver Estuary, Fiddlers Ferry and Doddington; a flock of 12 was off Leasowe on Nov 14th. **Goldeneye** returned in numbers from the third week of October. An early **Smew** was at Rostherne from Nov 22nd, possibly the bird visiting Melchett Mere in mid December. **Goosander** records were not plentiful but reports of up to three came from Fiddlers Ferry, Woolston, Great Budworth Mere, Rostherne and Sandbach Flashes.

A **Honey Buzzard** was over Hilbre, a **Red Kite** was seen at Christleton and a **Marsh Harrier** was at Frodsham Marsh all in early September. **Hen Harrier** reports were few although a bird was using the Parkgate roost by mid November. **Buzzard** sightings were widespread from early September with reports of up to three from Burton, Hale, Frodsham Marsh, Arley, Rostherne, Knutsford and Tabley. September **Ospreys** were reported from North Wirral, Blacon and Combermere while one fished at Lamaload Reservoir in late October. A **Hobby** was at Hilbre in early September while late in the month there were sightings at Burton and Rostherne. At least four **Peregrines** hunted the Dee Marshes and two were seen at Red Rocks on Nov 20th, three birds hunted the Mersey and Frodsham Marshes while birds were also reported from Neumanns Flash and Rostherne.

Water Rails were back at Rostherne and Red Rocks Marsh by Oct 8th and 11th respectively. The last **Little Ringed Plover** were at Sandbach Flashes on Sept 15th and Frodsham Marsh on Sept 21st. An **American Golden Plover** was by the Mersey at Penketh on Oct 13th. 400 **Grey Plovers** were at Red Rocks on Nov 7th. Flocks of **Golden Plover** included 670 at Neumanns Flash in November. A south-westerly hard weather movement was noted during the frosts in early December. **Little Stint** passage was disappointing with numbers just making double-figures on Frodsham Marsh, one was at Sandbach Flashes until Oct 27th. **Curlew Sandpipers** occurred in larger numbers including maxima of 60 at Hilbre on Sept 9th and 50 on Frodsham Marsh on Sept 20th. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Inner Marsh Farm on Sept 21st, a **Purple Sandpiper** returned to New Brighton on the same date. The Sandbach Flashes **Ruff** flock numbered up to 27 during October. **Greenshank** at Parkgate and Frodsham Marsh peaked at 25 and 15 respectively. A juvenile **Wilson's Phalarope** remained at Woolston from Oct 19th to Nov 3rd and a **Grey Phalarope** visited Fiddlers Ferry on Oct 18th.

There were few reports of skuas until strong winds brought 24 **Arctic** and three **Long-tailed Skuas** to New Brighton on Oct 17th, three **Pomarine Skuas** were seen there the next day. More unusual was a sighting of a **Long-tailed Skua** over Sandbach Flashes on Oct 6th. **Mediterranean Gulls** were reported from Hilbre, Red Rocks, Wallasey and New Brighton throughout the period. **Sabine's Gulls** were seen at Fiddlers Ferry on Oct 6th, New Brighton on Oct 17th and Dove Point on Nov 3rd. A **Bonaparte's Gull** was on the Weaver Bend on Oct 13th and a **Ring-billed Gull** reported from New Brighton in late September.

Reports of **Glaucous Gull** at Neumanns Flash from July until into October are believed to have involved two birds; others were at New Brighton on Sept 17th, Hilbre on Oct 11th and Penketh on Oct 14th while Thurstastons "old faithful" has returned for another winter. An **Iceland Gull** was reported at Neumanns Flash in mid November. Several different "**yellow-legged**" **Gulls** were reported from Fiddlers Ferry and Neumanns Flash. Last known dates for **terns** are: **Sandwich** - Oct 18th at New Brighton, **Common** - Oct 17th at New Brighton, **Arctic** - Oct 20th at Farmwood Pool and **Black** - Oct 12th at Woolston. A **Puffin** was seen from Hilbre on Oct 5th while another was off New Brighton on Oct 18th when a **Little Auk** was also seen.

A **Barn Owl** hunted at Frodsham Mash in September and October. **Short-eared Owls** returned from September with up to three on the Dee, five on Frodsham Marsh and four at Fiddlers Ferry. A small, late, passage of **Swifts** included one over Rostherne on Sept 22nd; two **Swallows** were over Sandbach Flashes on Oct 26th and two **House Martins** were near Ashley on Nov 3rd. A **Shore Lark** flew calling over Red Rocks on Nov 23rd and a **Water Pipit** was at Ness Quay on Nov 26th. Two **Waxwings** were at Caldy Grammar School on Dec 13th and a **Black Redstart** at Red Rocks on Oct 28th. The last **Wheatear** was at Frodsham Marsh on Oct 27th. **Fieldfare** and **Redwing** seemed slow in arriving but a large influx of both species was reported over the weekend of Oct 19th/20th. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** possibly "humei" was reported from Dibbinsdale on Nov 18th. The only **Firecrest** reported was in Marbury Country Park in early November. A **Great Grey Shrike** was at Hale Lighthouse on Oct 6th. Two **Ravens** could often be found on Frodsham Marsh. A movement of **Chaffinches** was noted at Red Rocks on Oct 29th and Nov 1st with a max of 355 in an hour but there have been very few reports of **Bramblings**. 75 **Twites** were at Ness Quay on Nov 26th. A **Lapland Bunting** was at Leasowe in early November, and two flew calling over Hurleston Reservoir on December 1st when two were also at Red Rocks. **Snow Buntings** visited Heswall, Red Rocks and Hilbre with a maximum of 13 at Hilbre on Dec 7th. Lastly, a **Rustic Bunting** at Red Rocks on Oct 21st will be the first Cheshire and Wirral record if accepted.



Steve Barber

Thanks to Paul Hill, Colin Lythgoe, Keith Massey, Julia Mottishaw, Mark and Jane Turner.

