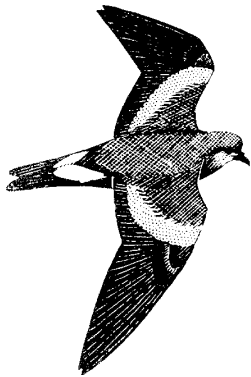


Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society



BIRD NEWS

Number 40 October 98



**Great Grey Shrike • Feeding Birds in the Garden
Birds in the Oxford English Dictionary
Armchair Birding • The Origin of Jizz
Grey Partridge Recovery Project**



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Articles, Letters and Comments would be welcomed by the Editor

Front cover: Sabine's Gull, Little and Manx Shearwaters by Tony Broome

Other illustrations by Tony Broome, Dave Quinn & Thelma Sykes

Editorial

By the time you read this piece, the first CAWOS exhibition will be all done and dusted. Many people worked tremendously hard to achieve the finished product but none more so than Sheila Blamire and David Cogger. Sheila may be entered for the Guinness Book of Records as the world's fastest one-handed typist, an unwanted tag brought about by the unwarranted attentions of two Romanian dogs. So a mightily deserved thank you to Sheila for all her efforts. David Cogger acted as the co-ordinator for the exhibition, and somehow got us over the finishing line despite many of the team, myself included, thinking that a deadline was something that you missed.

One thing that the exhibition demonstrated was that the best results come from the pooling of talents. The exhibition reflected this in a very graphic fashion, with superb complementary features from many organisations and individuals. Add to this the tremendous support given by individuals to act as guides for the visitors and the positive responses this elicited. It makes me feel justified in saying that CAWOS did produce an exhibition to be proud of. Undoubtedly there were things that could perhaps have been improved and so they shall be. For this is not a once and for all exhibition. Virtually everything on display is designed to be reusable and the publicity committee is already making plans to utilise the component parts for many other occasions. So if you didn't get the opportunity to see the exhibition at the Grosvenor Museum, fear not, it will, like the Phoenix, rise again.

When the editorial team began compiling this edition of Bird News we feared that a shortage of copy would result in a lamentably slim edition. Fortunately this has not come to pass, in fact this is possibly one of the most diverse editions I've personally been involved with. As you peruse the following pages I'm sure that all of you will find an article, letter, or news item of some interest. I particularly enjoyed David Atkinson's 'Armchair Birding'. While Hugh Pulsford's feature on Great Grey Shrike covers one of the most charismatic species on the British list. I know Thelma Sykes's article on Long-tailed Tits will make some of you look upon this species in a fresh light. As you can see, Bird News is reliant upon the support of the membership, so if you have never contributed before, maybe now is the time to take up the cudgel.

Talking about cudgels, is there anybody out there willing or wishing to take up the one of Bird News Editor? I am looking to hand on the baton as I wish to change my role within the Society. As many of you are aware I am involved with staging the CAWOS Identification Workshops. This is an area I wish to expand. In addition I would like to develop an activity-based conservation group within CAWOS. This will entail considerable time and effort to establish and as such will prevent me from functioning effectively as the Editor of Bird News. Many of you are no doubt saying that I never have functioned effectively as Editor. In fact this is quite true of this edition, as Sheila Blamire has carried out 95% of the editor's functions. Thank you Sheila!

This does not mean to say you've heard the last of me, I'll still be a regular contributor to Bird News, after all, if I don't put my money where my mouth is why should you? If you're tempted and want to know more, contact me at home 0151 423 4275 and I'll put you in the picture. Suffice it to say you'll get the same tremendous support from the editorial team as I have. If this turns out to be my final edition as Editor I'd like to say thank you to everyone who has contributed to Bird News, in whatever form, during my period at the helm.

Au revoir and keep birding.

Jeff Clarke

[Note: Copy date for next issue will be the 7th December - please try to be prompt]

Imminent dates for your diary:-

Thursday 26th November 'The Cheerfulness of Sparrows' book launch - see page 21 for details
Friday 4th December 'Lesbos - Jewel of the Aegean' by Richard Brookes - see Diary page 29

County Rarities

GREAT GREY SHRIKE

Great Grey Shrikes appear less than annually in Cheshire and Wirral, consequently when one is found it often attracts a reasonable crowd. Identification of this species may seem to be quite easy. It is a big, thrush-sized shrike, which often perches conspicuously in the open on overhead wires or a prominent bush. The plumage is a combination of white, black and grey, with the bill being dark and hooked and the tail long, graduated and white edged. However, it really isn't quite that easy! I can well remember running to the observatory at Spurn Point towards the end of August many years ago and excitedly announcing that there was a Great Grey Shrike near the church. This was greeted with the measured response of "why wasn't it a Lesser Grey Shrike?" Of course when it did prove to be one of the latter species I had to eat plenty of humble pie.



So, what had I missed? Well, most field guides will tell you that the Great Grey Shrike is a bigger bird than the Lesser Grey, which is not really much help in the field. It's the structural differences which are the most important features. In addition to a long tail, the Great Grey has short wings with the primary projection ending at the rump, giving it a more horizontal posture. In contrast the Lesser Grey has long wings and a shorter tail which gives a more upright appearance. When comparing the length of the primaries to the length of the exposed tertials those of the Great Grey Shrike are $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$, whilst those of Lesser Grey are $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ times. These ratios alter the whole appearance of the birds. Adult Great Grey Shrikes have a bandit-like mask through the eye with a white supercilium. The underparts are whitish and the upperparts are grey with white on the scapulars and black flight feathers with various amounts of white on the bases of the primaries. Adult Lesser Grey Shrikes have a more extensive black forehead and mask, and no white supercilium. Males also have a pinkish breast with a larger white wing patch but with less white on the scapulars. Young Lesser Grey Shrikes, however, are the most likely to be confused with young Great Greys. Whereas in both species the plumage is browner and faintly barred, particularly on the mantle and the crown, the Lesser Grey Shrike lacks the black forehead. So the structural differences of the length of the exposed primaries, the length of the tail and the posture remain the key to separation. Lesser Grey Shrikes also show pale edges and tips to the primaries. Together with a thicker, stubbier bill these points may provide further help.

The only other point of note is that there are several races of Great Grey Shrike in Europe. These become darker and greyer in general plumage as you head south in Europe, into North Africa and eastward to Iran. There is also less white on the supercilium and varying amounts of white on the wings. The key race to look out for is the Steppe Grey Shrike, *Lanius excubitor pallidirostris* which has occurred in Britain on a few occasions. Steppe Grey Shrikes are generally smaller and look washed out as they lack the contrast of grey, white and black of the nominate race. It also has dusky lores rather than black, creamy buff underparts, white underwing coverts and axillaries, white on the secondaries and a pale horn coloured base to the bill. The Steppe Grey Shrike has now been recognised as a separate species.

Hugh Pulsford, 19 Tudor Way, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 2AS

Recent Reports

Before I start my “seasonal summary” I would like to ask regular contributors to Recent Reports if they would send me records on a month-by-month basis, as this will help speed up the writing process and, hopefully, not delay the publication of *Bird News*. I am always grateful to hear of any interesting records, so please feel free to contact me (my address and phone number are at the end of the article) with large counts, unusual behaviour or new local records. Please note that any sensitive breeding records should only be sent to the County Recorder.

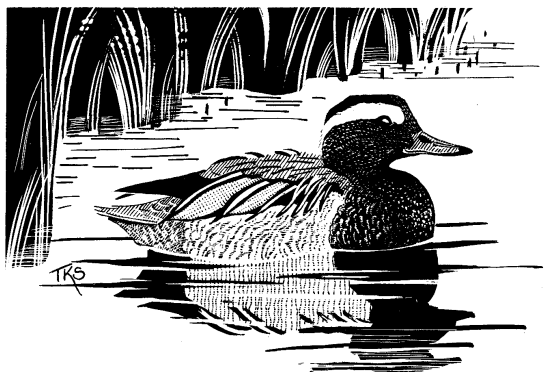
Some of these records may be unauthenticated and require review by the County Rarities Panel or the BBRC. The records cover the period from June to the end of August. Please note: descriptions should be sent to the County Recorder as soon as possible, rather than at the end of the year.

JUNE

Five pairs of **Little Grebes** bred at Doddington Pool making it possibly the best breeding site for this species in Cheshire. At Rostherne the first **Great Crested Grebe** broods appeared on 13th with up to 12 birds at Chelford SQs where breeding didn't occur and 3+ pairs at Sandbach Flashes. Up to 125 **Cormorants** visited Frodsham. A **Little Egret** remained at Burton & Parkgate all month with another at both Fiddler's Ferry (first record there) & Richmond Bank on the 6th. The **Grey Heron** colony at Budworth Mere reached 120 pairs. A **White Stork** was seen flying north-west over the M56 at Lymm at 10.30am on the 3rd. The adult and five immature **Spoonbills** remained on the Dee Marshes (to 4th), with three immatures staying to the month's end. The **Greater Flamingo** at Inner Marsh Farm was last seen on the 3rd, before it moved to East Yorkshire.

Three pairs of **Mute Swans** summered at Chelford SQs but only one pair bred, raising two young, while the total number of young raised in the Witton area increased to 28 young. Three **Whooper Swans** were at the Weaver Bend (4th) they then visited Marbury No1 tank, Budworth Mere and finally Neumann's Flash (all 7th). Over 500 **Canada Geese** visited Frodsham with 212 at Winterley Pool (26th) which included 30 juveniles. The **Ruddy Shelduck** remained at Chelford SQs (to 14th) with a drake at Richmond Bank (28th). By the end of the month **Shelducks** were seen heading off from the Mersey estuary towards the Continent for their annual moult, with breeding confirmed at Gatewarth.

Single drake **Mandarins** were at Rostherne Mere (24th, 27th & 28th) & Poynton Pool (13th). **Gadwall** numbers at Rostherne increased to a peak of 22 on the 27th and a female was seen with nine young at Inner Marsh Farm (20th). One or two **Teal** were seen occasionally in summer at Chelford SQs this year. A male **Garganey** was still at Marbury CP (6th) with a female from the 3rd and a pair remained at Frodsham (4th).



A **Pochard** was at Marston Flash (9th) having been present on this small pool for nearly 18 months while a drake at Sandbach Flashes (12th) had an all black nail to the bill. Four pairs of **Tufted Ducks** bred at Doddington Pool with at least two pairs at Sandbach. A sub-adult drake **Goldeneye** was seen at Chelford SQs occasionally throughout the summer. Two pairs of **Ruddy Ducks** summered at Marbury No1 tank with breeding at Fiddler's Ferry and Sandbach Flashes while up to six summered at Inner Marsh Farm.

A **Red Kite** was seen flying over the Queensferry bridge (20th). A female **Marsh Harrier** was at Inner Marsh Farm (1st-2nd). The long-staying **Osprey** spent most days at Rostherne Mere or Tatton Park (from 3rd-30th) with probably the same bird seen flying south over M56 one mile east of junction 11 on the 20th. A **Hobby** was seen occasionally at Chelford SQs, near Knotbury and at Sandbach Flashes. A regular **Peregrine** was at Rostherne and Sandbach Flashes. A **Grey Partridge** was seen near Budworth Mere Yachting Club (9th). A **Water Rail** was at Rostherne all month.

Three pairs of **Oystercatchers** summered at Chelford SQs but only one pair bred, raising two young, up to three were at Budworth Mere and a pair at Doddington Pool made three nesting attempts, unsuccessful due to high water levels and predation. A high count of 27 **Ringed Plovers** was made at Sandbach Flashes (3rd) and **Dunlin** numbers peaked there at 18 (2nd). The non-breeding flock of **Black-tailed Godwits** at Inner Marsh Farm peaked at 900 early in the month declining to 300 by the month's end. This is the largest summering flock in Britain. Passage at Sandbach Flashes peaked with 21 on the 7th otherwise up to nine daily between 5th & 16th. Up to three **Curlews** roosted at Neumann's Flash on two dates. **Spotted Redshanks** returned to Inner Marsh Farm (23rd). Two pairs of **Redshanks** summered at Chelford SQs but unfortunately both failed to breed. The first returning **Green Sandpipers** were at Marbury No1 tank (23rd) and Sandbach Flashes (25th). A pair of **Common Sandpipers** summered at Chelford SQs and a pair probably bred at Danebridge with a migrant at Poynton Pool (5th).

A **Pomarine Skua** was reported flying past Red Rocks (20th). Two **Mediterranean Gulls** were at Inner Marsh Farm (3rd). A 2nd summer **Iceland Gull** was at Richmond Bank (23rd & 25th). A **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Sandbach Flashes (9th). Up to three **Common Terns** were at both Rostherne and at Sandbach Flashes on four dates with six at Neumann's Flash (15th). Three **Arctic Terns** were at Rostherne (4th). **Turtle Doves** were reported at Delamere and Neumann's Flash, but no confirmation of breeding has been forthcoming. A **Long-eared Owl** remained at Woolston Eyes with breeding confirmed at another site in the Mersey Valley. The **Sand Martin** colony at Fiddler's Ferry reached 120 nests. A pair of **Dippers** fed young at Danebridge and three pairs bred along the lowland stretch of the Dane. **Ring Ouzels** bred in the Three Shires Head area this year.

The **Grasshopper Warbler** remained at Witton Brook (to 18th) with two at Richmond Bank (25th). **Lesser Whitethroats** continued to be very scarce this year but breeding occurred in western Poynton for the first time in several years. Three **Wood Warblers** sang at Alderley Edge Woods early in the month. **Spotted Flycatchers** bred at Bartholomey, Crewe Cemetery (2+ pairs) & Malkin's Bank. A **Nuthatch** at Woolston Eyes was unusual there. An unidentified "grey" **Shrike** was reported at Frodsham No4 tank (5th) but not seen subsequently. A **Raven** was again at Rostherne (7th & 21st) with 2 irregularly at Frodsham. Five **Twite** were seen near the East Cheshire border (25th). Two **Hawfinches** at Woolston Eyes was an excellent record there. Three male **Yellowhammers** and a jangling **Corn Bunting** were singing in the Chelford area.



