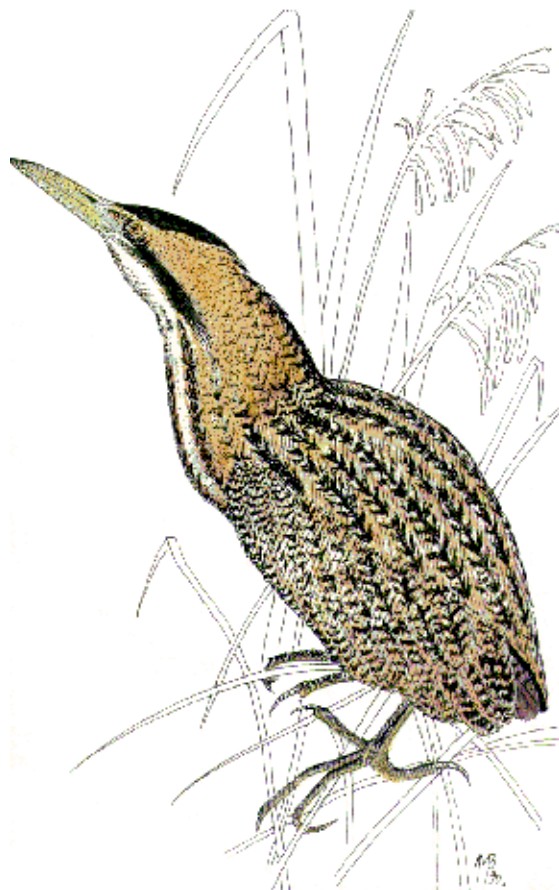


BIRD NEWS

Number 45 January 2000



**Bewick's and Whooper Swans in Flight
CAWOS Web Site • Sandbach Flashes
Cheshire & Wirral Raptor Study Group
Winter Farmland Bird Survey**



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*The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the
Society, the Council of the Society, or the Editor.*

Front cover: Bittern by Tony Broome

Other illustrations by Tony Broome, Ron Plummer, Thelma Sykes
and Cheshire Countryside Management Service.

Editorial

The very fact that I'm writing and you're reading this Editorial means that the world did not, contrary to widespread predictions, descend into technological chaos at midnight on 31st December 1999. Aeroplanes didn't plummet from the sky; nuclear power stations didn't go critical; cities were not blacked out and rampant looting did not occur (even in Liverpool!). Even all of my home electrical appliances carried on working properly. All over the country, as clocks chimed twelve and the Millennium Bug failed to bite, fireworks and lasers lit up the night sky and people partied deep into the wee hours. But, despite all of the hype and freely flowing festive spirit, essentially nothing except the century changed. Please don't misunderstand my despondency: I'm sure that to many people the millennial celebrations were a well-needed distraction from the pressures of late 20th century society. It's just that I believe a unique opportunity for humanity to examine meaningfully the current condition of our planet was lost.

With the birth of our first child, Rebekah Joy, on 13th January, this new year has brought a major transformation into the now largely sleepless lives of my wife's and mine. Consequently, I've found myself recently thinking a great deal about the world into which she has been born and the changes she may witness as she grows up. The 20th century was characterised by war, man's inhumanity to man and environmental pollution, all on a global scale. It is the century that gave birth to the terms blitzkrieg, ethnic cleansing, holocaust, global warming and genetic modification: not much of a legacy to our children. As we stand at the gateway of the 21st century much media attention has been focused on our past achievements and the development of human civilisation. But some commentators have also looked forward to the brave new world of the global village where man lives in harmony with both himself and his environment. A nice vision, but I wonder whether it can ever be achieved. For Rebekah's sake, I hope so.

Unfortunately, the early indications do not look good. Even as I am writing this column, millions of tonnes of heavy fuel oil from the wrecked tanker *Erika* are being washed up on France's Atlantic coastline. It is thought that many thousands of seabirds wintering in the Bay of Biscay - such as Fulmars, Gannets, gulls and auks - may have been killed. Others like shearwaters, storm-petrels, skuas and terns may well be affected during their northward spring migration from the subequatorial Atlantic. Many of these birds are annually recorded on passage off Hilbre Island or breed within the North-West. So, all you sea-watchers out there, do not be surprised if those species are somewhat less common this year. Of particular distress to me, a self-proclaimed wildfowl nut, was the sight on the television news of oiled Brent Geese vainly attempting to get airborne from the waters of Brittany's Golfe du Morbihan.