Notes & Letters

SKY LARK BEHAVIOUR

I was most interested in the letter from Barry MacDonald about the unusual behaviour of a skylark, ie. in eating scraps of food.

In 1986, we were up in Northumberland visiting St. Mary's Isle, a few miles north of Whitley Bay. It is a very small island with a lighthouse, no longer under Trinity House, and a causeway for use when the tide permits. Like most of that coastline, grass grows down to the shore-line.

As we watched, our eyes were drawn to an almost rhythmic movement of some tall grasses, getting nearer and nearer until a skylark appeared, followed by five others. In a most dignified manner, in single file, they walked up the slope to the small car park where they scavenged about, under and around the car, finding small pieces of bread etc.

Our arrival at the car park caused not a flutter. Had these birds learnt how careless we humans can be? As this was in late June, was the female making sure that her brood was well nourished? This is a very quiet place and we were the only people there. The weather was sunny and warm so the skylarks were not short of their natural food.

Mrs Peggy Scott - North Cheshire R.S.P.B., 2 Knutsford Old Road, Grappenhall, Warrington WA4 2LD

HEN HARRIER

I live in a house overlooking a school field in Middlewich. On the afternoon of 3 March 1991, between 3 and 4pm, on a clear day, I was alerted by an unusual call from a bird flying across the field. It flew quickly up and down the field, calling as it went, before flying off southwards. It was a bird of prey, bigger than a kestrel but smaller than a buzzard, with a long tail and tapering wings. The wing tips were black but most of the rest of the body was light-coloured. At about the same time on 11 September, in identical weather conditions, a similar bird behaved in much the same way. My identification was that it was a male Hen Harrier, but as I have never before seen one, I would be interested to hear if anyone else saw this bird on the same day or can confirm or correct my identification.

David Cogger, 113 Nantwich Road, Middlewich

DARK RUMPED OCEADROMA PETROLS

Many of your readers will no doubt have been following, with some interest, the continuing identification of the Tyne and Wear dark-rumped petrels. In the October 90 edition of your magazine, reference was made to an occurrence of a similar bird which was seen off Hilbre Island in September last year. Descriptions and detailed notes were supplied to the Tyne and Wear ringing group and, after much discussion and many months research, the bird was identified as a Petrel similar to those trapped by themselves. The "Hilbre" bird helped build up a whole picture, supplying information on JIZZ since their birds were trapped during the hours of darkness.

Another Dark-rumped Petrel was caught in July of this year, again in the north-east, but this time a blood-sample was taken, by a licensed expert, to be used in a DNA test. The results of this test are encouraging in that a sequence has been obtained and will be used for comparison purposes against other similar Storm Petrels. The other Petrels to be considered are Madeiran Petrel (*O. castro*), Leach's Petrel (*O. leucorhoa*) and Swinhoe's Petrel (*O. monorhis*). This will obviously take some time as DNA tests need to be obtained from overseas.

Other identical birds have been caught on the Portuguese owned Salvage islands over the last eight years but this year's blood sample was taken for the first time. Comparisons will now be made with the "Tyne Petrels" to see if these are identical to those caught in this country.

It is felt by those involved with the research, that the results will show that these birds are in fact Swinhoe's Storm Petrels, although in some quarters Swinhoe's are considered a sub-species of Leach's.

P E Kenyon, 196 Chester Road, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 11G

AN UNUSUAL DEATH

Wearing my hat as manager of the Cheshire Trust nature reserve at Dane's Moss, I collect not only wildlife records, but every scrap of information I can find about the history of the moss, particularly peat extraction. Recently I obtained some valuable notes from one of the peat workers on the moss, Mel Wood, of the final years before extraction ceased. Included in these notes was an interesting event which arose after the winter of 1962/63.

That winter will long be remembered for its severity. Following on a cool summer came snow and then frost with freezing conditions that persisted without let-up for many weeks on end. (Buxton recorded its lowest temperature in the 30 years to 1988 on 23/1/63 of -14.4 degrees centigrade). Where the ground was not covered with frozen snow it was rock-hard, all pools and lakes were covered in ice and even many streams were frozen across. Those birds which did not flee south or west became desperate for food and many died. They also needed to find shelter at night from the bitterly cold conditions.

On Dane's Moss, as part of the drying out process, peat blocks were put into stacks, with holes left every so often to enable air to circulate. Small birds entered these holes and roosted within the peat stacks at night for shelter. (There is an old record of wheaters nesting in these stacks.) Because of the impossible weather conditions, work ceased on the moss at the end of October 1962 and did not recommence again until May 1963. When the peat stacks were taken down to go to the baling mill "hundreds" of dead birds were found within them. Freezing had caused water in the peat blocks to expand, swelling the peat blocks and all but blocking the air holes so that the birds became entombed and starved to death, no doubt very rapidly in the conditions.

"Hundreds" may be a natural exaggeration after seeing many such birds, but there were scores of peat stacks, so the total number of birds may have been very considerable. We shall now never know the total nor all the species, but Mr Wood recalls Wrens, Blue Tits and Chaffinches being some of the birds involved.

John Oxenham, Birchwood, 178 Holmes Chapel Road, Somerford, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4QB

JUST HOW GREEN?

The loss at Woolston of the best waterfowl breeding habitat in Cheshire, part of an SSSI, has roused feelings of anger and frustration among both Woolston regulars and people who, like myself, visit the site only irregularly. Anger and frustration not least because, as I understand matters, the Manchester Ship Canal Company (who, to be fair, gave permission for the Woolston Eyes Conservation Group to manage the site in the first place) are acting entirely within their legal rights and obligations. There is apparently nothing any conservation body, local or national, can do about it.