JULY

Fiddler's Ferry had a new July maximum of 22 **Great Crested Grebes** on the 26th. Several pairs of **Black-necked Grebes** successfully nested at Woolston this year. Elsewhere a juv was at Chelford SQs (5th) with two juvs at Rostherne Mere (11th-16th). Up to 30 **Cormorants** visited Fiddler's Ferry. The **Little Egret** remained at Burton to 27th at least, while others visited Frodsham No6 tank (15th), Saltney Ferry mid month and Railway Flash, Sandbach to 6.55am when it flew off west (16th). A **White Stork** was seen flying south over Poynton in the afternoon of the 2nd. Three immature **Spoonbills** remained at Inner Marsh Farm (to 24th) with a further two at Burton Outer Marsh (11th). A minima race **Canada Goose** was at Inner Marsh Farm (6th). A drake **Ruddy Shelduck** was at Richmond Bank (2nd). A pair of **Shelducks** bred at Sandbach Flashes.

The drake **Mandarin** was again at Rostherne Mere (5th) with a female at Poynton Pool (28th). Up to six **Wigeon** were seen daily at Inner Marsh Farm with odd birds at Frodsham. A female **Gadwall** was at Marbury No1 tank with five young (1st), the first confirmed breeding in the Witton area. A **Teal** at Poynton Pool (24th) was the first ever July record there and the male **Pintail** returned to the Pool for its fourth summer (from 5th). Single **Garganeys** were at Sandbach Flashes (15th-26th) and Inner Marsh Farm (20th-21st). Five broods of **Tufted Ducks** were hatched at Chelford SQs. A female **Scaup** was at Frodsham (20th). A male **Common Scoter** was at Budworth Mere (12th) and nearby five **Goosander** flew west over Marbury No1 tank (25th), the first July record for that area. Six **Ruddy Ducks** were at Inner Marsh Farm (2nd).

The long-staying **Osprey** commuted between Rostherne and Tatton (to 23rd at least) but mainly was seen at Rostherne Mere. This is the third record of a bird summering in the county, following one in 1979 & another in 1994. Three **Hobbies** were seen together in the east Cheshire hills with singles at Arclid SQ, Blacon, Frodsham, Inner Marsh Farm & Sandbach Flashes. Several **Red-legged Partridges** were at Weston (18th). Single **Little Ringed Plovers** were at Fiddler's Ferry (5th & 11th) and Inner Marsh Farm (22nd & 2 on 29th) with 20 at Frodsham (29th), 14 at Sandbach Flashes (7th) & up to seven at Witton Limebeds. Up to 800 **Lapwings** were at Fiddler's Ferry with five pairs breeding at Doddington Pool. **Golden Plovers** returned to Neumann's Flash from 26th. Single **Sanderlings** and **Little Stints** were at Frodsham No6 tank (20th). Three **Ruffs** were at Inner Marsh Farm (18th). Up to 600 **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Inner Marsh Farm with 550 at Frodsham (5th), three at Fiddler's Ferry (26th) and up to three at Marbury No1 tank (21st-28th). A **Whimbrel** flew over Marbury No1 tank (14th) and nearby the **Curlew** roost at Neumann's Flash peaked at only 22 on 10th. **Spotted Redshanks** peaked at eight at Inner Marsh Farm (8th) with 21 Greenshanks there on 30th. Up to eight **Green Sandpipers** were at Chelford SQs, Doddington, Inner Marsh Farm and Marbury No1 tank with 10 at Sandbach Flashes (6th). A **Wood Sandpiper** was at Inner Marsh Farm (24th-31st). Five **Common Sandpipers** was the peak count at Sandbach Flashes (23rd).

An adult **Mediterranean Gull** was at Neumann's Flash (21st) with another bird over Frodsham No6 tank. A **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Chelford SQs (24th), with two at Sandbach Flashes (15th) and three there on 22nd. A 1st summer **Glaucous Gull** was at Hilbre (13th). A **Sandwich Tern** at Inner Marsh Farm (12th) was an excellent record. A **Common Tern** was at Neumann's Flash (16th) with two at Chelford SQs (5th), three at Doddington Pool (31st) and two at Sandbach Flashes (30th). A **Turtle Dove** at Frodsham No4 tank (5th) was an excellent record there. Over 400 **Swifts** visited Frodsham No6 tank on one or two dates. 100 **Sand Martins** were at Fiddler's Ferry (26th) with 150+ at Frodsham No6 tank. **Grasshopper Warblers** were reeling at Fiddler's Ferry (to mid month), Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton (from 18th), Marbury No1 tank (19th-22nd) and Weston Golf Course (18th). Several **Reed Warblers** were in song at Fiddler's Ferry to mid month. An eastern race "grey" **Chiffchaff** was at Frodsham No6 tank (15th). A **Treecreeper** was an unusual bird to be trapped at Woolston Eyes. Three **Ravens** were at Rostherne (12th) with two at the Decca Pools (28th). Sandbach Flashes had a good post-breeding flock of 37 **Tree Sparrows** on the 30th.

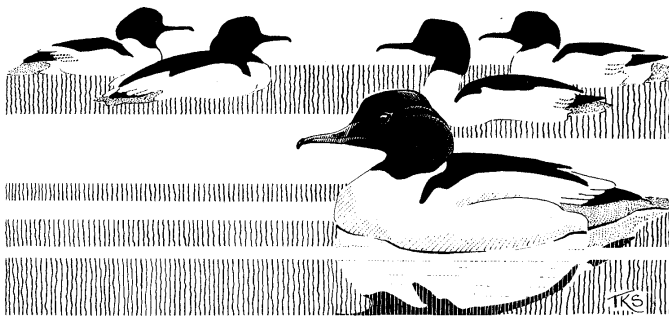
AUGUST

Of non-avian interest, a Minke whale beached itself off the mudbanks at Pickering's Pasture on the River Mersey (7th) and was refloated on the high tide, only to be beached at Speke next day. The whale was successfully refloated again and returned to the Irish Sea.

A **Little Grebe** at Poynton Pool (16th) was an excellent local record. Fiddler's Ferry had a new August maxima of 25 **Great Crested Grebes** on the 1st with 25 at Chelford SQs (8th) and up to 56 at Rostherne Mere, most of which were adults while three pairs at Budworth hatched four young. **Black-necked Grebes** remained at Woolston Eyes to mid month with others at Budworth Mere (16th) & Rostherne Mere (23rd). A **Mediterranean Shearwater** passed Hilbre (22nd) and 12 **Manx Shearwaters** flew by (9th). A **Leach's Petrel** was off New Brighton (21st). The Rostherne Mere **Cormorant** roost reached 71 birds on 23rd, the largest ever August roost. It can only be a matter of time before the birds start breeding here. Fiddler's Ferry had a new record site count of 50 Cormorants on the 16th. A **Little Egret** was at Burton/Inner Marsh Farm all month with two from 28th, one at Hilbre (8th) was only the second ever there. 100 **Greylags** at Witton was a site record and up to 30 were at Inner Marsh Farm. **Canada Geese** peaked with 1150 at Inner Marsh Farm (a site record), 350 at Neumann's Flash and a site record of 262 at Poynton Pool (4th). An escaped **Snow Goose** joined the Canada flock at Budworth, as did a feral **Barnacle Goose**. Three **Ruddy Shelducks** were at Frodsham Score (15th) with one

lingering (25th & 29th). A record 17,000 **Shelducks** were on the Mersey WeBS count (9th) and two broods were seen at Fiddler's Ferry.

Three female **Mandarins** visited Inner Marsh Farm (16th & 27th), two were at Poynton Pool (21st), a female with four fully grown young was at Rostherne Mere (16th) and an eclipse drake at Sandbach Flashes (5th-9th, 24th-25th & 29th). **Wigeon** returned to Sandbach Flashes from 26th with 20 at Inner Marsh Farm (26th). Poynton Pool had a post-breeding maximum of 108 **Mallards** on the 6th. Three returning **Pintails** were at Inner Marsh Farm (26th) and the drake remained at Poynton Pool (to 19th). Single **Garganeys** were at Inner Marsh Farm (29th), Neumann's Flash and Sandbach Flashes (6th-9th & 25th-26th). **Shovelers** returned to Fiddler's Ferry from 15th with a monthly maximum of 60 next day while 52 were at Inner Marsh Farm (26th). The post breeding build up of **Tufted Ducks** reached 167 at Chelford SQs (8th) and 317 at Rostherne Mere (9th) with a brood of two at Budworth Mere (9th). Four **Goosanders** at Inner Marsh Farm (1st) was an exceptional record there.



Hobbies were seen together in the east Cheshire hills and another at Rostherne (12th). **Water Rails** were at Inner Marsh Farm & Marbury No1 tank. A **Spotted Crane** was at Woolston Eyes No2 bed (31st) with up to four reported at Inner Marsh Farm (from 12th).

Golden Plovers returned to Sandbach Flashes from 8th. A summer plumaged **Grey Plover** was at Fiddler's Ferry (23rd) along with up to 2000 **Lapwings** there all month, while the post breeding flock at Chelford SQs reached 820 on the 2nd. Two **Knots** at Fiddler's Ferry (16th) were the first ever August record of that species there. **Little Stints** visited Sandbach Flashes (4th-5th & 28th-29th) and Woolston Eyes with two at Inner Marsh Farm (30th). 200 **Dunlin** at Fiddler's Ferry (16th) was a new August maxima for the site, 3000 were at Hilbre (8th) and up to 24 were at both Sandbach Flashes and the Witton area. 50 **Snipe** at Marbury was a good count as was 37 at Sandbach Flashes (17th). Six **Black-tailed Godwits** visited Sandbach Flashes (8th) with 18 there on 16th. Up to 200 **Curlews** visited Fiddler's Ferry while single **Whimbrels** were at Fiddler's Ferry, Inner Marsh Farm, Sandbach Flashes & Woolston Eyes with four at Hilbre (8th). Two **Spotted Redshanks** at Marbury No1 tank (10th) were the first there for several years. The peak count of 41 **Greenshanks** was made at Inner Marsh Farm on the 20th with small numbers at Frodsham, Marbury No1 tank, Neumann's Flash, Sandbach Flashes & Parkgate. At least six **Green Sandpipers** were at Inner Marsh Farm (27th) with four at Frodsham, Neumann's Flash, Rostherne Mere and nine at Sandbach Flashes (13th). The **Wood Sandpiper** remained at Inner Marsh Farm (to 3rd).

An adult **Pomarine Skua** was off New Brighton (21st). **Arctic Skuas** were seen off Hilbre on several dates with six on 29th. One or two juvenile **Long-tailed Skuas** were in the River Mersey mouth (21st) followed by other juveniles at Hilbre (22nd) and Leasowe (24th). An adult and 1st winter **Mediterranean Gull** visited Inner Marsh Farm (29th). A **Yellow-legged Gull** visited Neumann's Flash on three dates with a single at Chelford SQs (11th), three at New Ferry Tip (4th), five at Richmond Bank (17th) and a regular single at Maw Green Tip, Sandbach (12th-27th) with a record eight there on 24th. An adult **Grey-headed Gull** was reported at Inner Marsh Farm (17th) for 10 mins early morning before flying off with **Black-headed Gulls**. Two **Common Terns** were at Rostherne Mere (16th) with three at Budworth Mere (11th) and three at Sandbach Flashes (2nd). Small numbers of post breeding **Little Terns** were off Hilbre during the first week.

A **Turtle Dove** was briefly at Woolston Eyes and a **Tawny Owl** at Poynton Pool (11th) was the observer's first ever there. A juvenile **Green Woodpecker** at Sandbach Flashes (4th-5th) was an

excellent record as was a bird at Poynton Pool (9th). The monthly maxima of hirundines at Fiddler's Ferry included 100 **Sand Martins** (15th-16th) and 200 **Swallows** (8th), plus 100 **Swifts** (8th-9th). 1000 Swallows roosted at Sandbach Flashes (12th) rising to an impressive 2500+ on 15th. A **Tree Pipit** was ringed at Woolston Eyes where a **Redstart** was also ringed and an immature was at Sandbach Flashes (28th). A **Reed Warbler** was still singing at Fiddler's Ferry (1st). The reeling **Grasshopper Warbler** remained at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton into the first week. A possible **Melodious Warbler** was at Frodsham No6 tank (17th) but could not be relocated. Up to 40 **Willow Warblers** were regularly on Hilbre during the month. A **Spotted Flycatcher** at Chelford SQs (8th) was the only summer record there. A juvenile **Woodchat Shrike** trapped & ringed at Hilbre (9th-10th) was only the fifth county record and the second ever for Hilbre following a male in May 1958. A **Raven** flew over Mollington (29th).

If you would like to see your Cheshire and Wirral sightings featured here please send details to me to arrive by early December. As stated at the beginning of this article I would appreciate receiving any reports on a month-by-month basis to speed up the writing process and to stop me getting harangued by the *Bird News* editorial team!!! Please remember to send your descriptions to Tony Broome.

Phil Oddy, 4 Swan Close, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 1HX Tel: 01625 877855

Thanks/acknowledgements for Recent Reports:- S & G.Barber, Birdnet, Birdwatch & Birdwatching Magazines, J.Clarke, M.Duckham, K.Kirk, C.Lythgoe, K.Massey (Fiddler's Ferry Reserve), Rostherne Mere NNR log, Sandbach log, D.Walters (Marbury CP & Witton Lime Beds), C. Williams and anyone else who passed on records.