The *Erika* disaster all too clearly demonstrates how events far removed from Cheshire can have an impact on our avifauna since many of our birds winter or breed beyond British shores. However, there are of course dire events happening closer to home. Persistent enquiries by a Council member have eventually yielded from MAFF the admission that GM crop trials may be taking place at unnamed sites within Cheshire. This should concern all birders, as these crops may have a significant impact on certain invertebrates and, consequently, the birds that feed on them. As yet, these effects are unknown and unquantified. Also, whilst the Ruddy Duck debate rages on, culling is almost certainly continuing within the county. Whether you agree with the cull or not, the situation would never have arisen without man's irresponsible actions both in destroying the White-headed Duck's natural habitat and allowing the release of the GI (oversexed and over here!) duck into Europe.

These situations are just examples of the way in which we as a species have consistently acted with arrogant disregard for our fellow earthlings. Perhaps the Millennium Dome would have been better used, not to celebrate our technological and intellectual prowess, but to exhibit as a reminder to future generations all the species we have exterminated over the last century. However, I'm not sure there would be enough space. We tend to think of ourselves as a superior species but perhaps we should never forget that, to heavily paraphrase John Donne, 'no species is an island, entire of its self; any creature's death diminishes me, because I am involved in creation'. 'Therefore never ask to know for whom the bell tolls;' it just might toll for us.

Simon Edwards

Note: copy date for the next issue is 11th March - please be prompt

County Rarities

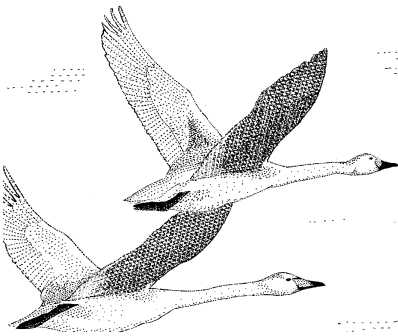
BEWICK'S AND WHOOPER SWANS IN FLIGHT

(*Cygnus columbianus bewickii* & *Cygnus cygnus*)

A high-flying flock of swans heading east-west in October is most likely to be Bewick's, whereas a flock heading south down the west coast in November is surely to be Whoopers on their way to their wintering grounds from Iceland. True or false? They could be either...

If you ask birders what they look for when distinguishing Whooper and Bewick's Swans from each other and from Mute Swan, the most likely response will be comments concerning the extent of yellow on the bill and something about the overall size and proportions. This isn't much to write a description about, especially when the basic colour is white in adults and grey-brown in juveniles. If the birds are in flight, these sorts of characteristics start to be of little use.

So, what do you look for if you pick up that flock of swans flying towards you? Well, first you have to eliminate Mute Swan, and that comes down to looking for any orange on the bill and listening for that characteristic rhythmic throbbing of the wings. Of course, by now you will have picked up some birds, probably the adults, with yellow on the bill: but how much? Ignore it; look at the overall jizz and proportions. For me, Bewick's Swan always looks like a goose: it's got goose-like proportions of neck length, wing length and body length. It's an albino Pink-footed Goose, pure and simple! On the other hand, Whoopers are the original swans: long-necked, big-headed, big bill, large body and long wings. They fly like swans; not tight and urgent like a Bewick's, but rhythmic and purposeful with deliberate wing-beats. Of course, the purists will have you looking at the amount and shape of



yellow on the bill (loads in Whooper, less in Bewick's which has at least half of the bill black and the yellow not wedge-shaped as in Whooper) but by then the flock is moving past you and heading out towards some distant marsh. Did you manage to get on that? Basically, in Whooper, because there is a lot of yellow on the bill, it will be noticeable at a distance.

Luckily, immatures tend to stay with their parents, which is good because they tend to lack any yellow on the bill and have pale, washed-out pink bills with darker tips (a slightly larger pale area in Whooper than in Bewick's). So, for first-winter birds it tends to be size and shape that are the only trustworthy field characteristics, but most develop the adult bill by their second year.

Plumage-wise, adults of both species are very white, but adult Whoopers can show orange head staining, whilst immatures of both species tend to be pale-greyish and not as dark or brownish as immature Mute Swans and never with as patchy a plumage as that species. Both species may call in flight: Bewick's has a tuneful "oop oop" type of note which rather echoes, unlike the trumpet-like call of a Whooper (Mute Swan, despite its name, often grunts, honks or hisses in flight). In Cheshire, both species are now annual and can be seen on both the Dee and Mersey estuaries in winter.