Over the years a great many commercial interests have made large sums of money and paid large amounts of taxes (or in some case actually received subsidies) through (or for) despoiling natural habitats. Estuaries have been industrialised, heathland taken for housing, great chunks of the flow-country ploughed and afforested - all irreversibly ruined. It is ironic to say, that when accidentally as a result of some industrial or other commercial operation, exciting habitat is created, it is viewed by the "powers that be" as transient - and destroyed.

Many of the best sites for birds in Cheshire are of such a "transient" nature, Frodsham Sludge Pools, Neumann's Flash, Chelford SQ's and Sandbach Flashes as well as Woolston. It is true that left to themselves the value of many of these sites reduces due to natural progression. It is not too unrealistic to think that under the right ownership and with management some, at least, of these sites could be safeguarded for wildlife. This would take money of course but surely, in an age which prides itself on an increasing "green awareness", industry and government could "plough back" some of the profit and taxes made in part by despoiling natural habitats into conservation in this way?

Steve Barber, 14 Thornfield Grove, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport SK8 6AZ

To all our readers a belated but very sincere Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year wishing you all a successful birding 1992

"GET ON YOUR BIKES"

Having recently read about the first "twitch" from the Scillies to Fair Isle my thoughts turned to the methods of transport used by Cheshire birders over the years. In these days of mass ownership of cars, travelling to see a particular bird or to visit a "hot-spot" in Cheshire and Wirral is relatively easy. Thanks to the extensive network of major roads criss-crossing Cheshire and Wirral, even distant parts of our recording area can be reached in around an hour from almost anywhere else in our area. The morning can be spent watching gale-blown sea birds from New Brighton promenade and the afternoon at Sandbach Flashes.

For at least the first half of the present century, travel for the vast majority of the population meant walking, pedal power or public transport. Things were little different for birdwatchers. T. A. Coward who was a regular watcher at Rostherne Mere in the first part of the century used to cycle there from his Bowdon home. Not for him the comfort of a chauffeur-driven car which, according to Eric Hardy in his review of Harrison and Rogers' "The Birds of Rostherne Mere" in the Cheshire Bird Report for 1978, was A. W. Boyd's pre-Second World War method of transport to the same place. Hardy himself cycled some distance to view the mere.

Although there is little evidence of exactly how pre Second World War ornithologists went about their birdwatching in Cheshire and Wirral, it seems more than likely that they were powered by their own steam. During work on "The Breeding Bird Atlas of Cheshire and Wirral" the Manchester Ornithological Society kindly made available the ornithological diaries of N. Abbott. Abbott was a very active birdwatcher between 1910 and 1930. For much of this time he lived on the outskirts of Wilmslow. On foot he covered the countryside around his home, preparing detailed maps of the breeding season distribution of the local bird species. For trips further afield, to Radnor Mere, Redesmere or Rostherne he used his bicycle. For a journey to Budworth Mere and the Northwich Flashes he "let the train take the strain", with his bicycle along in the guards van for use after disembarkation. His diary records how one winters evening, with the light failing, he pedalled along the Northwich to Middlewich road on the track of a vast Starling pre-roost flight; he found the roost but his diary did not record what time he arrived home! Because of the method of travel Abbott was more or less forced to adopt, he became aware of birdlife of the countryside between the particular sites he visited.

The majority of the records submitted for the Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report are from observers, myself included, who have travelled to a particular site: Rostherne, Frodsham Marsh, Sandbach Flashes, Parkgate and others and reported the birds they have found there. This is fine so far as it goes, but with the ease and speed of transport around Cheshire and Wirral, familiarity with the birdlife of the general countryside has become lost. Records from areas away from the main birding "hot-spots" are decreasing. Except when a special effort is made for a local or national "Atlas", our knowledge of for example: the winter distribution of Golden Plover and Lapwing flocks or the breeding season distribution of Tree Sparrow, Yellowhammer and Corn Bunting leaves much to be desired.

This is not an attempt to get everyone fit through walking or cycling. It is a plea to birdwatchers to remember the birdlife of the countryside between the Cheshire and Wirral "hot-spots". On your next local birding outing try driving along some of the country lanes and in the summer, wind down the car window, the song of many species carries above the noise of the engine! Finally, let the County Recorder know about your sightings.

Steve Barber, 14 Thornfield Grove, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport SK8 6AZ

CONSERVATION

CHESHIRE WILDLIFE LIAISON OFFICER

PC Mike Wellman has recently been appointed to the above post. He is anxious to hear of any infringements, within the county, of wildlife legislation or regulations. He is already involved in cases of badger digging and traffic in endangered species.

Cheshire County Council are commended in making such an appointment. We hope adjacent authorities respond in a similar way and appoint their own wildlife liaison officers so that the whole of the North West area has such cover.

Mike can be contacted at Knutsford Motorway Dept., via Cheshire Constabulary, Police Headquarters, Chester CH1 2PP.

BIRDS OF A PARKGATE GARDEN

I keep a number of lists of birds, one of these is a list of birds seen in our garden and another is of birds seen from our garden but not actually in it (eg. flying over, on Wirral Way which is at the bottom of our garden or in neighbours gardens). To date we have seen 64 in our garden and 36 others from it. A number of these are birds you would expect eg. Sparrow, Tits, Finches etc. The following is a summary of some of the others seen.