Jizz and all that Jazz

THE DARKLING THRUSH (with apologies to Mr Hardy)

Having covered corvids, pigeons and doves, and with winter approaching, it might be appropriate to look at thrushes. In response to the Jizz themes in the last issue Bob Anderson has written to correct the derivation of the word "JIZZ". He also points out that this has been a perennial theme over the years, with no absolute and definitive answers, other than to get out there, observe and soak up your own "feel" for a species. No apology for again mentioning that this series is concentrating on pointers to identification which supplement the more obvious plumage details and song. We hope that "every little helps" and that our excellently printed crib cards issued with the last copy of *Bird News* will be of use to some members.

The thrush family, Turdidae, inhabits many countries of the world and it is confirmation of these "JIZZ" issues that a White-throated Thrush, seen by myself and a friend in West Mexico this year, was so obviously a member of the family well before we were sure of its specific name. The true Turdus family comprises 66 species, which includes the American Robins. Numerous other species totalling a further 111 come under the Flycatcher and Ant Thrushes, Rock, Whistling, Ground and Nightingale Thrushes, Shortwings, Rock Jumpers and even the American Solitaires and Bluebirds (the Bluebirds were a surprise to me). Three other species have become extinct since 1800 and several more are rare.

From these 177 species no fewer than 22 have been recorded in Britain and Ireland, although two of them are category D birds, (where the possibility of escape cannot entirely be ruled out), 16 of these are true rarities from Southern Europe, America and Siberia, so will not be covered here. The remaining 6 will be far more familiar, comprising two "Blackbirds", the Ring Ouzel and Blackbird, and four "Thrushes", Song Thrush and Redwing, Mistle Thrush and Fieldfare. We will consider them in these pairings. Some will say they are "easy" species but I wonder, if we are all honest, just how many times we have been fooled and confused by what turns out to be a Mistle Thrush in flight?

We will look first at the Blackbird and Ring Ouzel. No problems here, might be the first reaction! Our familiar Blackbird is still a common garden resident with numbers being supplemented by a substantial winter influx from the Continent starting in September. The Ring Ouzel, on the other hand, is becoming rare and is only a summer visitor from the Med. region, arriving in March and April and leaving between August and October. Habitat preference is also radically different with the few remaining Cheshire Ring Ouzels occupying breeding territories in the Axe Edge and Danebower area of the Pennines. Yet, during passage, Ring Ouzels can be found anywhere in the country. Although they are uncommon and noticeably shy than Blackbirds, if you see a "different"

Blackbird with paler wings flying away from you try to track it until it comes to rest. The alarm call as they fly away will be a harsh, hollow 'tchack' or 'tchuck' repeated several times. Although they are likely to fly a considerable distance they may land in a tree or bush and stay quite conspicuous. (Take the opportunity of the flight anyway to note the following points below). At rest through the telescope look for a silvery appearance on the wings, caused by the feathers having white edges. Do not rely upon seeing a clear white or pale breast band which is much duller on females and for that matter both sexes in the autumn, whilst it is completely absent in juveniles! No yellow eye ring (if you're lucky to be close enough) or less yellow in the bill are good points but all these issues hardly describe the "JIZZ" of the Ring Ouzel. If you see the bird perched well or, even better, feeding, there are the characteristics of overall shape and wing length to look for. Whilst both Ring Ouzel and Blackbird are similar in size, the Ring Ouzel is noticeably more upstanding on longer legs. The profile accents this with the back running in an almost straight line from the nape to the tail. Look again at your next Blackbird and see an altogether more rounded and dumpy back. Ring Ouzels also have longer primary feathers and a longer tail so, if you suspect one, look for these characteristics as it flies away. These points are also fundamental to excluding partial albino Blackbirds that are not uncommon. In profile, given the luxury of close views, look for a thicker, wedgy bill on the Ring Ouzel. The usual care has to be taken over juvenile birds but the dark chocolate Ring Ouzel shows a distinct pale neck patch and no chestnut of the young Blackbird. Also beware in flight of the similar outline to departing Starlings or even Fieldfares! Indeed Ring Ouzels fly faster and higher than the Blackbird with its lower flight, which includes glides and ups and downs. Most observers will also be very familiar with the Blackbird lowering its wings and fanning its tail on landing. Beware of autumn migrants and birds leaving winter roosts, both of which can fly very high indeed!

Much of the above comment regarding residency applies to breeding Song Thrushes and Redwings which, in Cheshire, are only winter visitors. Sadly, however, the converse to Blackbird and Ring Ouzel is true with regard to numbers. Most birdwatchers will be aware of a considerable decline in the Song Thrush population, whereas large flocks of Redwings can be seen given cold weather and the right habitat. Large numbers of continental Song Thrushes winter in Britain and occasionally flocks may be disturbed from hedgerows after nocturnal migrants in October have landed to rest before dawn. It might seem more appropriate to contrast Song Thrush with Mistle Thrush due to their superficial similarity in markings. The Song Thrush and Redwing, however, appear similar in size, with the Redwing being smaller. Both species may also feed in gardens together during cold spells. Given poor views of a small thrush in cover it might be said that a plumage feature, namely the distinctive white or buff supercilium, gives the best clue to it being a Redwing. In profile, Redwing seem a more "dumpy" rounded bird, probably enhanced by having a slightly shorter tail than Song Thrush. Against the light and in flight the classic underwing colour of rust-red on Redwings may not be so obvious and Song Thrushes do have a similar but buffer underwing colour. Although these days it is much more likely that several small thrushes in flight will be Redwings, it is worth looking for their more "staccato" wing beats with a series of flaps which momentarily stop with the wings being only partly closed. Song Thrushes have a fast flight with more fluid wing beats. Flight calls are without doubt the best way of separating a small number of birds in the air. The familiar high, reedy 'tzeeeep' of Redwings is very different from the short, annoyed-sounding 'tsic, tsic' of flushed Song Thrushes. Their movement on the ground also provides one of the best "JIZZ" clues as they hop, then run forward and finally stop bolt upright, with their head on one side. Listening for worms I always thought.

Moving to Mistle Thrush and Fieldfare I have always found the former an enigmatic bird which tricks me into imagining some larger species. I have read I am not alone. In size there is not much to separate the two species, with the Mistle Thrush just the longer by 1.5cm. We can again make the contrast between the resident Mistle Thrush and the mainly winter visitor / passage migrant Fieldfare, which can arrive as early as September and which leaves for Northern Europe no later than April. (Occasionally single birds have summered in the Pennine uplands). The main plumage detail differences are of course well known. Both species can occur in gardens but the Fieldfare usually only moves away from the open fields, where it feeds in flocks with Redwings, during the severest cold weather. (One in my garden took up residence in the snow around some fallen apples and offered to spend a disproportionate amount of energy chasing away all other species. A very aggressive bird indeed!). Fieldfare feeding flocks can again be large, normally well exceeding

any flock of Mistle Thrushes. I have no hard evidence but just a feeling that Mistle Thrushes have become more common in recent years, with post breeding flocks occurring in good numbers. (The 1996 Bird Report recorded the largest flock as 82 on August 15th which is significant but not in the same league as c.2000 Fieldfares seen at each of three different sites this year). In profile, feeding or perched, both species have a heavy chested and long tailed appearance. It is often said that Mistle Thrushes are "open-faced" in contrast to the "sterner", more brooding, look of the Fieldfare. At a distance the pale brown overall appearance of the former contrasts well with the dark grey head and rump of the latter. Both species tend, when still, to "stand tall" and drop their wings and sometimes their tails. In flight wing shapes are the same and the underwing covert contrast is also very similar with perhaps the Mistle Thrush showing marginally more white. Seen in flight from below the Fieldfare has a paler lower breast and the tail feathers are all black. This is quite different from the sandy brown tail of the Mistle Thrush with white tips to the outermost feathers if you are close enough. As far as true "JIZZ" is concerned, however, perhaps the best distinction is in the flight pattern of each species. The Mistle Thrush in particular has a most pronounced up and down flight. It closes its wings during glides between flaps, just as the Woodpigeons described in the last issue, and like that species can appear more 'pot-bellied' than the 'chestier' Fieldfare. Mistle Thrush flight can often be high up, adding to initial identification uncertainties. Fieldfares by contrast have a much more unsteady flight, quite often reminiscent of Redwings, especially if it is windy and is less undulating and appearing slower than Mistle Thrushes. Flocks often look as though they're disorganised and 'drift' sideways seemingly making little headway. Although hardly a "JIZZ" feature I can't resist re-iterating the analogy between the hard "chak-chak-chak" call of Fieldfares and the sound of my hedge clippers. Absolutely right! Now was it the Song Thrush or the Mistle Thrush that my father-in-law described as the "rain-bird"? But, folklore would be another theme altogether. There's a hint!

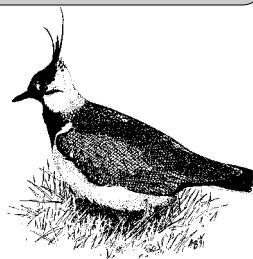
As ever, supplementary comment, whether kind or critical, would be most welcome.

Richard Gabb, 72 Chester Road, Poynton, Cheshire, SK12 1HA Tel: 01625 262946

P.S. I would refer you to our own Prof. David Norman's book on the Fieldfare, reviewed in Bird News No 23 July 1994 (Hamlyn Species Guide).

The View from the Farmyard

Towards the end of summer, when the dawn fields are hung with gentle mists that neither touch the ground nor reach any great height, you can walk through dew-drenched fields and sense in the air the first hint of autumn. It's hard to put words to just how it does feel, it's as though it stirs some deep natural instinct. In these now perceptibly shorter days with the harvest almost gathered, the summer visiting birds loosen their bonds to their former nest sites. Swallows and martins, which seemed only to exist to return time and time again with food for their chicks, now sit in disorderly concentrations upon the power lines in the early mornings, before going to the fields to feed, only to return at dusk, darting back into their roosts in the shelter of the buildings. And as each day passes fewer birds return, the others joining the throng bound southward. When the sun has risen high enough to disperse the mist, then the bushes that catch the warm sunlight first are the ideal places to find migrants. They, having spent the night in the cover offered by the bush, emerge to warm themselves and preen, sometimes snatching at passing insects or picking ripe elderberries from bunches which weigh down the branches upon which they are hung. Occasionally a bird spurred on by the sun's warmth will deliver a snatch of song. Not the great outpouring of spring, but a stunted verse, soulful and melancholic. Then by the middle of the day these birds are gone: Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Garden Warbler, all following their instinctive urge to travel south. I wonder whether the emotional feeling I find so hard to describe, is the last vestige of the human instinct to migrate. An instinct we suppressed when we laid down our agricultural roots and committed ourselves to one patch of land, turning our backs forever upon the animal instinct we no longer desire to follow.



As the days wear on the small flocks of Skylarks and Meadow Pipits in the fields, and Redwings and Song Thrushes in the woods reap the harvest of Britain's maritime summer. Our climate is capable, even in poor years, of providing a rich bounty of seeds and fruit, insects and larvae, to feed the millions of winter visitors from the north. Insectivores are pressed to move south as the cooling nights take their toll upon the cold-blooded flying insects. Swallows and martins depart leaving the autumn skies almost empty of birds, the depressing silence in the farmyard spurs me toward walking further afield in search of avian activity. The fresh clarity of the autumn air does justice to an impressive male Wheatear, his plumage just hanging onto its summer grandeur. One hundred yards further along my walk I discover my first ever Redstart for Toft, fortunately again another male in his fading finery. I sit and watch as its shyness is replaced by inquisitiveness. It approaches closer and closer wagging its tail, and bobbing its head, moving from branch to branch to observe its observer. My mind races from one fantasy to another: Redstarts nesting in the trees alongside the ancient drainage ditch, Wheatears with their young on top of the bank in Toft Park. All these dreams are for the future, but as with a farmer, with the end of one harvest his mind is already planning the next season's crop. So I finish my walk with a far more positive frame of mind than when I started and the prospect of what next year may hold to ease me through the winter.

I was recently shown the preliminary proposals of a plan to expand the Cheshire population of Grey Partridge. Creating field margins and small areas of habitat across a wide swath of Cheshire, with the backup of expert advice and encouraging payments to participants. Also onboard, a gamekeeper to advise the shooting/keeping fraternity on their role. However, after my initial enthusiasm for the scheme, a degree of scepticism crept into my mind. Of particular concern to me are the proposals to use Larsen traps to capture Magpie, Jay and no doubt other offending species. I am fully aware that corvids were seen as the great demon when, shortly after the Second World War, the incredible bags of partridge taken were seen to be due to keeping and the suspension of shoots over the war years. Does it not follow that, as keepers were less active during these years, the corvid pressure should have been far greater than now? But still a very large population of partridge was able to develop. These traps don't only lower the population in the immediate area, but draw birds from the neighbourhood to fill the vacuum created around the trap, so these birds also fall prey to "Larsen's black hole". Assuming that the scheme is able to increase the population of Grey Partridge to good levels, are not the shooting fraternity likely to want to resume shooting partridge, after all it is at this time a purely voluntary cease-fire brought about largely by the low availability of suitable birds. Walking in the southern uplands of Scotland I once spent a very pleasant couple of hours talking to an old crofter. He related to me the tale of how, tiring of losing their poultry, he and several of his neighbours embarked upon the systematic massacre of every Hen Harrier in the locality and beyond. This clearly was many years ago, but the old man lamented the destruction which nature has never rectified. At that time this was the heartland of the harrier range, he said, "who ever would have believed that the birds would never return, after all they were very common you know." Are we in any position to know what the corvid future is, and are we in our ignorance going to regret our actions in the years to come? Surely the Magpie and Jay, two of our most colourful species, deserve a little more respect.

Pete Hall, The School House, Toft Road, Knutsford, Cheshire

[Eds. The Grey Partridge Action Plan is explained in detail on pages 24-27.]

THE STATUS OF SPECIES IN CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL

Work is underway to review the one-line status statements, which appear under the name of each species, in the systematic list of the *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report*.

Input from members will be welcome.