A last point concerns the American counterparts of Whooper and Bewick's, i.e. Trumpeter Swan (*Olor buccinator*) and Whistling Swan (*Cygnus columbianus columbianus*) respectively. Whistling Swan could turn up anywhere, though Trumpeter Swan would be a major rarity as it is not yet on the British List. Ostensibly, both of these are black-billed versions of either Whooper or Bewick's Swans, but there is variation in the bill colouration and some show an amount of yellow. Forgetting Trumpeter Swan, if faced with a black-billed Bewick's Swan take several hours drawing the exact details of the bill - its shape, exact proportions, colours and extent of the markings; you'll need the notes to get it accepted. I know; I tried in 1972 and failed!

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

Bird News has followed most recent guides by accepting Bewick's Swan and Whistling Swan as jointly comprising the two races *bewickii* and *columbianus* respectively of Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*). It is unlikely that Trumpeter Swan has ever occurred in a truly wild state in the Western Palearctic and, as stated, it is certainly not on the British List: its almost exclusively western distribution within North America does not bode well for its addition. Ed.

Recent Reports

Some of these records may be unauthenticated and may require review by the Society Records Panel or the BBRC. The records cover the period from early Sep to Nov.

SEPTEMBER

A peak of 20 **Great Crested Grebes** was at Fiddler's Ferry (4th-5th). A juv **Black-necked Grebe** remained at West Kirby ML all month. Two **Spoonbills** visited Inner Marsh Farm (24th-25th) and were joined by the female Mauritanian bird on 23rd-24th. c20 **Greylag Geese** at Inner Marsh Farm (22nd) was a good count there and one was at Frodsham No6 tank (11th). 201 **Canada Geese** at Poynton Pool (18th) and 414 at Fiddler's Ferry (11th) was a new site record. A female **Ruddy Shelduck** was at Inner Marsh Farm regularly (9th-25th) but five were present on 22nd. Elsewhere two were at Frodsham, a female was at Neumann's Flash (7th) and a drake visited Rostherne Mere (5th).

Small numbers of **Wigeon** returned to Catchpenny Pool, Fiddler's Ferry, Frodsham and Sandbach Flashes early in the month. A male **Gadwall** visited Fiddler's Ferry while a record 126 were at Arpley Tip (both 4th). Peak counts of **Teal** included 3000 at Inner Marsh Farm and 600 at Fiddler's Ferry. The monthly maximum of **Mallard** at Poynton Pool was 110 on 28th and **Pintails** returned to Frodsham by mid-month. Six **Garganey** visited Inner Marsh Farm (3rd) with two still present on 22nd and two at Budworth Mere (11th). Elsewhere single birds were at Chelford SQs (irregularly to 18th), Frodsham, Marbury No1 tank (13th with four there on 23rd) and Neumann's Flash (23rd). c100 **Shovelers** were at Inner Marsh Farm (22nd) while 170 were at Fiddler's Ferry (4th) and 43 were at Neumann's Flash (18th). Up to five **Pochards** and 18 **Tufted Ducks** visited Fiddler's Ferry early in the month. A **Ruddy Duck** at Poynton Pool (28th) was an excellent record there.

A **Marsh Harrier** lingered off Burton/Parkgate for a few days mid-month with one/two at Fiddler's Ferry (5th & 11th-12th). A **Hen Harrier** passed through Inner Marsh Farm where up to 18 **Buzzards** were recorded over several days. Other Buzzard sightings included four at Fiddler's Ferry, two over Neumann's Flash (25th & 29th) and six at Tatton Park. An **Osprey** circled over Tatton Mere (20th) before flying off south-west while another flew west over Moore NR (13th). Single **Hobbies** were at Chelford SQs (12th), Frodsham (4th & 10th), Macclesfield Forest (5th & 10th) and Rostherne Mere (18th-19th). **Peregrines** were at Fiddler's Ferry, Frodsham, Parkgate and Sandbach Flashes. 13 **Red-legged Partridges** at Henbury (11th) suggested local breeding. Several **Water Rails** were at Inner Marsh Farm with a returning bird at Fiddler's Ferry on 25th. 100+ **Coots** were at Arpley Tip pools (4th).

Two late **Little Ringed Plovers** were at the Weaver Bend (18th) with the last bird at Chelford SQs on 7th. 130 **Golden Plovers** were at Fiddler's Ferry (25th) and up to 1600 **Lapwings** were at Chelford SQs during the month. Seven **Knots** visited Frodsham. Peak counts of **Little Stints** included 20 at Frodsham (22nd) and six at Neumann's Flash (23rd). A juv **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at the Weaver Bend (16th-20th) and was very mobile at times while another at Neumann's Flash (19th) will be the first for that area if accepted. Good numbers of **Curlew Sandpipers** included 63 at Frodsham, 68 at Hoylake, 23 at Parkgate with one at Inner Marsh Farm (17th) and one/two at Neumann's Flash (25th-28th). 19 **Snipe** at Tatton Park (25th) was a good site count. Up to 230 **Curlews** roosted at Neumann's Flash. 40+ **Greenshanks** were at both Inner Marsh Farm and Parkgate while four visited Fiddler's Ferry and 20 visited Frodsham. Two **Green Sandpipers** remained at Marbury No1 tank to 24th, a record seven were at Chelford SQs (2nd) and another was at Arpley Tip pools (4th). A **Common Sandpiper** at Poynton Pool (10th) was late for that site, while others were at Inner Marsh Farm (22nd) and Neumann's Flash (19th). A **Turnstone** was at Fiddler's Ferry (11th) and a much-twitched juvenile **Red-necked Phalarope** stayed at Inner Marsh Farm (21st-26th), being only the second site record.