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Heron | An occasional visitor to our pond also seen on our roof. |
| White Stork | This was present on and off, on Mostyn House School fields 14/10/83 to 22/10/83 |
| | and was seen over our house on a couple of occasions. |
| Wildfowl | Many sightings of Swans, Geese and Ducks. Regular sightings of Shelduck in summer setting off on moult migration. |
| Birds of Prey | Hen Harrier, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Merlin & Peregrine all seen. Sparrowhawks are regular visitors to our apple trees or on our fences. |
| Quail | Heard calling 12/13 June 1980. In 1989 heard from 18 June to 21 June. |
| Pheasant | One female in a neighbours garden 17/12/80. |
| Waders | Seen passing over and heard moving over and calling at night. |
| Avocet | One flew low off the marshes calling over our house 8/8/88. |
| Woodcock | One flew west over our garden 8/10/91. |
| Snipe | One landed in our garden during cold spell 22/12/81. |
| Gulls/Terns | Seen regularly. A Common Gull was in garden 12/2/85. |
| Cuckoo | Regular but only one seen in garden 28/3/85. |
| Little Owl | One on top of lamp post 1/10/82 opposite house. |
| Tawny Owl | On Wirral Way occasionally. |
| Woodpeckers | Occasional Great Spotted and Green. Lesser Spotted seen once 13/12/86. A Great Spotted spent about 5 hours on and off on 5/1/88 and nearly demolished the front of a tit box. |
| Waxwings | Present on Wirral Way 30/11/74 to at least 18/1/75 (13). |
| Black Redstart | A female spent about 5 mins in garden 14/11/82. |
| Wheatear | One on our driveway 18/9/82. |
| Redwing/Fieldfare | Regular particularly in hard weather. A Redwing found dead 16/2/79 weighed only 42 grammes (1/2 its normal weight). |
| Wagtails | Occasional Pied and Grey in garden. |
| Warblers | Whitethroats seen regularly also Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcaps seen regularly in winter and also breed. |
| Spotted Flycatcher | Seen once 13/9/84. |
| Pied Flycatcher | One sighting in garden 25/7/90. |
| Tits | Blue, Great, Coal & Long Tailed regular. Willow occasional Marsh Tit seen only once 28/1/89. |
| Tree Creeper | Rare visitor to garden, 2 in garden 17/11/89. |
| Jay | Seen on Wirral Way occasionally. |
| Raven | Fly over from Welsh side of Dee. Family party of 5 seen on a few occasions in 1990. |
| Finches | Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Goldfinch regular. Brambling usual during hard weather (7 on 6/4/89). Siskin never seen in garden until Dec 1988 when we had up to 7 regularly until 29/3/89 (1 was taken by Sparrowhawk 11/2/89). A few seen winter 1989/90. |
| Redpoll | One or two usually each year. |
| Yellowhammer | Although common on Wirral Way. Only one ever seen in garden on 1/10/85. |
| Reed Bunting | Rare in garden usually in hard weather. |
| Corn Bunting | Seen once in garden on 14/10/85. |
| Red Billed Quelea | A female in garden from 17/10/81 - 6/12/81 was found dead in snow 3/1/82. |

G H Rhodes, 18 Springcroft, Parkgate, South Wirral, Cheshire L64 6SE

Ringers Notebook

There is always a time lag before we receive details of ringed birds: this means that records of our summer visitors often come through when our thoughts have turned to Fieldfares and Redwings!

Sand Martins continue to show amazing movements in all directions, almost always being caught again by other ringers. Our birds go to autumn roosts in south-east England, and there are so many of these records each year that they are not now listed in full in the CBR. Less common movements include the juvenile caught at a Delamere colony on 7th July that had been ringed nine days before in Lincolnshire, 170 km away, and an adult female ringed at a Sandiway quarry on 2nd June that was caught again on 15th August in a colony in County Durham (156 km N).

A Woolston Sedge Warbler was retrapped at Icklesham in East Sussex, 352 km SE, just four days after being ringed on 3rd August. It was over 3g heavier when caught in Sussex, and so had probably made the journey south the night after it was ringed, and fattened up for a couple of days near the south coast before being caught.

Not much is known about our local Rooks but one, ringed in its nest near Kelsall in mid-April was found dead near Ince, 14 km NW. on 25th August.

Three Teal ringed on the Mersey in winter 1990/91 have provided evidence of their easterly origins. Two females caught at Bromborough Pool on 3rd February 1991 have been reported shot, one on 20th August in Finland, 2162 km NE, and the other on 23rd September in Denmark, 841 km ENE. A male ringed at Hale Duck Decoy on 20th September 1990 was caught again in Denmark on 4th June 1991, the date suggesting that it was probably in a breeding area.

The effects of 1991's poor breeding season are obvious this autumn and winter, with virtually no Goldcrests passing through and a far lower proportion than normal of first-year birds in the local flocks of tits.

Much more information about bird ringing in Cheshire and Wirral is contained in the 1990 Annual Report of the Merseyside Ringing Group, which is available from 6 The Spinney, Parkgate, South Wirral, L64 6RX, price £2.50 including postage.

Dr David Norman, Rowswood Cottage, Ridding Lane, Sutton Weaver, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 6PF. (telephone Runcorn 711064)

BTO/CAWOS One Day Conference at Chester

The Chester College of Further Education was the venue of the first joint BTO/CAWOS Conference held on the 9th November, which had an attendance of 95.

The morning session commenced with PAUL JOHNSON's (Hawk & Owl Trust) intriguing insight into Bedford's Tawny Owls. The problems and strategies required to carry out such a study and the necessary cooperation with local authorities and people were outlined, not to mention the requirements of the birds themselves. The results of the study were given in detail and revealed the Tawny Owl to be the top predator in that type of environment. MALCOLM CALVERT outlined the history of Cuckoo parasitism of Reed Warblers in Cheshire. This had occurred in the past but not until 1977 had it been recorded in his study area. The incidence had increased then stabilised. Success rate to a fledgling was not high due to the habitat and the need to match the breeding cycles of the two types of bird with the season's weather conditions.

RICHARD BLINDELL gave a review of a study carried out in the moorlands in East Cheshire. Fieldwork had begun using the "Transect Method" but later the "Intensive Search of 1/4 sq km Block Method" was found to be more productive. New information had been revealed as to the birds special needs in this habitat especially where moorland was surrounded by cultivated areas. The moorlands in question were under threat mainly from intensive human pressure and the study had indicated the need for Moorland Management schemes.