We have much data from the well recorded sites including Red Rocks, Frodsham, Witton area, Rostherne, Sandbach, Fiddler's Ferry etc. but would particularly like to hear how the 'so-called common' passerines have fared over the last 10-15 years on *your* local patch. Please contact:- **Steve Barber, 14 Thornfield Grove, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, SK8 6AZ Tel: 0161 485 6571**

Notes & Letters

THE GREAT CAWOS YULE LOG 1999 - ENTER NOW!!

Blimey, I can't believe how quickly this has come round again. It only seems like five minutes ago that I was ringing people up to get their scores off them for the last one. Anyway, as promised the next Yule Log will take place on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd January 1999. For a copy of the simple guidelines and a checklist for the day you should contact me at the address shown below or phone me now. Last year more teams than ever took part and all enjoyed themselves despite the rotten weather - at least they have a choice of days to race this year. They all spent a day birding around Cheshire, seeing as many birds as they could and helping to prove that Cheshire is a first rate county offering a wide range of habitats for our winter visitors - everything from estuaries to woods and from reservoirs and meres to rubbish tips.

Basically, teams can be any size from two upwards. You get one point for each species and bonus points for having youngsters and non-CAWOS members on your team. The team with the most points is the "winner". But really, I must stress that this event isn't just about getting loads of day-ticks, it is about getting out, enjoying Cheshire's countryside and birds, and hopefully showing non-members and youngsters how enjoyable and fascinating birding can be. Once again, the event will raise some money for a worthwhile cause. It will cost £1.00 per person again this year, and I am delighted to be able to tell you that Birdline North West is continuing its excellent support for this event by sponsoring it again. So thanks to them a birding charity will benefit to the tune of £50.00. You will get your chance to vote for the most worthy Cheshire-based conservation cause(s) when you get your checklist etc.

Don't forget that Cheshire and Wirral bird news is available from Birdline North West on 0891-700-249, then press 08, and if you get any news then please try to ring it in. Many of the teams taking part will be grateful for the chance to increase their enjoyment of the day. Come on, if you didn't take part last year make sure you don't miss out this time, ring me NOW before you forget. If nothing else, it will get your 1999 Year List off to a good start and you might find this year's Christmas Cracker (yes, I know I say that every year, but it's about the best gag I can think of).

Mike Holmes, 114 Merlin Way, Coppenhall, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 3RZ. Tel: 01270 216890

THE ORIGIN OF "JIZZ"

It is unfortunate that *Bird News* ('The Art of Jizz') should repeat the modern misconception about the origin of the word "jizz", which has nothing to do with "the corruption of the military term GIS.....".

The word was introduced by T A Coward (arguably the greatest of Cheshire naturalists), some time prior to 1922. The short essay "Jizz" (probably still the definitive attempt to describe that elusive quality) appears in "Bird Haunts and Nature Memories" of that date, but is almost certainly a reprint of an earlier newspaper or magazine article. Since Coward wrote "Possibly the word has never before been written, so that we are justified in spelling it phonetically", it is fair to assume that this is the first published reference. Coward attributes its origin to "a West Coast Irishman" who, asked how he knew the creatures of his local shores, replied "By their jizz". He goes on to say: "We have not coined [the word], but how wide its use in Ireland we cannot say; it may have its origin in this one fertile Celtic brain, or it may have been handed down from father to son for many generations".

In view of Richard Gabb's efforts (like others before him) to analyse and codify the components of jizz, it may be worth quoting a couple of Coward's remarks: "As a rule it is character rather than characteristics, the *tout ensemble* of the subject." Or: "Shape, size, manner of flight or maybe note.... Yes, but there is something more; something definite yet indefinable.... It is its jizz". However good field guides and other aids have become, his assertion that jizz "can only be learned by the study of wild creatures in their natural surroundings" still holds true.

It may be forgivable for a national birding magazine to perpetuate the "GIS" story, but in Cheshire at least we should ensure that Coward and his West Coast Irishman receive the credit due to them for giving us this invaluable word.

Bob Anderson, 102 Crewe Road, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 6JD

ARMCHAIR BIRDING

It is surprising how something of birding interest can turn up in the most unlikely places, such as when quietly minding one's own business at home.

Among the effects from my late mother-in-law's house was a copy of "Mrs Beeton's Shilling Cookery Book with more than 600 Recipes etc." This little book is not dated, but from advertisements on the back flyleaves, it would appear to have been published about 1885. While leafing through it recently, I was surprised to come across a recipe for "Roast Ortolans".

The preface states that the book was intended to "help Plain Cooks and Maids-of-all-work to... assist them in the important task of dressing and serving daily food", so the inclusion of this recipe would seem to indicate that Ortolans were a relatively readily available food item at that time. They were, though, quite expensive at an average cost of "3s to 4s [15-20p] each". In comparison, Partridges were said to cost an average of "2s 6d and upwards a pair"; Pheasants "4s and upwards each"; Plovers "1s 6d the brace, if plentiful; usually 2s 6d"; Ptarmigan "1s 6d to 2s each"; Quails "1s to 2s each"; Teals cost an average of "1s 6d each, but seldom bought"; Wild Duck "6s 6d the couple upwards"; and Snipes "1s 6d to 2s 6d the brace". Woodcocks were said to be seldom bought, and "should not be drawn, as the trails are considered a great delicacy"! Snipe were to be prepared similarly.

The Ortolan has apparently always been only a very occasional visitor to this country. The only Victorian bird text I have readily available is Howard Saunders' "An Illustrated Manual of British Birds" published in 1899, which refers to a dozen or so early occurrences of Ortolan, then states "Several have been captured near London since 1837, and from that time onwards such increasingly large numbers of live Ortolans have been annually imported from the Continent that occurrences in the home counties are open to suspicion, as escapes are notorious." Saunders goes on to state that "The Ortolan visits Heligoland in large numbers in the spring as well as the autumn passage, and is found in the summer as far north as the Arctic Circle in Scandinavia, but eastwards, its northward range recedes to about latitude 57° in Russia. South of the Baltic the bird is irregularly distributed throughout Europe, and, though local, it is fairly common at no greater distance from this country than some districts in the north of France, Flanders, Dutch Brabant etc.". The Ortolans available to Mrs Beeton must therefore have been imported, dead or alive; from the Continent, or bred in this country. Were the imported Ortolans, referred to by Saunders as a source of escapes, imported simply as ornamental cage birds, or were they bred from in captivity as a commercial venture to supply birds for the table? It is perhaps unlikely that we shall ever know.

In her recipe for dressing plovers, Mrs B states that "there are 3 sorts - the grey, green, and bastard plover or lapwing". The reference to Grey Plover causes us no problem, but green plover and Lapwing are now considered synonymous, and I have never previously come across "bastard plover". How can we explain Mrs B's distinction between green plover and Lapwing? And does anyone out there know what a "bastard plover" is?

Reverting to Ortolans, I then wondered if there was any reference to this bird in Henry Mayhew's vast work "London Labour and the London Poor", first published in 1851, and containing descriptions of every means of earning a few pence that the ingenuity of the London populace at that time could devise. I have only an abridged version of this vast work, but even this runs to 592 pages. There are sections on "Street sellers of live birds", and on "Bird catchers who are street sellers", but there is no reference to Ortolans here. There is, however, ample evidence of the size of the trade in catching and selling wild birds, which indicates the abundance and variety of birds in the London area at that time.

Mayhew describes the method of catching birds, presumably mainly finches, by use of a caged decoy bird in the middle of a 12 yard square net spread on the ground, the sides of which are pulled over when the wild birds have been attracted. By this method, up to nearly 200 birds were said to have been caught in one "pull", and 50 to 100 was not uncommon. There were said to be about 200 bird catchers in the villages which now form Inner London, and the numbers of birds they are said to have caught seem, from our perspective now, truly amazing. Mayhew estimated annual catches in and around London of about 70,000 Linnets, 30,000 Bullfinches, 70,000 Goldfinches, 15,000 Chaffinches and half that of Greenfinches. Apart from finches, a variety of other birds were caught and sold. The annual take of larks was 60,000, including "Skylarks, Woodlarks, titlarks [Meadow Pipits] and mudlarks [what were these?]". Also caught and sold were redbreasts "not exceeding 3,000"; "Thrush, Throstle or (in Scottish poetry) Mavis.... about 35,000";

and Blackbirds caught in the same manner as thrushes, "but the supply is less by about one-fifth". Nightingales were a more recent fashion - "It is only within these last twelve or fifteen years that the London dealers have cared to trade to any extent Nightingales, but they are now a part of the stock of every bird-shop of the more flourishing class... The "domestication", if the word be allowable with reference to the Nightingale, is but partial. Like all migratory birds, when the season for migration approaches, the caged Nightingale shows symptoms of great uneasiness, dashing himself against the wires of his cage or aviary, and sometimes dying in a few days. Many of the Nightingales, however, let the season pass away without showing any consciousness that it was, with the race of birds to which they belonged, one for a change of place... The capture of the Nightingale is among the most difficult achievements of the profession. None are caught nearer than Epping [Essex], and the catchers travel considerable distances before they have a chance of success. These birds are caught at night, and more often by their captor's imitation of the Nightingale's note, than with the aid of a call bird." Whatever we might think now of the ethics of catching Nightingales for cage birds, the skill of their captors surely commands admiration.

Then there were also sellers of bird nests, complete with clutches of eggs, and Mayhew lists as being available for sale nests of Linnet, Thrush [Song Thrush], Moorhen, Chaffinch, Hedge-sparrow, 'bottle-tit' [Long-tailed Tit], House-sparrow, Yellow-hammer, Water-wagtail [Pied Wagtail], Blackbird, 'Golden-crest Wren' [Goldcrest], Bullfinch, Crow, Magpie, Starling, 'Egg-chat' [whatever that was], Goldfinch, Martin [house?], Swallow, and 'Butcher-bird'. Saunders equates this with Great Grey Shrike, but states that "there is no evidence that it has ever bred with us". Mayhew's 'Butcher-bird' seems far more likely to refer to Red-backed Shrike, but even so it is perhaps surprising to us that it was sufficiently common around London to appear in Mayhew's listing. Mayhew goes on to list cuckoo eggs and nests of Greenfinch; "Sparrow-hawk"; "Reed-sparrow" [Reed Bunting or Reed Warbler? - "they build in the reeds close where the bulrushes grow"]; Wood-pigeon; "Horned Owl" [Long-eared Owl?]; and very occasional eggs of Woodpecker and Kingfisher. Mayhew's main informant stated that he got his eggs around Chelmsford and Witham in Essex, up to 28 miles from Whitechapel church in London, and was away from home for two days at a time on each expedition. The account of his exploits is quite fascinating.

However, this trade in caged wild birds and nests and eggs must have exerted a very considerable adverse effect on the species involved, and even without the subsequent spread of urbanisation in and around the villages such as Isleworth, Hampstead, Putney, Streatham etc, that then formed "London", it is surely doubtful if the populations could have survived such an annual toll for long.

So mother-in-law's old cookery book led me to a few interesting hours pondering over the occurrence and abundance of birds of the London area in the middle of the last century. As I say, something of birding interest can turn up in the most unlikely places!

David Atkinson, 33 Sandringham Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK10 IQB

EXCERPTS FROM THE KOS WEB SITE

Darren Morris is a Tatton Ranger - this is his resumé of our 'bird of the year'.

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

Over the next few days it developed a daily routine, catching fish on Tatton mid morning, mid afternoon and early evening, always approaching the mere from the east end of the park and eating its catch on the dead branch in the tree on the farmland behind the Old Hall. The best views were from the "Osprey bench". Later in its stay it spent most of its time at Rostherne Mere, only coming to Tatton to fish. Some spectacular views were had by many observers over the course of its stay. Its presence was phoned daily to Birdline and a steady stream of birdwatchers made their way to the bench. Most were lucky enough to see the Osprey, even a *Liverpool Daily Post* reporter running a story on the bird got some superb photos. The most impressive views though were those when it was fishing, flying along the length of Tatton Mere, pausing about 30m above the water, then plunging down, wings held back, feet outstretched. Sometimes it was fully submerged

before flapping clear of the water with a fish gripped in its talons. Often it appeared to struggle with the weight of the fish, indeed Ospreys have been known to drown, pulled under by large fish! Most of the fish caught by the Tatton bird were Roach weighing 1 - 2 lbs.

In the 1950s Ospreys returned to breed in Scotland at the famous Loch Garten site, protected by the RSPB. One and a half million people have been to view the birds at their eyrie. Now Scotland is graced with over 100 pairs of breeding birds and it is only a matter of time before they breed in England. The RSPB is currently involved in a release scheme at Rutland Water. Young chicks which have little chance in the wild are taken from their Scottish nests and re-introduced at Rutland in release pens. Here they are fed until able to fly, then set free ready to migrate to Africa for the winter. It is hoped these birds will return to Rutland to breed in later years. Ospreys are not fully mature until about three years old, so it is thought the Tatton bird was an immature who had not quite made it to Scotland. We know it is not a Rutland bird due to the lack of rings on its legs.

Finally a quote from the *New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*, "Observations in England, Wales and Ireland may involve passage birds, but evidence of summering in new areas is ever increasing, and the habit is often the forerunner of breeding attempts".

Tony Usher, 113 Town Lane, Mobberley, Cheshire, WA18 7EU www.personal.u-net.com/~usher

THE LIFE OF BIRDS OR RATHER 'BIRDS IN OUR LIVES'

Just to show how our Hobby (pun intended) can rule our lives (I can hear every non-birding spouse or partner agreeing wholeheartedly!):-

We eat Penguin biscuits and Stork margarine, whilst drinking Kestrel Lager or Woodpecker Cider. We might read Puffin books, or experience a Condor moment, whilst living near a Pelican crossing in Leighton Buzzard and working for the Kingfisher Retail Group! *Then of course:-*

Hole a birdie (or even an eagle or an albatross!)	Bald as a Coot
To chicken out	As high as a kite
Rise with the larks	To be eagle-eyed
Raven-haired	Eat like Gannets
To descend like vultures	Hoard like Magpies
To be pigeon-toed	Sing like a Nightingale or a Canary
To grouse about something	To swan about
Have albatrosses around our necks	To be dovelike
To Crow about it	To be as wise as an owl
To crane your neck	Cuckoo in the nest
Hawk goods around for sale	To be 'choughed' about something

Okay I'm struggling now, over to you.....

Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QG

NEW SPECIES FOR CHESHIRE? *Accipiter parasiticus*

At the recent Migration Watch Workshop held on 13th September, the gathered assembly witnessed an example of avian klepto-parasitism of the most dramatic kind. A juvenile male Sparrowhawk had been circling for some minutes in the area of Denhall Lane. It suddenly began a fast stoop toward the marsh and quickly gathered up one of the scattering Starlings. It began to head away from the marsh carrying its still live prey. It had barely travelled ten yards when a second juvenile Sparrowhawk, this time a female, swooped down, causing the startled bird to release its prey. The Starling made a desperate bid for freedom but was rapidly overhauled by the second Sparrowhawk. The bird dropped briefly out of sight, then re-emerged from the vegetation, with its firmly clasped prey, heading into the nearest tree cover, no doubt to consume its swag. None of the group could recall seeing another instance of intraspecific parasitism in this species before.

A brief literature search suggested that piracy is frequently encountered in the Accipitriformes without specifically citing the Sparrowhawk. Perhaps the most remarkable observation was an example of "triple piracy where a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* was robbed by a Merlin *Falco columbarius*; Merlin by a Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* and Honey Buzzard by a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*." (A Dictionary of Birds, Campbell and Lack et al, published by T & A. D. Poyser 1985.)

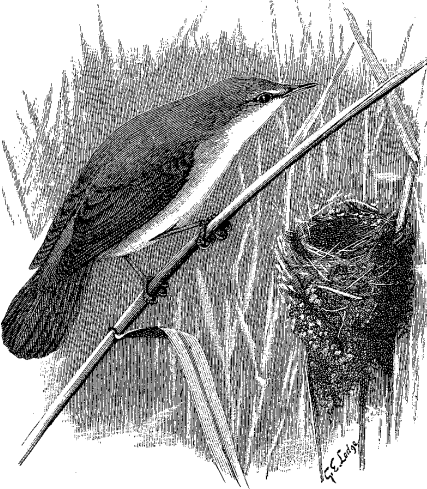
Jeff Clarke, 90 Simonside, Hough Green, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 4YN

FREEZING WOODPECKERS

In response to Peter Walton's 'Siskins in a Trance?' in the last edition of *Bird News*, I would like to offer another explanation for this behaviour. We also have noted that occasionally a single bird appears to become virtually immobile whilst apparently feeding alone on the peanut feeders. However, rather than the bird relishing the chance to relax in its otherwise frenzied lifestyle, my suggested explanation has more sinister undertones. A Sparrowhawk makes frequent opportunistic visits to our garden, which always results in the feeding birds making a quick dash for cover. Often the first sign that the raptor is about is that the garden is apparently devoid of birds! On several occasions we have witnessed a bird on one of the peanut feeders (this particular nut holder is the furthest from cover) deciding that to adopt a freezing posture is the best course of action to avoid the attentions of the Sparrowhawk. We have seen this with a number of species including Nuthatch, but it is the Great Spotted Woodpecker that adopts this pose the most often. In fact there was one occasion when the Sparrowhawk was perched on the summerhouse roof, from which the peanut feeder is suspended, with the 'frozen' woodpecker literally just a couple of feet away. For what seemed an eternity this scenario continued, with the Sparrowhawk occasionally flying to the bird table and back to the summerhouse roof. This posture adopted by birds is obviously successful – because the woodpecker did not move as much as an eyelid, it avoided detection and the Sparrowhawk eventually flew off! This was the signal for the Great Spotted Woodpecker to resume feeding as if nothing had happened, along with all the other birds that had immediately returned to the garden. Could this be the explanation in the case of the Siskin?

Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QG

EFFECT OF WEATHER ON REED WARBLER NESTS



Apart from occasional instances of infertile eggs and nest desertion, clutches of Reed Warblers are usually successful unless adversely affected by predation or extreme weather. In my summary of the seasons 1974-1986 at Rostherne Mere NNR using a sample of 710 clutch starts, I found that 70% produced nest-leaving young whereas 20% were lost to predation compared to 7% lost to weather and 3% failed through infertility or desertion.

Heavy rainfall has often been cited in literature for causing nest failure but my observations at Rostherne have conflicted with this conclusion. The weather data for Manchester is recorded at the Airport, some seven kilometres to the east of the reserve, and it would therefore not seem unreasonable to surmise that Rostherne experienced similar conditions. Rainfall would affect all parts equally but gusty conditions would presumably cause more problems to exposed reed stands than sheltered areas.

In the *Cheshire Bird Report* for 1981, I reported on the effect on the warbler nests of a record-breaking deluge of 95 millimetres that fell in twelve hours on 5th and 6th August. No actual damage was caused to ten nests and their contents of eggs and/or young, however the other known nest in use was knocked over by the rising flood water, which entered the mere via the 'outlet' stream.

In the summer of 1998, from 12th to 14th July, strong winds from between the south and west pounded the south facing reed beds of Mere Covert opposite the observatory. This resulted in the tearing of many nest hinges through violent plant movement and caused the collapse of eight of the 19 occupied nests in active use at this location at the time. Three clutches of eggs and five broods of young Reed Warblers were lost. Damage was less severe in more sheltered parts of the swamps.

Over the last twenty six seasons strong wind rather than rainfall has posed a threat to the well being of the Reed Warbler nests on the reserve.

Malcom Calvert, 12 Hill Drive, Handforth, Wimslow, Cheshire, SK9 3AR

BIRDS IN THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

While proof reading this edition of *'Bird News'* I became fascinated by 'Armchair Birding' written by David Atkinson. I abandoned the proof reading and began to search for references to some of the strange bird names mentioned by David. My source is the 'Oxford English Dictionary' (OED) Second Edition on CD-ROM. I found an entry for Bastard Plover and sure enough it is stated to be another name for Lapwing. Apparently Bastard Plover was first written down in 1552 by a chap called Huloet in his 'Abcedarium Anglico-Latinum', as "Plouer called bastarde plouer, or blacke plouer, vpupa". A few years earlier, in 1538, Elyot had written in his 'Dictionary' "Vpupa, a lapwynk or blacke plouer". The name Bastard Plover was connected directly to that of the Lapwing by Stonehouse who in his book 'Axholme', written in 1839, wrote "the pee-wit or bastard plover still hovers around its accustomed haunts". Quite how bastard came to be applied to this species is not made clear but perhaps it relates in some way to the usage of bastard to describe "an animal of inferior breed". I was intrigued to see that the OED gives green plover as another name for Golden Plover although the Dictionary does not seem to give any obvious reason for this. The OED does in fact state that green plover is used in Ireland for the Lapwing. The first edition of the OED was published in 1884; perhaps Mrs Beeton was one of its first readers!

I found the information culled by David from the work of Henry Mayhew amazing and like David, pondered over 'mudlarks'. Newton, in 'The Encyclopaedia Britannica' (1882) wrote "The Mud-lark, Rock Lark, Titlark and Tree Lark are Pipits" and the OED gives mud lark as another name for Skylark. Apparently an Australian bird, the Magpie Lark, is also known as the mud lark but it seems very unlikely that this is the creature referred to by Mayhew. Continuing my trawl through the OED I found that mud-lark is/was also another name for a pig or hog. The line "or fry the mud-lark's oiferiferous wing" comes from the poem 'Mobiade' written by T Campbell in 1801 while in 1869 'Overland Monthly' printed "A hog clandestinely killed outside of camp and smuggled in... was called a 'slow bear'... 'Mud-lark' signified the same thing". Perhaps Mayhew was confused by his informants. On the other hand, the OED quotes Ogilvie who in 1882 referred to a mud-lark as "a man who cleans out common sewers"!!

I have been unable to find any reference to 'egg-chat' in the OED. However, although the passage from Mayhew quoted by David appears to leave little room for confusion, the OED gives one definition of 'chat' as "a small poor potato". Perhaps, as with mud-lark, Mayhew could have misunderstood what he was being told and some of the people of London were accustomed to sitting down to a meal of ham, eggs and potatoes otherwise known as mud-lark with egg-chat.

Finally, I applied the OED test to 'jizz'. I have long been an admirer of T A Coward and am pleased to be able to report that Bob Anderson is supported by no less an authority than the OED in his contention that Coward introduced the word 'jizz' back in 1922. The OED defines 'jizz' as "The characteristic impression given by an animal or plant". It goes on to say "GUISE, is coincident in sense but the phonetic relationship remains unexplained and the two words may therefore be unrelated". This is all very well but I can't help a sneaking feeling that Coward might have misheard when that West Coast Irishman said (in, I presume, a broad West Coast of Ireland accent) "By their guise".

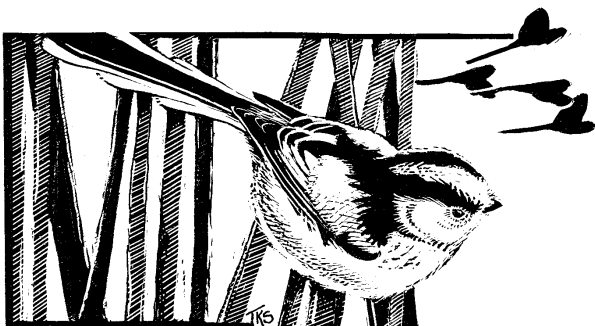
Steve Barber, 14 Thornfield Grove, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, SK8 6AZ

LONG-TAILS - RELATIVELY SPEAKING

The Reserve at Connah's Quay has a wonderful way of springing surprises. One visit this winter ended with late low sunshine making the stunted hedgerow on the access road glow with colour. It was when we approached the gap in the hedge that the colour exploded. The muddy puddle through the gap was a riot of rainbows with water droplets shaken everywhere from the vigorous bathing of two Blue Tits, a Linnet and a Goldfinch. Greens and blues, reds and ochres shot through with gold and turquoise; it is a brave artist who dares such a palette.

That day began with the surprise of a group of Long-tailed Tits busily sputtering through the same hawthorns. Not rarities, these birds, but unexpected on the Reserve none the less. Where were they going, these eight? Who knows? One thing is certain, wherever they were travelling, they would be travelling together. Long-tailed Tits are very together birds: co-operation is their watchword. A bird ringer friend once told me that catching Long-tailed Tits in a mist net is easy. If one flies in, all the others in the group follow to see what's the trouble. He actually said "if you catch young Tom, then you'll also get mum and dad, brother Simon, Uncle James and Aunt Flo!".

So it was with the five that were caught together at Meols one October. They were ringed with consecutive ring numbers, just as the ringer took them off the strip. Four weeks later, at Warsop in Nottinghamshire, a mist net trapped a Long-tailed Tit and buzz, buzz, buzzzz after it came another four. The ringer extracting them from the net found that the first was ringed, and the second *and* to his astonishment the third, fourth *and* fifth.



Imagine his disbelief when he checked the ring numbers and found them to be five consecutive rings! It was our Meols quintet still travelling together.

Such co-operation plays a vital part in winter. Small birds must maintain body heat through nights when the temperature plummets to below zero and Long-tailed Tits not only roost communally but also keep bodily contact, huddling close to other members of the group. Yet Long-tailed Tit co-operation goes further - even to the extent of helping each other out in the breeding season.

In spring the group undergoes some changes. Young females move to neighbouring groups whilst the young males stay put, finding a mate from incoming females to their own group. Each pair stakes out a territory within the group's range and begins to build a nest. The new females are allowed to roost with the group until the nest is completed.

But the breeding season is fraught with danger and many nests fail. If the pair attempts a replacement clutch the young will hatch too late in the season for the insect food supply; if they abandon all attempts at breeding they have failed to pass on their genes and may not have another season. What happens is family togetherness of an extraordinary kind. The pair splits up, the female returning to her former group, and both will help to raise the young at another nest. This is usually the nest belonging to one of their own brothers.

The whole family benefits. The young are better fed and more young survive from nests that have helpers. The parents spend more time in vigilance for predators and they start the winter heavier and fitter. The Helpers ensure that their own kindred survive and so pass on more of the family genes. Also, by helping, they assure themselves of their vital place in the winter flock, that stick-together group of parents and youngsters, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. Summer and winter, rain and shine, in hedgerow or in mist net, co-operation rules OK. Long-tailed Tits are the musketeers of the bird world. Relatively speaking it is "All for One and One for All".

Thelma K Sykes, Blue Neb Studios



**'Visible Migration through the Southern Pennines'
by Keith Clarkson, Friday 2nd October 1998.**

These days, when birdwatching has become big business, or the subject of University Ph D theses, or the observations of a clique of 'notables', it was refreshing to see how the dedicated amateur can make a real difference to our understanding of bird behaviour.

Keith Clarkson delivered a marvellous account of the migration of birds along the edges of the Pennines. He and his friends had spent long hours observing the passage of common birds over the hills outside Sheffield. Against perceived ornithological wisdom, they were able to show that thousands of common birds such as Woodpigeons, Meadow Pipits, Chaffinches and also Snow Buntings and some rarer birds, Lapland Buntings and Richard's Pipits, regard the moors as a hostile environment and are compelled to migrate along its fringes at low level. The observers even pressed a hot air balloon into service to prove to the doubters that the birds travelled at a few hundred feet above ground level and not thousands of feet high as when they cross the sea. The thrill of logging nearly quarter of a million Woodpigeons in a month, as well as the pleasure in recording our native species on migration was communicated to the appreciative audience. Thus Keith's enthusiasm and dedication kept his audience spell bound for nearly two hours.

Laurie Fairman, CAWOS Press Officer, 59 Northwich Road, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 0AR

FEEDING BIRDS IN THE GARDEN

In *Bird News* No. 38 ('Tree Sparrows and Nut Bags') several questions were asked around when and what to feed birds. This article hopes to provide some answers, but contributions from other society members would be welcomed.