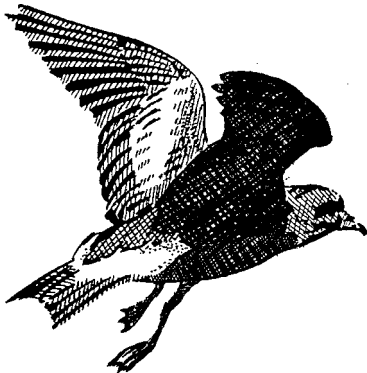
The **Mediterranean Gull** returned to Leasowe and an intermedium **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at Neumann's Flash (23rd). Five **Black Terns** were at Frodsham (11th) with six at Rostherne Mere next day. A **Barn Owl** visited Inner Marsh Farm. A **Sand Martin** at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton (12th) was the observer's first record there with the odd bird from Fiddler's Ferry (to 5th), Poynton Pool (to 11th) and Tatton Mere (to 21st). On 22nd, large numbers of **Swallows** and **House Martins** passed through Inner Marsh Farm and 2-3000 passed through Thurston in 90 mins, but Poynton Pool had a poor passage of both species during the month. A large hirundine movement

was noted at Tatton (21st). Elsewhere, 100 Swallows at Fiddler's Ferry (13th) was the monthly maximum with the last birds on 29th. Migrating **Meadow Pipits** flew over Poynton Pool (from 21st) including an impressive 112 on 25th, 40+ on 30th and a total of 223 flew over Poynton (26th). A heavy passage of birds was also noted over Elton late in the month and 1000 flew over Thurstaston in 90mins (22nd). The movement of 25th coincided with a large movement in Derbyshire where one site logged over 1000 birds in the morning. Four **Yellow Wagtails** were at Arpley Tip pools (4th) with two still at Frodsham (6th). 15 **Pied Wagtails** fed in a flooded field by Lower Park Road, Poynton (28th) and three **White Wagtails** were at Frodsham (6th).

An influx of 20+ **Robins** at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton (12th) was the observer's first noticeable influx of this species there. The same site hosted a female **Redstart** on 26th and was the latest record there. A dead **Whinchat** was picked up on the Weaver Bend (11th) and a **Wheatear** was at Inner Marsh Farm (22nd). Frodsham had its earliest ever **Fieldfare** on 11th. Two **Redwings** over Poynton Pool (29th) were the observer's earliest ever there while the post-breeding flock of **Mistle Thrushes** there peaked at 52 on 8th. A **Sedge Warbler** was still at Frodsham (11th) when a **Lesser Whitethroat** was also seen. A **Whitethroat** at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton (12th) was the latest ever there and another was at Fiddler's Ferry (25th). Two **Willow Warblers** at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton (26th) arrived with an influx of other migrants and coincided with another at Fiddler's Ferry (26th). **Goldcrests** were conspicuous in western Poynton (from 7th) with a peak of 11+ on 26th. A **Firecrest** was at Moreton (10th-12th). Single **Spotted Flycatchers** were at Malkin's Bank, Sandbach (1st) and Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton (26th) - the latest ever there. A well-twitched female **Red-backed Shrike** was at Dovecote Nurseries (3rd-10th & again from 30th). 11 **Jays** at Poynton Pool represented a local influx (26th) while a migrant passed through Frodsham late in the month. Two partial albino **Carrion Crows** were at Poynton (14th). Two **Ravens** flew over Arpley Tip pools (4th) and Fiddler's Ferry (24th) with two regularly at Tatton. Small numbers of **Bramblings** flew over Elton late in the month. 60+ **Goldfinches** were seen near the Weaver Bend (11th) and c40 **Redpolls** at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton (26th) represented a good influx.