The morning session finished with NIGEL CLARK's (BTO) study of the Dunlin and how the different races wintered on our shores often in mixed flocks which varied according to season. Our own breeding birds migrated to Africa and beyond but the breeding areas of the wintering birds were still comparatively unknown. However the opening up of the Arctic area to more researches and the use of the latest techniques in block sampling were likely to give wide insights into this bird which is our commonest winter wader.

After lunch Dr DAVID GIBBONS (BTO) surprised the audience with his study of Moorhen, a species which for most people had been taken for granted. The study carried out at Peakirk had revealed that the Moorhen regularly parasitised adjacent nests of other moorhens. The factors which determined the phenomenon were described as well as the reasons and success rate in relation to normal breeding.

DENIS ELPHICK reviewed the status of Mute Swans in Cheshire, the fall in numbers in the 70's and early 80's and the present increase from the minimum in 1985 following the banning of anglers lead shot in 1987. The current ringing scheme in Cheshire and surrounding areas was explained and the belief that the population was poised to make a comeback to something like its old status.

Dr DAVID GIBBONS (BTO) returned to update the situation regarding the New BTO "Breeding Atlas for the British Isles". He explained the difference between the new atlas and the old and gave examples of how species distribution had changed in such a short time between the surveys. The new atlas was expected to be published early in 1993 at a forecast price of £25.

Dr DAVID NORMAN brought the audience back to Cheshire, especially to the Dee and Mersey estuaries highlighting their importance both in the National and International scene with regard to waders and wildfowl. Data collected over many years has been invaluable in monitoring changes to the estuaries as well as protecting them from the many development projects which could harm their special environment.

The concluding presentation was by Dr KEN SMITH (RSPB) who had just finished a study of the breeding requirements of the Great Spotted Woodpecker when the September 1987 gales devastated the two areas he had covered. The study was continued in order to monitor the affect of this drastic occurrence on the birds feeding and nesting habitats. Happily as far as the birds were concerned their numbers had not been reduced as limiting factors had been balanced by favourable ones.

The meeting concluded with the Vice Chairman of CAWOS, DAVID STEVENTON, thanking all who had helped with making the Conference a success, especially the two BTO representative COLIN LYTHGOE and CLIVE RICHARDS, Cheshire College, BTO Staff and CAWOS Members not to mention the first class presentations from all who had taken part. He hoped that this would be the first of many such conferences which could do so much in furthering Ornithology in Cheshire and Wirral.

P.S. Displays were also a feature of the conference from the BTO, CAWOS, Subbuteo Books, Focalpoint, Birdline Northwest, Mersey Estuary Cons. Group

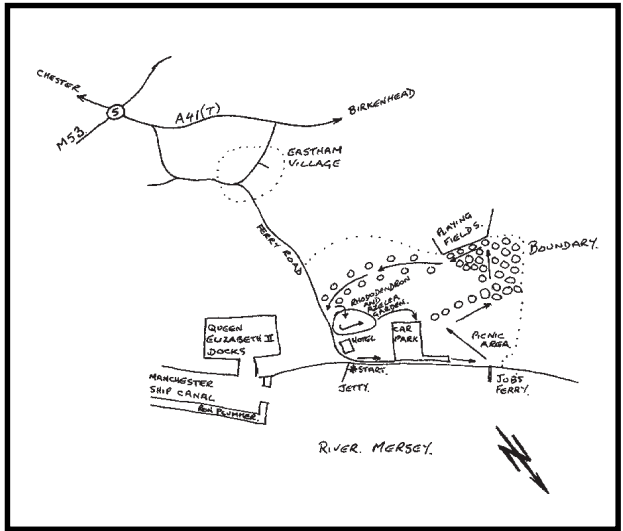
Derek Kelly - CAWOS Council

Sites to Watch

EASTHAM WOODS

How many of you have ever been to Richmond-on-Mersey? For that matter, how many of you even know where it is? If I asked the same about Carlett Ferry you would still probably be none the wiser. But if I gave its more recent name of

Eastham would you still be in the dark? Would you even care? Eastham Woods may not be as well known, birding wise, as Weaver Bend or Hilbre Island but it is still worth a visit.



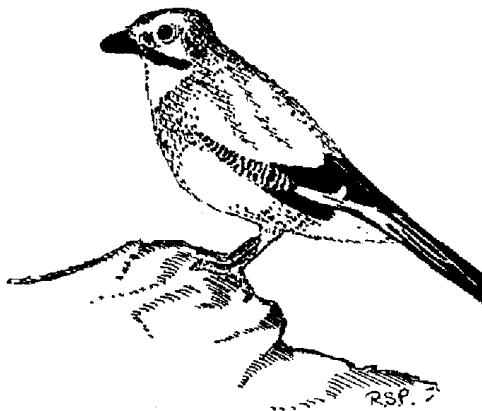
As recently as 1928, there used to be ferries sailing between here and Liverpool. The "Ruby", "Pearl" and especially the "Sapphire" would take as little as 40 minutes for the crossing, and that against the tide. A far cry from the time this service first started in about 1500, when the same journey would take up to twelve hours by sail. Records show that as many as 30 stage coaches per day would call here with passengers wanting to travel between Chester and Liverpool. Alas, this form of transport went into decline in 1840 when the Birkenhead to Chester railway was opened. For a while longer the ferry still plied a fair trade with day trippers but when the boats were broken up in 1929, they were never to be replaced, and the jetty finally went the same way in 1935.

The Eastham Ferry Hotel was built by Sir Thomas Stanley in 1846 and still offers the visitor good food and drink in pleasant surroundings. There are some quaint old mementoes of the bygone age of sail and steam adorning the walls, each with an explanatory note for those unfamiliar with the nautical side of life. From the car park, either in front of the hotel or at the main car park further on to the left and right, the visitor can now take a leisurely stroll round the nature trail.