When to feed

It is really up to you when you decide to start and stop feeding the birds. However, in the past there has been some controversy as to whether you should feed birds when they are raising young (this could mean anytime between April and September), as it was thought that young birds might die if they are given unnatural foods. Both the RSPB and BTO now approve all-year-round feeding of wild birds. This is because many of our farmland bird species have declined significantly over the last 20 years, due to intensification of agriculture and pollution. So providing suitable supplement feeding, not only gives us pleasure in observing birds at close quarters, but may also mean the difference between life or death during critical food shortage periods.

Once you have started feeding do not stop halfway through the winter. The food you put out becomes steadily more important as the winter progresses; seeds and fruit become scarce and insects become impossible to find. Many birds are creatures of habit and will make a special visit to your bird table once they learn there is food there for them. When the weather is really bad, a wasted journey to your empty bird table will make life even harder for them.

Birds use up any fat reserves very quickly, turning it into energy to keep warm. In winter there are two critical times of day for them. Last thing at night they need to eat enough food to keep them going until dawn. First thing in the morning they must find food quickly as their reserves have been used up. If you can't provide this level of deluxe service, then first thing is probably the best time.

What to feed

The best foods for wild birds are those made available by nature, so any food put out should be regarded as a supplement to nature. Of course all sorts of kitchen scraps will make a welcome meal, including cooked potato and rice, melon seeds, chopped bacon rind (*not* strongly salted), raw pastry and tinned cat and dog food (but beware attracting all the local strays!). We've witnessed tremendous acrobatics from Starlings feeding on the suspended carcass of the Christmas turkey.

But there are a few simple rules on what to avoid, for example never put out desiccated coconut, uncooked rice or dry bread as these may swell up inside the bird's stomach; salted peanuts can be put out as long as they are washed thoroughly and dried first. Beechmast, acorns, hazelnuts, hips and haws can be collected and stored in a cool, dry place, to put out to attract Jays and even Nuthatches and Coal Tits, who like to collect and hoard food for the winter. During a drought you can help Blackbirds and thrushes by putting out soft food such as fruit and grated cheese, whilst in the winter months they will particularly appreciate windfall apples and pears, though do space them out to avoid competition between birds.

However, a great deal of research by wild bird food companies has gone into identifying the types of foods best suited to individual species or groups of species. Nutritional requirements at differing times of the year have been considered, and the demands placed at migration and breeding. There are many special foods available to attract different species of birds, with different feeding habits, here is a selection:-

Peanuts – they are a pulse rather than a true nut, but they are rich in oil and highly nutritious and very popular with squirrels and badgers, as well as birds! Peanuts can be contaminated with aflatoxin which kills wild birds, so only buy from a reputable supplier. Please make sure that peanuts are always in a container so that birds can't choke on whole nuts. This is particularly important in the breeding season to prevent whole nuts being fed to young birds at times of natural food shortages.

Peanut granules – these are the germination points of peanuts that are removed during processing because they are too bitter for human tastes. They are a valuable bird food as they have a higher protein and oil content than the rest of the nut. Chemically they are very similar to the fruit of our native Beech tree, which is a staple winter food for many of our small resident birds and passage migrants. They are ideal for adding to birdcake mixes, or for scattering on the ground or on the bird table.

Wild bird seed – this should contain a good mix of small black and small striped sunflower seeds, peanuts or peanut granules, pinhead oatmeal (particularly loved by Robins, Dunnocks and thrushes), millet, canary seed, flaked maize and small grain wheat.

Black or 'oil' sunflower seeds – they have thinner skins than the striped variety so birds can get to the kernels easily and they are regarded as the most cost-effective means of supplying high-energy foods to wildlife. They are safe for young birds so can be fed on the ground or bird table all year round, as well as in the feeders.

Sunflower hearts – this new feed is rich in energy, oil and protein and suitable for feeder, table or ground feeding, attracting a broad spectrum of garden birds from Song Thrushes to Bramblings and especially Bullfinches; and there are no husks and therefore no mess to clear up! They are suitable for all year round feeding, but particularly in those periods leading up to, and during times of great stress, e.g. bad weather, breeding and migration.

Niger seed – though widely referred to as a tiny thistle seed, it is in fact a member of the Compositae family and is closely related to the sunflower. It is oil rich and attractive to a wide range of species and particularly loved by Goldfinches. It is best to put it on the table or in a feeder.

Mealworms – these meal beetle larvae are high protein, live foods, particularly loved by Robins, but other species such as tits will relish them as well. They are particularly valuable during the breeding season for species such as Tree Sparrows. You can buy them from some pet shops or by mail order, but they need to be stored in plastic tubs in a cool place or in the bottom of the fridge.

Bird cakes – you can buy these ready made, but they are very simple to make yourself. Use melted suet, lard or dripping and stir in a mixture of cake crumbs, broken biscuits, sultanas and currants, sunflower seeds, peanut granules, porridge oats, etc. Use purpose-made bell feeders or follow the Blue Peter tradition by tightly packing the mixture into empty yoghurt pots with a piece of string threaded through the centre. There is a commercially available peanut cake containing dried insects, designed with over-wintering insect eaters in mind, such as Blackcaps!

Where to feed

Using a bird table is probably the best way to feed birds as it gives you a clear view and provides the birds with some protection from cats. Try to place it in the open, but close to cover, so that birds can make a quick dive for safety if danger threatens. Also you are more likely to see shy species such as Dunnocks or Wrens that do not normally stray far from cover. Avoid buying tables with nesting boxes – birds won't use them as there's too much disturbance. Do keep bird tables and nearby areas clean and don't allow piles of droppings or old, mouldy food to build up; try to regularly move feeding sites. Metal and plastic surfaces can safely be disinfected with sodium hypochlorite solution, or Dettol or Jeyes fluid.

Acrobatic members of the tit family will be attracted to hanging feeders and baskets filled with nuts. Greenfinches are also fond of peanuts and will often chase away other birds. A variety of ledge feeders, hanging baskets and bird tables are available from the RSPB or from pet food shops such as Freshpak who advertise in *Bird News* or from other specialist companies.

Thrushes, Blackbirds, Starlings and Chaffinches are some of the birds that prefer to feed on the ground, so don't forget to put some food out for them, but scatter directly on the ground away from bird tables so that the food doesn't become contaminated by droppings. By simply clearing a patch of snow in hard weather you can help them to find insects and spiders hidden below.

Shy birds, like Dunnocks and Wrens, will feed more readily if food is scattered under bushes (they particularly love grated cheese). To attract woodpeckers and Nuthatches try filling the holes and cracks of a post or a suspended log with a fatty food such as suet.

Water

Birds need water, even in winter, for drinking and also for bathing to keep their feathers in good condition to insulate themselves well during the long, cold winter nights. Seed eaters in particular need to drink plenty of water, as this is lacking in their diet. Other birds, such as Blue Tits, may drink more in winter because their winter diet of dry nuts and sunflower seeds does not provide them with as much water as their summer fare of juicy caterpillars. Try to keep at least one area of water ice-free, but *never* use any kind of anti-freeze or other chemical in the water.

A shallow dish or tray, or a larger container such as an inverted dustbin lid, is suitable for putting out water, but the water should be changed often, preferably every day. You could make a more permanent water hole by digging a shallow scrape in a flowerbed and lining it with plastic held down with stones. Ideally, a pond will provide water for drinking and bathing all year round and will attract many interesting types of wildlife to the garden.

Top Tips

Here are a few ideas on feeding birds gleaned from friends and magazines:-

- Make a batter of milk, flour and sugar, fry it, let it cool and then put it out for the birds.
- To prevent food falling off homemade bird cakes, make a spiral of heavy duty garden wire which can be inserted into the container instead of string, before filling with the mixture and left to set as usual. Make the wire long enough to form a loop for attaching to the bird table or branch. Clean thoroughly before re-using.
- To make a hanging peanut feeder more squirrel proof, or to simply deny access to larger birds such as Starlings, use an old lampshade frame to protect it.
- A more elaborate idea is to use a large plastic hamster ball with four holes cut into the top half (size of a 2p will only allow Blue Tits to enter).
- Make cheap, but effective squirrel baffles from large, round plant pot saucers. The trick is to drill the hole in the saucer slightly larger than the pole, so that when it rests on a wooden block attached to the pole it is able to tilt at an angle of at least 45°. Squirrels will climb the pole, but when they grab the saucer it tilts and gives way, usually enough to put off the majority of squirrels. You can also mount this above hanging feeders, with the added advantage of keeping the rain off.
- To protect the feeding area from cats and large birds such as pigeons or corvids, make a 'hopper guard' from garden wire meshing. This is simply a wire cage with spikes that you stick into the grass to hold it in place.
- To keep water ice free put a small, light ball on the surface, it will usually be moved about just enough to keep some of the water open.
- Make a bird table with a fine mesh bottom to let water drain through, thereby keeping foods reasonably dry and fresh.
- In the spring, fill homemade large wire mesh, peanut feeder-type holders with nesting materials such as wool, dry grass, moss etc.

And last, but not least...

- A good way to deter squirrels from hanging feeders is to hang them (the feeders, not the squirrels) from 'knicker' elastic! Apparently the squirrels don't like being bounced around!

Any other ideas?

Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QG

Acknowledgements to Birdwatching, RSPB and miscellaneous others!

Book Launch

“THE CHEERFULNESS OF SPARROWS”

A collection of thirty bird poems by Peter Walton is to be published on 26th November 1998. About half-a-dozen of them first appeared in *Bird News*, but otherwise they will be new to readers. The collection will be called "The Cheerfulness of Sparrows" (Rock Sparrows, in fact!). A notable feature of the book will be the set of bird images (in response to poems) specially commissioned from Tony Broome, Robert Gillmor, Bill Morton, David Quinn and Thelma Sykes. A Chinese painting will form the end-paper.

The book will be priced at £4.20 in bookshops - and at Waxwings. Mail order also available at £4.85 (inc. p&p) either from Waxwings or direct from:- Shoestrings Press, 19 Devonshire Avenue, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 1BS.

The book will be launched at a reading in the Portico Library, Manchester on publication day: Thursday 26th November 1998 at 7pm (corner of Charlotte St. and Mosley St).

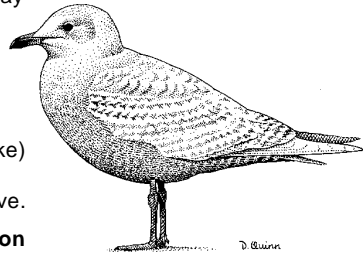
Admission - £1 (including a glass of wine) or £5 (to include the book - decide during the evening if you wish!)

*'Four magpies fighting in the road
(A bouncing, rattling pied charade)
Think their early-morning quarrel far
More momentous than the approaching car.'*

ICELAND GULL

Losing the paper where I'd noted it
First time – that pure white gull – was in its way
Most apt, since I'd been going to say
How odd it felt to be looking at
A bird whose whole identity was a lack
Of anything to make it stand out
In a crowd (and crowd there was, about
Two thousand gulls, blizzarding above the lake)
Except I took the lack itself to prove
A separateness which only the unmarked have.

Peter Walton



[Eds. To celebrate Peter's forthcoming publication we thought you would appreciate an example of his undoubted talent as a wordsmith]

RUMOURS... RUMOURS...

Most people within the society will know the depth of feeling expressed by our County Recorder regarding fishing and fishermen (one time a past Editor of *Bird News* had to pull a 'too-controversial' article by him!). Well imagine our surprise when this same person was witnessed *fishing* off the end of the quay in Hugh Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly. He might have thought that he was far enough from home to get away with it!

Another tale from the Scillies involves the 'most literary' member of CAWOS. A Barred Warbler turned up on St Mary's and was subsequently enjoyed by the assembled mass of birdwatchers. A late arrival breathlessly asked this person 'has the *barred* been seen recently? Imagine his incomprehension when the answer came back "Oh, is Shakespeare on the island as well?!"

Rumour has it that there is a new, exciting survey about to be undertaken in a secret location in central Cheshire which, if it comes off, is set to break new grounds, both in its format and in the complexity of data collection. The outcomes could be very revealing and should contribute to further our understanding of the complex inter-relationship between birds, birdwatching and out-of-season breeding behaviour. Hopefully more will be revealed in the future, depending upon factors currently outside of our control. So watch this space.

A certain member of the *Bird News* Editorial team feels that she (bit of a give-away there!) is constantly having to remind other members of approaching deadlines and printing dates, so this cartoon seems rather apt, not that she would dream of moaning about it to her husband of course! (with apologies to Peanuts and Schulz):-



Membership News

Welcome to the following new members: D Sharples, MP Wright. Membership for 1998 ended at 345, eleven more than last year. It would have been good if we had topped the 350 mark but perhaps that will be a target for 1999.

Recently one or two members have contacted me about not having received copies of *Bird News*. If you think you ought to have received an issue, or anything else which we are due to send out, please contact me if you suspect you have been missed out. In the odd case it has been my fault, but the Royal Mail can take the blame for the vast majority.

At the Council meetings in July and September the following items were discussed:

- 1000 copies of the *Bird Report* would be printed this year and Keith Sheel was thanked for his work in persuading organisations and shops to take copies.
- the Grey Partridge recovery programme was discussed and it was agreed that our logo should go on the publicity leaflets, together with those of other supporting organisations.
- a grant of £75 was made to the Girl Guide Association towards the cost of materials for nestboxes at their Pettypool camp site; a working party with members of CAWOS and Guides was to be held there on 7 November.
- a grant of £750 was made to the voluntary wardens of the Dee Estuary for help in the cost of noticeboards protecting birds in the estuary; the CAWOS name would appear on the boards.
- a grant of £50 was made to the Raptor Study Group towards expenses for a speaker to talk about their Buzzard survey in Cheshire next year.