OCTOBER

A **Red-throated Diver** flew NW out of the River Mersey past New Brighton (3rd) while a **Great Northern Diver** was off Hilbre (7th). Six **Leach's Petrels** off Leasowe (2nd) represented a poor total, with one next day, when up to 15 were reported in the mouth of the Dee. Ten **Cormorants** at Budworth Mere (1st) was a poor monthly maximum but a record six flew over Poynton Pool (2nd). A **Bittern** returned to Rostherne Mere from 8th. Two **Little Egrets** were at Parkgate (12th) with one regularly to 19th and another at Inner Marsh Farm (25th). Two **Spoonbills** were again at Burton Marsh (2nd-3rd) with the Mauritanian bird there (9th-11th, 24th, 25th, 27th). Both **Bewick's** and **Whooper Swans** were seen at Frodsham. A skein of 124 **Pink-footed Geese** flew over Fiddler's Ferry (29th) while a large movement of c650 flew over Poynton (10th) and 18 flew SW over Poynton Pool (16th) - possibly heading for the Dee Estuary. 350 **Canada Geese** were off Denhall Lane, Burton (3rd) with a huge 220 at Poynton Pool (20th). Single **Barnacle Geese** were noted at Burton Marsh, Frodsham and past Hilbre (7th). Five **Ruddy Shelducks** visited Spike Island (12th) with four at Frodsham (19th) and one at Inner Marsh Farm (15th).

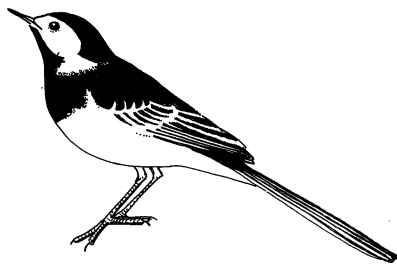


Six **Wigeon** visited Tatton (17th) and a pair dropped onto Poynton Pool (24th) during a heavy rainstorm. 13 **Gadwall** were at Budworth Mere (1st) while 360 **Teal**, 114 **Mallard** and 62 **Shovelers** were the respective monthly maxima at Fiddler's Ferry. 145 Mallard at Poynton Pool was a high count. A juv **Garganey** was at Inner Marsh Farm (to 11th) and one was at Frodsham (9th). An eclipse drake **Blue-winged Teal** was at Frodsham (16th) but could not be relocated despite an extensive search. A **Scaup** visited Frodsham. A male **Velvet Scoter** and 25 **Common Scoters** flew past Hilbre (7th). Single **Eiders** were off Hilbre (7th) and Meols (2nd). Seven **Buzzards** were at Tatton (17th) where a Peregrine was seen on several dates. A late **Osprey** was at Capesthorpe Hall (23rd). Peak counts of **Golden Plovers** included 500 at Fiddler's Ferry, 600 at Frodsham and 145 at Neumann's Flash. 200 **Grey Plovers** were at Frodsham along with 2000 **Lapwings** while

3000 were at Fiddler's Ferry and 1500 at Neumann's Flash. 120 **Knots** visited Frodsham with 200+ at Hoylake (22nd). Small numbers of **Curlew Sandpipers** and **Little Stints** were at Frodsham late in the month with one of the former at Neumann's Flash (4th). A **Jack Snipe** returned to Fiddler's Ferry (from 17th) with a peak of four there. Six **Spotted Redshanks** and five **Greenshanks** were at Parkgate (22nd) with a **Green Sandpiper** at Tatton Park the same day. 11 **Turnstones** fed in the drained West Kirby ML (22nd).

Single **Pomarine Skuas** were off Hilbre and New Brighton (both 3rd when a **Great Skua** was also off Hilbre). An **Arctic Skua** was off Hilbre (7th) with two off New Brighton (3rd). A **Mediterranean Gull** was seen feeding on chips in Northwich town centre by an observer stopped at the traffic lights and a juv was at Arpley Tip (9th). One/two **Little Gulls** were off New Brighton (3rd) and a **Ring-billed Gull** was reported at Hurleston Resr (30th). An adult **Yellow-legged Gull** was again at Parkgate (15th). An adult **Glaucous Gull** visited Meols (2nd) and a **Kittiwake** was off New Brighton next day. One **Arctic** and several **Common Terns** were off New Brighton (3rd) while a Common and four **Sandwich Terns** were off Hilbre (7th). A **Black Tern** flew past Leasowe (2nd) and 150+ **Razorbills** were off Hilbre (7th). 300+ **Collared Doves** at Gatewarth (8th) was a high count there and 20+ roosting at Poynton Pool (12th) was a record there. A male **Ring-necked Parakeet** at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton (12th) was probably an escapee and the third local record, but one birder has recorded this species in nine of the last ten years in the Poynton area. A **Barn Owl** hunted Neumann's Flash (21st). A *saturata* type **Hoopoe** was at Hoylake (from 20th) favouring a small area of waste ground at King's Gap. This is a very pale race of this species which breeds in eastern Asia and its arrival coincided with a good influx of Siberian rarities.