Starting at what remains of the pier, look to your right, here are the lock gates for the entrance to the Manchester Ship Canal. At its height, Manchester was the third largest sea port in Britain but since the decline of shipping in the mid 1960's, most of the tonnage passing through the locks now only consists of oil tankers berthing at the Queen Elizabeth II oil terminal or container ships bound for Cawoods at Ellesmere Port.

The ever changing face of the Mersey can give some good bird watching. There are always Great Crested Grebes, gulls, sometimes including Kittiwake, Little, Mediterranean and the odd white winged, plus a variety of waders within sight. Also wildfowl passing overhead en route to their roost higher up the river or to the sand bars at low tide.

Turn left here and walk with the river to your right until you reach the fence at the end of the car park. Just further on than this is the remains of Job's Ferry. This is probably the site of the oldest landing stage at Eastham, although the sand stone jetty was only built about 1785 when it was known as Carlett Ferry. The first paddle steamer to be in service on the Mersey, the "Princess Charlotte", docked here from 1816 onwards but by 1874 this jetty could only be used at high tides. Look carefully beneath the roots of the sycamore tree here to see the remains of the 12 stone steps that passengers would use to get them from the top of the cliff to the jetty.



Turning away from the river, walk now across the picnic area to the left and follow the line of trees back to the right and through the woods. Most of this area was planted at roughly the same time so many of the trees are of the same age. The large oak tree here is probably the bearer of many of the younger oaks round-about. This is a good place for Treecreepers and Long Tailed Tits. There is also a fair variety of plant life here as well, including bluebell and wood anemone with fungi such as the sulphur tuft toadstool. Follow the path on to the playing fields through the beech grove and see if you can spot the square stemmed wood sage or the wavy hair grass, both of which indicate that the soil is infertile and sandy. Even so, the undergrowth and trees are good enough to give cover to a host of bird life that includes Nuthatches, Jays, Chaffinches, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps and the occasional Garden Warbler, during the summer.

Continue along the trail, bearing left, and you will find yourself in the rhododendron and azalea garden. Hidden in the midst of this thicket is an old bear pit, thankfully long since obsolete but still in good condition. Is it any wonder that the bears used in this barbaric sport stood little chance of survival when there was hardly any room for them to move? Take care from here back to the car park as the path becomes quite uneven and dangerous in places. There is only a short walk to the car park from here and the path takes you past the rangers' hut and a tea shop. Here is a good place to stop and rest after your walk of maybe two hours and make notes on what you have seen. Hopefully, your bird "tick list" will include many of the 78 species that have been recorded as either resident or passage migrant here.

Whatever you see, I hope your visit will be as enjoyable for you as it always is for me.

To reach Eastham by road, leave the M53 motorway at junction 5 and join the A41(T) heading towards Birkenhead. Turn right off the A41 after 200 yds and follow this minor road through the village. Turn right again, as the road bends left, into Ferry Road and continue until the River Mersey says stop. You will pass the Eastham Ferry Hotel on your left.

Ron Plummer

OCTOBER 9.5 APR Sat 15 Diary 8 May 7th 3 Jan Sun 28

FEBRUARY

- 2 CRSPB LEIGHTON MOSS by coach, ring 0244-324268 for details
- 2 MCOS SEAFORTH NATURE RESERVE, meet at Dock Gates 9.00am
- 3 CAWOS "RINGING BIRDS IN SENEGAL" by Dr David Norman
- 6 CADOS "THE COMPLETE OWL" by Michael Leach
- 7 ADNHS SOLWAY WEEKEND, ring for details
- 7 SECOS "NATURE THROUGH THE MICROPHONE" by Richard Margoschis
- 8 KOS SCOTTISH WEEKEND, ring for details
- 9 CADOS SLIMBRIDGE, meet Overleigh Cemetery 8.00am
- 9 SECOS SLIMBRIDGE, ring 0270-872435 for details
- 9 WG NORTH WALES, meet at Guild HQ 8.00am
- 11 ADNHS "NATURE IN WIGAN" by C. Owen
- 11 MRSPB "ICELAND - BIRDS & WILDLIFE" by Charles Linfoot
- 14 MCOS "SOURCE OF THE DEE" by Ray Roberts
- 15 MRSPB WOOLSTON EYES, ring for details
- 19 CRSPB "BIRDS IN WALES" by Dr. Stephanie Tyler
- 21 KOS "ST KILDA" by Dr. Robinson
- 21 WG SOLWAY WEEKEND, ring for details
- 22 CADOS NORTH EAST COAST WEEKEND, ring 0928-723871 for details
- 25 ADNHS "THE EXTENT OF THE MERSEY VALLEY" by Mersey Valley Warden
- 28 WG "EQUADOR & GALAPAGOS" by Val McFarland

MARCH

- 1 CRSPB ELLESMERE, ring 0244-341371 for details
- 2 CAWOS "A.G.M."
- 5 CADOS "A.G.M." & "BIRD BRAIN QUIZ"
- 6 SECOS "BIRDS OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN" by Cliff Heyes
- 7 KOS PENNINGTON FLASH, meet at Sessions House 8.30am
- 8 MCOS COMBERMERE, meet at the gates 10.00am
- 10 ADNHS "BUTTERFLIES" by P. Hardy
- 10 MRSPB "BIRDS OF VENEZUELA" by Breyton Holt
- 12 RSPB RSPB FILM SHOW at Congleton
- 13 MCOS "BIRDS OF ISRAEL" by Alan Roberts
- 14 CADOS TREGARON, meet at Overleigh Cemetery 8.00am
- 15 MRSPB MARTON MERE & RIBBLE ESTUARY, ring for details
- 18 CRSPB "A.G.M." + "OF MOORLANDS AND MUDFLATS" by Andre Farrar
- 20 KOS MEMBERS SLIDES
- 20 CADOS "ANNUAL DINNER"
- 22 ADNHS LEIGHTON MOSS & SILVERDALE, ring for details
- 22 SECOS ALDERLEY EDGE, ring 0270-872435 for details
- 22 WG RUTLAND WATER, meet at Guild HQ 7.30am
- 24 ADNHS "A.G.M."
- 27 WG "BIRDS OF ISRAEL" by Adam Davison