And of course by the time this newsletter reaches you we hope that many of you will have seen our exhibition in the Grosvenor Museum.

With this newsletter comes a leaflet offering members a 25% reduction in the price of a subscription to *British Birds*.

David Cogger, Membership Secretary, 113 Nantwich Rd, Middlewich CW10 9HD - 01606 832517

BACK ISSUES OF BIRD NEWS

The following back issues are available to members free of charge - just pay 20p per issue for postage. There is limited availability and they are offered on a first come, first served basis:

Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24 and 25.

Please send the appropriate number of 2nd class stamps, plus an address label to the address below. Exclude stamps if you are able to collect them at future indoor meetings.

We hope to make other issues available (with the exception of the early numbers) **IF** there is the demand - so please send a '*wish list*' to me, so that I can assess the interest. Please bear in mind that there will be a 'realistic' charge (probably minimum of 70p + p&p per issue) if we go ahead with this re-printing.

Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QG

HOUSE MARTIN SURVEY

This is a reminder to return all survey forms to me as soon as possible (give me a ring if you require forms). Please remember **any** information would be welcomed.

**Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane,
Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QG. Tel: 01565 830168**

Projects and Surveys

HALE HEAD FARMLAND CENSUS (BTO): 10-YEAR SUMMARY (1989-1998)

SPECIES	NO. OF TERRITORIES RECORDED			CHANGE: + or -
	TOTAL	1989-93	1994-98	
Skylark	149	65	84	+19
Corn Bunting	140	81	59	-22
Wren	90	44	46	+2
Blackbird	67	30	37	+7
Linnet	65	28	37	+9
Chaffinch	48	16	32	+16
Pheasant	45	24	21	-3
Robin	42	14	28	+14
Whitethroat	42	14	28	+14
Blue Tit	39	20	19	-1
Yellow Wagtail	39	16	23	+7
Grey Partridge	38	29	9	-20
Dunnock	31	17	14	-3
Great Tit	25	11	14	+3
Lapwing	24	11	13	+2
Woodpigeon	24	9	15	+6
Mallard	21	14	7	-7
Reed Bunting	15	6	9	+3
Sedge Warbler	14	1	13	+12
Meadow Pipit	10	5	5	0
Blackcap	9	4	5	+1
Tree Sparrow	6	6	0	-6
Moorhen	6	4	2	-2
Oystercatcher	6	2	4	+2
Starling	5	4	1	-3

The table shows:-

1. The total number of territories held by each species during the 10-year study (in descending order).
2. The number of territories held in the first 5 years compared with the second 5 years.
3. The difference between these two periods.

COMMENT

Skylark and Corn Bunting held the most territories in each of the ten years except in 1998, when Corn Bunting numbers fell from an annual average of 14 territories to only 5. The differing fate of these two species is one of the most striking features of this study, the Skylark showing a 30% increase in the second 5-year period, the Corn Bunting a corresponding fall.

The fall in the number of Corn Buntings and Grey Partridges and the disappearance of Tree Sparrows is in keeping with the national trend as reported by the BTO. The increase in Skylark numbers at Hale Head (where there is an extensive tidal marsh), is also compatible with the BTO finding that, in coastal sites, there has been a slower decline than elsewhere and an actual increase in recent years (*BTO News* May-August 1988).

It is encouraging that most of the other species breeding at Hale Head are at least holding their own, with Robin, Chaffinch and Whitethroat doubling their number of territories during the second 5-year period. The increase in the number of Linnets and Sedge Warblers may be due in part to the increasing use of oil-seed rape as a feeding and nesting site.

Colin Ogilvie, 1 The Riffel, Woolton Park, Liverpool, L25 6DR Tel: 0151 428 3472

BROSBI

Year 3 is coming to an end and we are about to enter year 4 of this 5 year project for Bird Recording On Sites of Biological Importance (BROSBI).

SBI's are designated by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT), Cheshire County Council and English Nature as being sites of importance for nature conservation within the county. They are intended to complement Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which are nationally important sites. The SBI system evolved in the early 1970s and sites have been under review since 1990, with the intention of reviewing each of the 566 sites in the CWT area every 5 years. This area covers all of Cheshire, the Wirral and Stockport & Tameside.

Most of the recent surveys have been carried out by CWT members. This has resulted in good records of habitat and plant species but generally rather poor records of birds. To overcome this problem CAWOS has agreed to organise a project jointly with CWT, with the aim of surveying each SBI every 5 years to determine its status so far as birds are concerned. This will also have the benefit of providing additional bird records to CAWOS for the annual bird report. The survey is relatively simple and will involve a minimum of four visits to site during a year to record all bird activity there. At the more ornithologically rich sites there will be a need for additional visits. Detailed guidelines and recording forms will be provided to all participants. To achieve sufficient coverage participation is open to all CAWOS members and also members of local bird clubs in the county.

Progress so far has been steady rather than spectacular. Results from the survey of 58 sites have so far been completed and passed on to CWT. These results will generally be valuable additions to the SBI database held by CWT. This enables a factual case to be put up against any proposed development that may adversely affect an SBI and so give sites some additional protection.

So far there are 13 individual recorders carrying out fieldwork, together with members of 8 bird clubs/groups. I am sure that a number of CAWOS members are already participating in the survey, usually as dedicated "local patchers" looking after their own area or as a member of a local bird club. However, I am equally sure that there are many more CAWOS members who are very competent and are not participating. No specialist skills are needed. If you feel that you are O.K. at basic bird identification and can afford to give four mornings spread throughout the year then please contact me so that we can agree on which sites to cover in 1999. If you have already done your local patch can you do some more sites?

If you are already involved - please remember to let me have your 1998 results as soon into 1999 as possible and let me know whether you need any new sites for 1999.

If you are NOT involved, but want to be - please let me know so that we can agree on which sites you can cover.

Colin Lythgoe, 11 Waterloo Road, Haslington, Crewe, CW1 5TF. Tel: 01270 582642

GREY PARTRIDGE RECOVERY PROJECT

The Grey Partridge Recovery Project has been developed by the Cheshire Grey Partridge Species Action Plan Group. The objectives of this group are to facilitate the delivery of targets for the recovery of Grey Partridge populations, as set out in *Countdown 1997: A Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the Cheshire Region*.

At present, membership of the Cheshire Grey Partridge Action Plan Group consists of the following partners:-

British Association of Shooting and Conservation, British Trust for Ornithology, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Cheshire Young Farmers Federation, Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society, Cheshire Police Wildlife Liaison Officer, Countryside Alliance, Country Landowners Association, Environmental Crop Management Ltd., Farming and Rural Conservation Agency, Game Conservancy Trust, National Farmers Union, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and representative Cheshire farmers and gamekeepers.

The Project Brief has been developed by a Steering Group comprising Countryside Alliance, Country Landowners Association, Cheshire Young Farmers Federation, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The Recovery Project has been ratified by all other partner organisations.

Project Rationale

Like many other previously common farmland bird species, the Grey Partridge has undergone a dramatic decline over the last 30 years. Nationally Grey Partridge populations have declined by 86% and the range has contracted by 19% (Gibbons et al, 1993. *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain: 1988-1991*). Declines and range contraction have been most marked in the west of the country. In Cheshire the population is known to have "declined dramatically", although the scale of this decrease has not been quantified (Guest et al, 1992. *The Breeding Atlas of Cheshire and Wirral*).

Due to the speed and scale of its decline the Grey Partridge is one of 36 species of bird to be included in the UK "Red List" of species of high conservation concern. Fortunately, however, The Game Conservancy Trust has been carrying out intensive research on this species for over 30 years and the reasons for its decline and ecological requirements are well understood. Further, the Grey Partridge has the largest clutch size of any bird in the world and given a sympathetic land management regime, has the capacity for rapid recovery.

The Grey Partridge is included in the first tranche of Species Action Plans in both the *UK Biodiversity Action Plan* and *Countdown 97: A Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the Cheshire Region*. Both plans set measured and timed targets for a recovery in the Grey Partridge population. They also list the necessary actions needed to achieve such an increase.

Recovery Project Brief

The Recovery Project aims to achieve a substantial increase in the Grey Partridge population over an area of approximately 150 square kilometres of lowland farmland in north east Cheshire (see Project Area). The Grey Partridge population will be increased through a combination of sympathetic management of farmland, the creation of habitat features specifically designed to meet the ecological requirements of the Grey Partridge and the provision of advice on legal means of predator control.

The Project aims to illustrate that environmentally sound management of farmland can result in economic benefits to landowners and help achieve a degree of diversification of farm incomes. The Project seeks to do this in two ways. Firstly, in the medium term, once Grey Partridge populations have recovered, landowners may wish to investigate achieving some financial return from field sports or conservation based environmental education initiatives. In the longer term, further economic spin offs for the local rural community may accrue, via the encouragement in investment in associated rural jobs such as gamekeeping and land management skills such as hedge laying, fencing and tree planting. In the short term, the Project will be seeking to target agri-environment schemes principally the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, on the Recovery Project area. Grant aid from such schemes will help contribute to farm incomes by removing some of the uncertainty of fluctuating prices and replacing these with guaranteed grant funding.

In time, farms participating in the Project will be used as demonstration sites to which farmers and landowners from elsewhere in Cheshire can be brought. Management practices beneficial to Grey Partridge can then be demonstrated to help facilitate and encourage action for Grey Partridge elsewhere in the country. Management practices demonstrated by the Project are largely available for grant aid under the MAFF Countryside Stewardship Scheme, and are thus applicable to farmers outside the Project area. It is hoped that the Project will also act as a model on which other biodiversity initiatives can be based elsewhere in the country.

Objectives

- To increase the existing Grey Partridge population in the Project area. The Cheshire Species Action Plan seeks to increase Grey Partridge populations by 20% by the year 2000. Within the Recovery Project area, the aim is to increase the population by 50% within 3 years.
- To illustrate that sympathetic management of farmland, new habitat creation and legal predator control can increase Grey Partridge populations to the extent that such management may result in a level of economic return to the landowner.
- To demonstrate the compatibility between conservation and maintenance of rural incomes. This is to be achieved through the targeting of grant aid (both agri-environment schemes and the Project's Habitat Creation budget) and encouragement to invest in jobs (such as hedge laying), which are associated with responsible farming, game management and environmental practice.
- Establish farms participating in the Project as demonstration sites to help encourage the implementation of the Grey Partridge Species Action Plan elsewhere in Cheshire and to act as a model of Local Biodiversity Action Plan implementation, which can be followed elsewhere in the country.

- To facilitate close links and working relations with a large number of landowners and farmers, in order to disseminate conservation “good practice” management in the area.
- To develop management techniques, which are both beneficial to Grey Partridge and acceptable to farmers, on the intensively managed grassland typical of many Cheshire farms.
- Through habitat management geared towards the Grey Partridge, illustrate that such management practices are also beneficial to a range of other declining farmland species which are included in both the UK and Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plans. Other farmland species included in the Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan are: Brown Hare, Skylark, Song Thrush, Barn Owl and a range of bats. Action for Grey Partridge can be expected to contribute to the county population targets set for all the aforementioned species.
- Habitat management undertaken by the Project will help to meet national targets for the management and/or restoration of 2 key habitats identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, namely Cereal Field Margins and Ancient/Species Rich Hedgerows.

Recovery Project Area

The Country Landowners Association approached their Cheshire membership to seek landowners who would be prepared to host the Project on their land. The response was enthusiastic and the Capesthorpe estate in the north east of the county was selected as the core of the Project area.

Building on the core Capesthorpe estate, the Project area has been expanded to include all land between Macclesfield and Knutsford to the north (with the A537 as the northern boundary), with the M6 between Knutsford and Holmes Chapel forming the western boundary. The A54 to Congleton forms the southern limit with the Project area being completed by following the A536 from Congleton to Macclesfield in the east. This encompasses an area of approximately 150 square kilometres.

In addition to the Capesthorpe estate, this area includes several other large estates and well over 100 farms, which comprise a mix of both tenanted and private ownership.

Project Timescale

The aim is to have secured sufficient funding to begin providing monies for on-farm habitat creation and enhancement works by autumn 1999. A rolling programme of events is planned both to build support for and bring in funding for the Project. This will commence with a farmers' meeting in winter 1998/99 to explain the objectives of the Project. The official launch of the Project 'vision' will take place at Capesthorpe Hall in mid-April 1999, and will be targeted at a broad range of potential sponsors, partners and implementers. This will be followed by a celebrity auction in late May to raise funds for the Project.

It is envisaged that funding will need to be secured for an initial 3 year period. This is thought to be the minimum timescale in which Project targets can be met. Ongoing monitoring, built into the Project remit, will allow assessment of the success of the Project in implementing its objectives. These will be reviewed on an annual basis in light of the monitoring results. During the course of the Project's initial 3 years it is hoped that a rolling programme of fund raising will be set in place and that this will allow the Project to be extended for an indefinite period of time.

Baseline Data Collection

In order to ensure that Project funds for habitat creation and/or enhancement deliver maximum value for money, baseline data in certain characteristics of the Project area is currently being collected prior to the commencement of the Project. This will allow targeting of scarce funds at those priority areas likely to be most important for Grey Partridges.

Project Remit

The Steering Group will undertake the overall running and administration of Project funds. Partner organisations, attached to the Project, will be responsible for delivering 4 tiers of advice on management for Grey Partridge. These can be defined as advisory, habitat creation funding, agri-environment schemes and legal predator control.

1. A site visit based on which recommendations will be made for adjustments to existing practices, or implementation of new management, which can be undertaken at little or no cost to the landowner, but which has significant ecological benefits for Grey Partridge.
2. Advice on the most appropriate form(s) of new habitat creation and/or enhancement which will be directly funded through the Project's "Habitat Creation" budget.
3. Advice on how larger scale habitat creation can be applied for and funded through the existing agri-environment schemes.

4. Advice on the means of and best methods for the legal control of certain predators, such as foxes and crows.

These 4 tiers of advice, delivered by the Project partners are now described in more detail.