A migrant **Great Spotted Woodpecker** visited Frodsham and a late **Sand Martin** was at Chelford SQs (3rd). Large numbers of both **Swallows** and **House Martins** were noted at several sites on 2nd-3rd including 20+ each at Burton (3rd), 51-55 of each were in the Marbury area (1st) and 15+ Swallows at Sandbach Flashes (6th). 30+ House Martins at Poynton Pool on 2nd is the largest ever Oct count there. Two large pipit sp. were reported at West Kirby (17th) and 11 **Meadow Pipits** over Poynton Pool (3rd) was the highest count of the month there. A **White Wagtail** was at Gatewarth (9th). One **Grey** and nine **Pied Wagtails** flew over Frodsham No6 tank just before dusk heading towards the Weaver Bend (16th) presumably to roost with several Grey Wagtails again roosting at Poynton Pool (from 12th). Three **Wheatears** were at Tatton (2nd) and a female was at Sutton Common (10th). Three passage **Stonechats** were at Frodsham while six visited Leasowe and two visited Red Rocks (both 22nd).



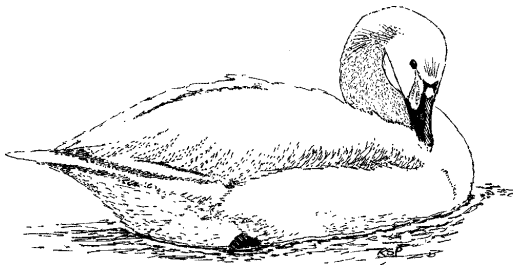
A **Ring Ouzel** at Fiddler's Ferry (17th & 24th) was the second reserve record and coincided with the arrival of 300 **Fieldfares** and 20 **Redwings**. The partial albino **Blackbird** remained at Poynton Pool (3rd) and 50 **Mistle Thrushes** were at Fiddler's Ferry on three dates. Fieldfares arrived in the Marbury area (from 28th) with two Fieldfares over Poynton Pool (14th) and a good passage over Tatton (17th). A migration watch at Denhall Lane (16th) produced 83 Fieldfares and 420 Redwings among 736 birds seen in 90 mins. Redwings returned to Hilbre (from 7th), Marbury area (from 7th) and Tatton (from 14th). A large Redwing movement was noted on 16th-17th including good totals from Chelford SQs, Poynton Pool (150+ over in an hour on 16th) and Tatton (17th). A **Blackcap** at Poynton Pool on 8th was possibly the latest ever there. A **Chiffchaff** was in song at Great Sankey (4th) and a *tristis* bird was at Leasowe Lighthouse (17th). Up to four **Willow Tits** remained around Neumann's Flash all month. The **Red-backed Shrike** at Burton remained to 20th becoming the second latest county record. The latest was a long-staying female at Frodsham between 25th Oct and 8th Nov 1958. A migrating **Jay** flew over Poynton Pool (5th) and c1000 **Jackdaws** flew over the same site (30th). A **Raven** flew over Lion Saltworks, Northwich (16th). Several **Bramblings** flew over Hoylake (22nd). A flock of 200 **Linnets** was at Arpley Tip (6th) with 22 at Dovecote Nursery, Burton (3rd). A **Lapland Bunting** was at Hilbre (13th). Two **Snow Buntings** returned to West Kirby (17th) and were then seen at King's Gap, Hoylake (24th).

On 17th, a four hour migration watch at Denhall Lane produced 3322 migrants including 885 **Starlings**, 756 **Chaffinches**, 570 Redwings, 328 Fieldfares, 150 **Greenfinches**, 83 **Skylarks**, 26

Bramblings, 25 **Song Thrushes**, three Swallows, a **Woodlark** (the third county record in the last two years) and a **Yellowhammer**. The same day Thurstaston produced 3723 birds including a flock of six **Crossbills**.