APRIL

| | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 5 | CRSPB | LLANGOLLEN, ring 0244-533029 for details |
| 5 | MCOS | TYNMYNYDD & WORLDS END, meet Tynmynydd 6.00am |
| 10 | MCOS | "A.G.M." & MEMBERS EVENING |
| 11 | ADNHS | PECKFORTON, ring for details |
| 11 | KOS | ANGLESEY, meet at Sessions House 8.00am |
| 12 | CADOS | SPINNIES & THE ORMES, meet Overleigh Cemetery 9.00am |
| 14 | MRSPB | "OWLS" by Michael Leach |
| 15 | CRSPB | "MEMBERS EVENING" |
| 21 | MRSPB | EVENING WALK AT BONIS HALL, ring for details |
| 24 | KOS | "A.G.M." |
| 24 | WG | "A.G.M." & FILMS |
| 26 | MRSPB | GREAT ORME, ring for details |
| 26 | SECOS | PEOVER HALL, ring 0270-872435 for details |
| 26 | WG | ANGLESEY, meet at Guild HQ 7.30am |
| 27 | CADOS | BURTON & GWYSENEY, meet Overleigh Cemetery 6.00pm |
| 28 | ADNHS | "AMPHIBEAN CONSERVATION" by R. Parker |

SOCIETIES

| | |
|---------|---|
| ADNHS: | Altrincham & District Natural History Society, mtgs Hale Methodist Church Hall 7.30pm, Sec. Vincent Pedley 061-748-4717 |
| CADOS: | Chester & District Ornithological Society, mtgs Caldy Valley Community Centre 7.30pm, Prog. Sec. Marion Barlow 09282-3871 |
| CAWOS: | Cheshire & Wirral Ornithological Society, mtgs Knutsford Civic Centre 7.45pm, contact Sheila Blamire 0565-830168 |
| CCTNG: | Cheshire Conservation Trust (North Group), mtgs Altrincham Library 7.45pm, Pub. Off. Ann Mason 061-860-5104 |
| CRSPB: | Chester RSPB Members Group, mtgs St. Marys Centre Chester 7.30pm, Prog. Sec. Brenda Legard 0244-682018 |
| HO: | Hale Ornithologists, mtgs St. Peters Assembly Hall 7.45pm, Prog. Sec. Barbara Vercambre 061-980-8362 |
| HPRSPB: | High Peak RSPB Members Group |
| KOS: | Knutsford Ornithological Society, mtgs Knutsford Methodist Church Hall 7.45pm, contact Peter Perkins 0565-632784 |
| LOG: | Lymm Ornithological Group, mtgs Lymm Village Hall 8.00pm. Prog. Sec. Peter Tonge 0606-891274 |
| MCOS: | Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society, mtgs Hartford Village Hall 7.45pm, contact Paul Kenyon, 196 Chester Rd, Hartford |
| MRSPB: | Macclesfield RSPB Members Group, mtgs Senior Citizens Hall 7.45pm, Prog. Sec. Julia Thornburn 0625-582433 |
| NCRSPB: | North Cheshire RSPB Members Group, mtgs Parish Church, Appleton, Sec. Lynn Fewster 0928-575876 |
| SECOS: | South-east Cheshire Ornithological Society, mtgs Sandbach Library 7.30pm, Prog. Sec. John Clowes 0270-872435 |
| SRSPB: | Stockport RSPB Members Group, mtgs contact Mike Armstrong 061-980-3986 |
| WBC: | Wirral Bird Club, mtgs Kingsmead Hall, Hoylake 8.00pm, Prog. Sec. Hilda Truesdale 051-632-2705 |
| WG: | Wilmslow Guild, mtgs Wilmslow Guild HQ 7.45pm, Prog. Sec. Miss S. Ricketts 0625-583148 |
| WRSPB: | Wirral RSPB Group, mtgs Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead 7.30pm, Prog. Sec. D Jowitt 051-625-5534 |

CYPRUS ON A TIMESCALE (28th April - 2nd May)

My hastily organised travel arrangements culminated in me being marooned at Larnaca Airport at 2.00am with no transport and no accommodation. The former problem was quickly overcome in the shape of a rather dilapidated "Suzuki" jeep - and I was soon heading south west to the AKROTIRI peninsula.

Due to the abbreviated time scale I had decided to limit the area covered to a few square miles around the Salt Lake at Akrotiri - including Ladies Mile Beach (and the pools and scrub between here and the lake) Zakaki Tip and football "stadium", Phasouri Reed Beds, Bishops Pool and the Kensington Cliffs. As anyone, who has ever spent any time in a Suzuki jeep will know, sleep was totally out of the question and I duly arrived at Ladies Mile Beach before first light (normally around 5.30am). As the sun rose and illuminated the saline pools behind the beach, it was clear that there were large numbers of waders present - scores and scores of Curlew Sandpipers, Little Stint, Dunlin with smaller numbers of Kentish Plover and Whimbrel. My presence had been duly noted by an army "scout car" and its three British occupants (the Airbase is not far and is fairly sensitive) who insisted on comparing my optics with theirs!

Scrub - a vast area which surrounds the salt lake was relatively unproductive with several Spectacled Warblers, Peregrine, 2 Marsh Harriers and 2 Great Spotted Cuckoos (obviously moving through).