Advisory Pack

Each landowner visited by a Project partner will receive an advisory pack containing information on the objectives of the Project and detailing ways in which Grey Partridges can be encouraged on the farm. The aim of the advisory pack is to reinforce the recommendations made during the site visit and to act as a source of material to which the landowner can refer whenever necessary.

Project Outputs/Targets

The success of the Project in meeting its stated objectives will be measured by the delivery of the following targets:

- Partner organisations to have visited 90 farms over 3 years and produced written recommendations on general management for Grey Partridge on each farm.
- After 3 years, to have funded a minimum of 90 acres of habitat specifically designed and managed for Grey Partridge.
- To facilitate the agreement of 5 Countryside Stewardship Schemes per annum from the 30 farms visited yearly.
- Through the voluntary gamekeeper network, advise on or establish legal predator control on 45 farms over the 3 years (15 per annum).
- Increase the Grey Partridge population within the Project area by 50% after 3 years.
- Demonstrate through monitoring, measurable increases in other farmland Biodiversity Action Plan target species, particularly Brown Hare and Skylark, on farms participating in the Recovery Project.
- Establish 3 "demonstration farms" during the course of the Project and organise regular events to promote and disseminate good practice.

Monitoring

It will be necessary to monitor the success of targeted advice and funded habitat creation in achieving increases in the populations of Grey Partridge and other farmland Biodiversity Action Plan species.

It is proposed that participating farms should be censused in years 1 and 3 after entering the Recovery Project. The exact methodologies for the monitoring are still to be drawn up, but may involve autumn counts of Grey Partridge coveys, Brown Hare and seed eating farmland birds.

The baseline Grey Partridge survey, due to be carried out in February 1999, will also need to be repeated at some stage of the Project's initial 3 year period.

Would you like to take part in a Covey Count Weekend? The survey of the project area is to take place on the weekend of 6/7th February 1999 (unless there are severe adverse weather conditions when field work may be undertaken the following weekend).

For more information about the Covey Count Weekend, and if you have any recent Grey Partridge records, please contact John Roberts at Cheshire Wildlife Trust (01270 610180).

If you would like to know how you could do more to help the Grey Partridge, please contact Roy Taylor of RSPB (01785 603395) for some free advice.

Roy Taylor, on behalf of the Cheshire Grey Partridge Species Action Plan Group

SPECIMENS NEEDED FOR ANALYSIS

Studying carcasses of birds of prey provides vital clues to harmful chemicals. The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology has been analysing the pesticide levels in the livers of dead predatory birds for 35 years. But they need your help. If you find (whole) bodies of Peregrines, Sparrowhawks, Kestrels, Merlins, Long-eared and Barn Owls, Grey Herons, Kingfishers, Great Crested Grebes or other large birds of prey, please send them in a sealed plastic bag inside a box or padded envelope, by first class post to:-

Lois Dale, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE17 2LS.

Include your name and address, where and when you found the bird and any notable circumstances. Mark the package 'perishable goods'. Your postage costs will be refunded in stamps and you will be sent a report on the cause of death and the results of the analysis. If you think the report would be of interest to CAWOS members, please send it in for publication.

Diary

NOVEMBER

- 21 HO Wirral, Inner Marsh Farm, Hoylake etc. meet Cecil Rd public car park, Hale 8:30am
- 22 CRSPB Martin Mere by coach, meet 9:00am, ring Graham Dixon 01244 324268 for details
- 22 SECOS North Wales Coast, ring for details
- 24 ADNHS 'ASTRONOMY' by Graham Sinagola
- 27 LOG 'SPLENDOUR IN THE COTTON GRASS' by Gordon Yates
- 27 KOS 'DORSET REVISITED' by Charles Owen
- 27 WGOS 'BIRDS OF THE MERSEY VALLEY' by Adam Davison
- 29 HPRSPB Tittesworth Reservoir, meet Marple 8:30am, contact David Knass
- 30 HPRSPB 'IN SEARCH OF HIMBRINI: THE BIRDS OF ICELAND' by Gordon Yates, at Marple

DECEMBER

- 3 CADOS 'COSTA RICA' by Roger Wilkinson
- 4 **CAWOS** 'LESBOS - JEWEL OF THE AEGEAN' by Richard Brookes
- 4 High Tide Birdwatch, Parkgate, 9:15am (HT 11:11, 9.8m)
- 5 High Tide Birdwatch, Parkgate, 10:00am (HT 11:58, 9.8m)
- 5 NCRSPB Marshside & Martin Mere, meet at Sainsbury's Car Park, Warrington at 9:00am
- 5 KOS Martin Mere/Marshside, meet Knutsford Sessions House 9:00am
- 6 LOG Marbury Park, by car, contact Peter Tongue 01606 891274
- 6 WGOS Marbury and Neumann's Flash, meet at Marbury at 9:30am
- 6 MCOS Anglesey, meet at Llanfairfechan at 9:00am. Leader: Mike Hems 01606 888525
- 6 SRSPB Tatton Park, meet at Mallard Close, off Knutsford to Mobberley Road, at 9:30am
- 6 CRSPB North Wales coast, meet 8:00am, ring Brian Roberts 01352 714758 for details
- 7 SRSPB 'CONSERVATION WITHIN NORTH WEST WATER' by Roy Rhodes
- 8 ADNHS 'FROM JOHN O'GROATS TO LANDS END' by Hilda Summersgill
- 8 MRSPB 'MIGRATION OVER THE BOSPHORUS' by Richard Raines
- 9 HO 'ISLAY, JEWEL OF THE HEBRIDES' by Gordon Yates
- 11 LOG Christmas Party
- 11 KOS Christmas Party
- 11 WGOS 'A LESBOS SPRING' by Steve Knell
- 11 MCOS 'MIGRATION TO MAASAI' by Keith Offord
- 11 SECOS 'TUNNICLIFFE'S ANGLESEY' by Paul Rogers
- 13 HPRSPB Conway/North Wales Coast, meet Marple 8:00am, contact Gordon McConnell
- 13 CADOS Marshside, contact Don Pawlett 01244 677477
- 13 MRSPB Rudyard Reservoir, meet Duke St. car park at 8:30am, contact Rob Hutchings 01625 432030
- 13 SECOS Shropshire Meres, ring for details
- 13 HO Leighton Moss, meet Cecil Road public car park, Hale at 8:30am
- 14 HPRSPB Members' Christmas Evening, at Marple, admission by ticket only
- 16 CRSPB Members' Evening
- 17 NNHS Members' Slides
- 19 ADNHS Local morning walk + pub lunch, meet public car park, Cecil Road, Hale at 9:30am
- 26 HPRSPB Boxing Day Walk, meet Disley Station 10:30am, contact Irene Blagden 01663 764091

JANUARY 1999

- 3 High Tide Birdwatch, Parkgate - time and tide tba
- 7 CADOS 'AROUND THE WORLD IN 180 SLIDES' by Steve Holmes
- 8 **CAWOS** 'ROADRUNNER COUNTRY' by Keith Offord
- 8 MCOS 'BIRDWATCHING IN TAIWAN' by Michael Taylor
- 8 SECOS 'THE SUB ANTARCTIC ISLANDS OF NEW ZEALAND' by Val McFarland
- 9 CADOS North Wales Coast, contact Alun Harley 01925 269430
- 10 KOS Tatton Park, meet Dog Lodge entrance 9:00am
- 10 CRSPB Rostherne and Marbury, meet 9:00am, ring Phil Ackers 01606 556347 for details

- 10 SECOS Southport & Martin Mere, ring for details
- 11 SRSPB 'THE BTO BREEDING BIRD SURVEY' by Richard Bashford
- 12 ADNHS 'BARN OWLS' by George Bramhall
- 12 MRSPB 'THE SUB ANTARCTIC ISLANDS OF NEW ZEALAND' by Val McFarland
- 13 HO 'KOOKABURRAS, CURRAWONGS and CROCODILES' by Keith Offord
- 16 HO Marton Mere and Wyre Estuary, meet Cecil Road public car park, Hale at 8:30am
- 17 WGOS Pennington Flash, meet at Pennington Flash at 9:30am
- 17 MCOS Seaforth/Marshside, meet Seaforth Docks gate 9:00am Leader: Mike Hems 01606 888525
- 17 MRSPB Marbury CP, meet Duke St. car park 9:00am, contact Philip Widdows 01625 262597
- 20 CRSPB 'NATURAL HISTORY OF MERSEYSIDE' by Colin Twist
- 21 NNHS 'THE ART OF BIRDING' by David Edwards
- 22 KOS 'TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO' by Val McFarland
- 26 ADNHS 'PERU' by Margaret Ledger
- 29 WGOS 'A CELEBRATION OF BIRDS' by Gordon Yates
- 31 ADNHS Mere Sands Wood, meet Cecil Road public car park, Hale at 9:30am

FEBRUARY

- 4 CADOS 'LIFE OVER 1000 FEET' by Keith Offord
- 5 **CAWOS 'CORMORANTS & INLAND FISHERIES – will the conflict continue?' by Chris Wernham**
- 7 CADOS Tregaron, contact Don Pawlett 01244 677477
- 7 CRSPB Sandwell Valley/Brandon Marsh by coach, contact Brian Roberts 01352 714758
- 8 SRSPB 'TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO' by Val McFarland
- 9 ADNHS 'CHESHIRE DRAGONFLIES' by Richard Gabb
- 9 MRSPB 'HOCKENHALL PLATTS NATURE RESERVE' by David Cummings
- 10 HO 'BIRD LIFE IN NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE' by Dr Colin Davies
- 12 MCOS 'WILDLIFE OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND' by Steve Knell
- 12 SECOS 'BIRDS OF VENEZUELA AND CHILE' by Brian Dyke
- 13 KOS Frodsham, meet Knutsford Sessions House 9:00am
- 13 HO Martin Mere and Marshside, meet Cecil Road public car park, Hale at 8:30am
- 17 CRSPB 'THE COMPLETE OWL' by Michael Leach
- 18 NNHS 'THE SEASHORE' by Hugh Jones
- 19 High Tide Birdwatch, Parkgate - time and tide tba
- 19-21 MCOS Norfolk, ring Paul Kenyon for details on 01606 77960
- 20 **CAWOS Gull Identification Workshop, details from Jeff Clarke, 0151 423 4275**
- 21 SRSPB Tophill Low by coach, departing at 8:00am – ring for details
- 21 MRSPB Rutland Water by coach, meet Duke St. car park 7:30am, contact Ian Taylor 01260 275248
- 21 SECOS Tregaron, ring for details
- 23 ADNHS 'WILD PLANTS AND PLACES' by Jack Smith
- 26 KOS 'BIRDS OF THE DEE' by Colin Wells
- 26 WGOS 'PORTRAIT OF A RIVER' by Charles Owen

Will **affiliated societies**, who wish to advertise meetings of relevance to CAWOS, please send their programme to:- **Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, WA16 6QG Tel: 01565 830168**

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

- ADNHS Altrincham & Dist. Natural History Society, mtgs Hale Methodist Church Hall 7.30pm, Sec. Vincent Pedley 0161 748 4717
- CADOS Chester & Dist. Ornithological Soc, mtgs Caldy Valley Community Centre 7.30pm, Prog. Sec. Don Coan 01244-660621
- CAWOS Cheshire & Wirral Ornithological Society, mtgs Knutsford Civic Centre 7.45pm, contact Sheila Blamire 01565 830168
- CRSPB Chester RSPB Group, mtgs St Mary's Centre, Chester 7:30pm. Prog Sec. Rob Adams 01829-270654
- HO Hale Ornithologists, mtgs St Peter's Assembly Rooms, 7:45pm, Prog.Sec. Barbara Vercambre 0161 980 8362
- HPRSPB High Peak RSPB Members Group contact John Durell 0161 427 3018, Ken Hodgson 0161 427 6828
- KOS Knutsford Ornithological Society, mtgs St Johns Church Centre 7.45pm, contact Roy Bircumshaw 01565 634193
- LOG Lymm Ornithological Group, mtgs Lymm Village Hall 8.00pm, Prog. Sec. Colin Antrobus 01925 635337
- MCOS Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society, mtgs Hartford Village Hall 8:00pm, contact Paul Kenyon 01606 77960
- MRSPB Macclesfield RSPB Members Group, mtgs Senior Citizens Hall 7.45pm, contact Peter Kirk 01625 829119
- NCRSPB North Cheshire RSPB Members Group, mtgs Appleton Parish Hall, Appleton, Mem. Sec Pam Gibson 01925 817874
- NNHS Nantwich Natural History Society, mtgs The Gables at 7:30pm, Sec. Mike Holmes 01270 216890
- SECOS South-East Cheshire Ornithological Society, mtgs St Peters Church Hall, Elworth Sandbach 7.30pm, Sec. Colin Lythgoe 01270 582642
- SRSPB Stockport RSPB Members Group, mtgs Stockport College, Theatre A 7:30pm, contact Peter Hugo 0161 485 4024
- WGOS Wilmslow Guild Ornithological Society, mtgs Wilmslow Guild HQ 7.45pm, Prog. Sec. Stephanie Harrison 0161 428 5462
- WRSPB Wirral RSPB Group, mtgs Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead 7.30pm Prog. Sec. D. Jowitt 0151 337 7940



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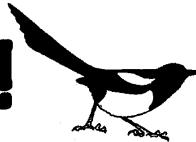
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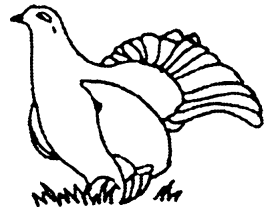
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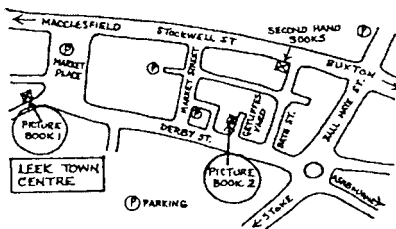
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