NOVEMBER

A **Great Northern Diver** was off Dove Point and another circled over Rostherne Mere (27th) before flying off south. 18+ **Great Crested Grebes** were at Bosley Resr (23rd) and a pair were displaying at Poynton Pool (29th). A **Bittern** at Inner Marsh Farm (7th) was joined by a second bird (10th) with one regular at Rostherne Mere (two there on 6th). Up to three **Little Egrets** were at Parkgate all month. The Mauritanian **Spoonbill** was at Inner Marsh Farm occasionally (1st, 4th, 8th & 24th). 31 **Bewick's Swans** were at Inner Marsh Farm (24th) with two **Whooper Swans** and a small race **Canada Goose** there. Six Whoopers were at Frodsham and Redesmere (both 6th) with another over Neumann's Flash (10th). 100 **Pink-footed Geese** were over Fiddler's Ferry (1st) with 48 over on 4th and 90 over on 6th; also c250 flew E over Poynton (17th). 30 **Greylags** over Elton was an interesting record and a pale-bellied **Brent Goose** was at Hilbre (2nd). The **Ruddy Shelduck** remained in the Inner Marsh Farm area all month, with another at Frodsham (6th) which was joined by a second (from 11th).



Five **Wigeon** visited Melchett Mere (9th) and the drake **American Wigeon** returned to Inner Marsh Farm (22nd-23rd). Up to 520 **Teal** were at Fiddler's Ferry while a male was at Poynton Pool (15th) with a further six there (21st) during heavy frosts. Drake **Green-winged Teal** appeared at Frodsham (3rd & 7th) and Inner Marsh Farm (22nd & 24th). The monthly maxima of **Mallard** were 160 at Fiddler's Ferry and 147 at Poynton Pool (19th). Eight **Shovelers** were at Melchett Mere while 50 visited Neumann's Flash (both 9th). A female **Eider** at Bosley Resr (20th-23rd at least) was the first inland record since Aug 1995. Coastal sightings included a pair off Hilbre (2nd) and one at New Brighton. A drake **Long-tailed Duck** was at West Kirby ML (7th-10th) with two birds there on 9th. A female **Goldeneye** at Neumann's Flash (6th-9th) was the first there for several years; a pair of **Goosanders** flew over Poynton Pool (19th) heading towards Audenshaw Resrs. A **Hen Harrier** was at Frodsham (12th). A **Red-legged Partridge** visited Fiddler's Ferry (27th).

Up to 3000 **Oystercatchers** were off King's Gap, Hoylake and three **Ringed Plovers** at Marbury No1 tank (13th) was an excellent record for the time of year. Peak counts of **Golden Plovers** included 1000 at Fiddler's Ferry (28th), 1000+ at Frodsham and 200 at Neumann's Flash (9th). 6000 **Lapwings** were at Fiddler's Ferry (28th) with 3000 at Neumann's Flash (9th) and 200+ over Poynton Pool (14th). Up to 10,000 **Dunlins** roosted at Frodsham with 25 **Little Stints** there (25th). A **Curlew Sandpiper** was at Fiddler's Ferry (21st). Six **Purple Sandpipers** visited New Brighton and 12 were at Hilbre (2nd). A **Woodcock** at Elton was the observer's first record there. c450 **Black-tailed Godwits** were off Thurstaston while 1000 **Bar-tailed Godwits** were at King's Gap, Hoylake. Five **Spotted Redshanks** were at Parkgate (19th) and a **Green Sandpiper** visited the Weaver Bend. A well-twitted 1st winter **Grey Phalarope** at Neumann's Flash (6th-10th) was only the second record for that area (the previous record dates back to Oct 1944). The Belgian-ringed **Mediterranean Gull** returned to New Brighton. A **Little Gull** was seen off Dove Point and another visited Sandbach Flashes (6th). An adult **Ring-billed Gull** was reported at Neumann's Flash (6th). A 1st winter **Caspian Gull** visited Richmond Bank (2nd) and an **Iceland Gull** was seen at New Brighton.

100 **Stock Doves** roosted on a bridge at Fiddler's Ferry (28th). One/two **Long-eared Owls** returned to Neumann's Flash (from 7th). Eight **Short-eared Owls** were at Parkgate (24th) with three at Frodsham (12th). The *saturata* type **Hoopoe** remained at Hoylake (to 4th) becoming the second latest county record (the first being a wintering bird at Bollington Cross between 20th Dec 1910 and 28th Jan 1911). Eight **Meadow Pipits** over Poynton Pool (3rd) were heading for a local roost and nine flew over on 19th with 16+ at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton (14th). Three **Water Pipits** were at Neston Old Quay (18th) and small numbers of **Grey Wagtails** roosted at Poynton Pool (to mid-month). A **Waxwing** at Sandbach Flashes (17th-18th) was a welcome first for the flashes. Two

Stonechats were at Frodsham and a male was by Melchett Mere (10th). 30 **Fieldfares** over Poynton Pool (7th) was the largest count there for some time. A **Chiffchaff** was in a Willaston Garden and 13 **Magpies** at Marbury No1 tank (23rd) was an exceptional count there. c1500 **Jackdaws** flew over Poynton Pool (2nd) with 1200 on 16th. A partial albino **Carrion Crow** was a garden tick for one Poynton birder (8th). Single **Ravens** flew over Neumann's Flash (8th & 14th). 60 **Goldfinches** were at Fiddler's Ferry (29th) and a **Twite** at Neumann's Flash (11th) was about the fifth record for that area. Two **Lapland Buntings** flew over Woolston Eyes NR (13th) which was the second reserve record.