The Dunes and "Salicornia" scrub which separated the pools from the beach were relatively unproductive, but it was a good place for seeing Red-footed Falcon - up to 9 strung out on the telegraph wires. Also seen were Peregrine, Marsh Harrier, Spectacled Warbler and 2 Great Spotted Cuckoos, the latter obvious migrants. The Dunes themselves served as a useful vantage point for viewing early morning movements of Terns/Gulls (many of which roosted out in the centre of the by now dried up lake) an early morning 1 hour watch produced 4 x Caspian, 2 x Gull Billed, 20 x White Winged Black, 12 x Comic Terns and 18 x Slender Billed Gulls. 2 Cranes flying over were a surprise at this time of year. Seawatching was something of a disaster, a 2 hour watch produced nothing more than 7 Avocets flying along the coast but as this was carried out sitting outside the Kentpo Oasis Bar sipping a cold "Keo" beer no undue hardship was suffered.

The Zakaki football stadium area and in particular the pools on either side of the road were excellent with literally scores of WWB Terns (with a few Whiskered and Black mixed in) and Collared Pratincole sunning themselves on the hot tarmac. Birds seen here included Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Snipe, Redshank and Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Black Winged Stilt. Black-tailed Godwit, Roller, Little Egret, Squacco Heron, Little Bittern, Collared Flycatcher, Little Gull, Blackheaded, Yellow and White Wagtails. The drainage ditches which followed the track down to the lake (NB. only suitable for 4WD) were also good with Roller, Common Sandpiper, Temmicks Stint and Turnstone (a very good bird by all accounts in Cyprus!).

Unfortunately, I was too late for migrant passerines but was just right for the shooting season. The sight of grown men bedecked in cammi gear, forage caps, bandoleers etc, ranged against some hapless Turtle Dove struck me as all rather pathetic but judging by the amount of cartridges lying around, I must have been in the minority of one - (over there at any rate).

Despite the ever present sound of gunfire the reed beds (a reserve) at PHASOURI were superb. If you had to design an ideal wetland environment, Phasouri is as close as you could get. Birds seen included Spur-winged Plover (3), Glossy Ibis (12), Redthroated Pipit, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Sanderling, Collared Pratincole, Garganey, Little Bittern, Little Egret, Purple Heron, Black Francolin, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Wheatear, Willow Warbler with Alpine Swift overhead.

Whilst you can certainly circumnavigate the entire salt lake (absolutely vast) the road is rough and I found the rewards few. There are some useful looking pools on the west side but they contained similar species to those already seen. The much vaunted "Bishops Pool" (- a sewage pond from the military base!) was disappointing and only added Golden Oriole and Sparrowhawk to the list.

Due to the limited amount of time, a brief visit was made to Kensington Cliffs at Episkopi, which enabled me to "tick" the 3 Cyprus specialities in quick succession - Cyprus Pied Wheatear, Masked Shrike and Cyprus Warbler. Other birds there included Eleanoras Falcon and Griffon Vulture. Night Herons were tracked down to a small reservoir near Zakaki before driving back to the airport and home.

The above does not pretend to be a comprehensive "clean up" operation but with a slightly earlier date, a lot more time and a little more planning

C Hancock, Browside, Brow Lane, Antroub, Cheshire

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Our recent move to Higher Whitley, has enabled us to offer our customers even better viewing opportunities. Situated within easy reach of the M56, we have ample free car parking. Visitors to our premises have been able to test out their prospective purchase whilst watching birds using our feeding station. These have included Willow Tit, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow and Greenfinch, whilst overhead Goshawk, Buzzard and Arctic Tern have been seen on passage. So far nearly 80 species of bird have been seen - is there a better way to try before you buy?

BOOKS

With the increased space our new Unit has, we are able to offer our customers an ever increasing range of Natural History Books, with all the latest from Croom, Helm, T & AD Poyser, Academic Press, Collins, MacMillan and others

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|---------------------------------------|-------|
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| Adventure Shorts | 9.95 |
| Casual Trousers | 9.95 |

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We also now sell a range of limited edition artwork by Roger Tory Peterson, Lars Jonnson, Robert Bateman, Keith Shackelton and other leading artists. All work is on display at Higher Whitley together with a selection of original artwork by local artists such as Philip Snow, Gordon Trunkfield and David Quinn

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STOP PRESS: The highly acclaimed
"GUIDE TO THE WARBLERS OF THE WESTERN PALEARCTIC"
has recently been published and is now available, Price £21.00.

THE BIRD BEFORE THE EGG

A few years ago my wife and I booked a self catering cottage on Mull to see some different birds from those in our Bedfordshire garden. We left our son and his intended to look after the house and off we went. Half way through our fortnight we received a message to ring home. My son answered and said "you are wasting your time on Mull. An unusual bird has flown through the kitchen window". He said it was "small, chicken sized with red stripes". The crash occurred while he was at work. Our neighbour Elaine had come in and swept up the glass and had photographed the bird with her instamatic flash before it had flapped behind the gas cooker. On arriving home our son tried to set the bird free through the back door but instead the bird flew back out through the broken window. It flew 200 yards and crashed into the roof of a house. Obviously blind with glass in its eyes. Sad to say no efforts were made to seek out and possibly succour the poor victim which might have survived. I asked for a more detailed description but our son said "don't worry, Elaine took a photo of it". Leaving instructions to get new glass fitted we rang off, confident that Elaine's photo would confirm identification.

Home again after the holiday Elaine had not yet finished her film. Three weeks later her 13 year old son went fishing in the Grent Ouse nearby where he claimed to have caught single handed, a gigantic 4' long pike with no witnesses but he had taken a picture of it with his mum's camera (borrowed without permission). The trouble was he had dropped the camera into the weir pool complete with all evidence of our bird and his pike. Over the following months the episode became forgotten. Early in December my wife decided to "spring clean" the kitchen and so we pulled the gas cooker out from the wall. A rattling sound accompanied the move and on looking behind the cooker, there caught on the floor but inside the frame was a perfect Red-legged Partridge egg. We still have it, CIRCA 1983.

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