PREDICTIONS FOR FEBRUARY TO APRIL

During February, rare grebes and divers are often displaced inland either by hard weather movement or by severe coastal storms. Inland, the favoured sites for rare divers are Rostherne Mere, Tatton Mere and Budworth Mere but any large water may hold them. When it comes to rare grebes, Hilbre is typically the favoured coastal site with some 34 records of Red-necked Grebe and 20 records of Slavonian Grebe between 1968-1998. Elsewhere, Red-necked Grebe is best looked for at Rostherne Mere, Frodsham or the larger inland waters. Slavonian Grebe has been seen annually inland since 1993 and is more regular inland than the former species.

By early March a few days of southerly winds will bring the first migrants, starting with Sand Martin and Chiffchaff, although it's often difficult to tell whether the latter are over-wintering birds. Iceland and Glaucous Gull will be regular; try Arpley, Dane's Moss, Maw Green or New Ferry Tips. The chance of an over-shooting Spoonbill or Hoopoe is not impossible and even Bluethroat has been recorded (on 25th Mar 1986). A passage Red Kite offers the best opportunity of a self-found bird and birds can turn up anywhere in the county. While sky-watching it is always worth noting the Buzzards as they move back to breeding areas.

April offers a huge variety and choice of where to go and what to see. On the coast, recent years have shown an increasing chance of a Puffin moving offshore with the odd Arctic Skua amongst the terns. Visit Arpley Tip for a good chance of Ring-billed Gull. Woodland such as Alderley Edge, Macclesfield Forest or Delamere Forest will produce Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts by the last week. Other rarities recorded in the last week have included three Black-winged Stilts together, two Stone Curlews, two Bee-eaters, two Wrynecks, Nightingale, Icterine and Subalpine Warbler.

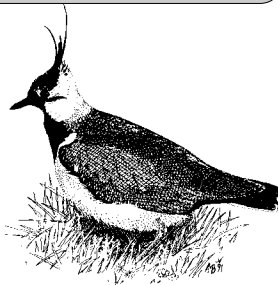
If you would like to see your Cheshire & Wirral records featured here send them to me at the address below or alternatively phone me. Publication is dependent upon space. Please send your records for the period Dec-Feb to reach me by the beginning of March. Remember to send your descriptions, if appropriate, to Tony Broome.

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

Thanks/Acknowledgements for Recent Reports go to: - Steve & Gill Barber, *Birdwatch* and *Birdwatching* Magazines, Jeff Clarke, Keith Massey (Fiddler's Ferry Reserve), Darren Morris (Tatton Park & Knutsford Moor LNR), Rostherne Mere Log, Dave Walters (Marbury CP & Witton Limebeds) and anyone else who passed records on.

The View from the Farmyard

As I drove the tractor by, what at first appearances was a small fragment of a yellow and white feather duster rolled down the side of a decaying pile of manure. Though the presence of a discarded cleaning appliance should, you would think, have drawn from me some further investigation, after several hours of mind-numbing tractor driving I was quite willing to let anything go. What really made me stop was, when defying the laws of gravity it rolled back some way up the side of the dunghill before tumbling once more to the base, where it spun round a few times. Then it contorted itself into another grotesque form. I was totally baffled. I resorted to my bins. My mind was full of worries about my sanity (some would say that it's far too late to worry about that). Lifting the bins to my eyes, I watched as the feathers contorted once more, then froze trembling as if struggling to free themselves from some unseen grip. "Oh, was that a leg, and there's a beak and two more legs, and at least two eyes". "My God," I thought,



"it's a new species - Hall's contorting dung finch, wow!" Then thoughts of fame were dashed as it divided into two before rejoining again; goodbye to my precious finch. Hello to two very upright Grey Wagtails. This was no tiff, this was full-blown war. Hacking beaks, grasping feet locked chest-to-chest, tails braced against the ground. Claspings claws full of feathers and the probing beaks, looking for soft flesh or perhaps an Achilles heel; no mercy, no quarter. I watched for as long as I could. My tractor was waiting in the field so I left. Fifteen minutes later when my trailer was loaded I passed again. It was all over, peace had won the day. Both birds worked back and forth across the roof of the barn, snapping up the big fat flies that were basking in the warm sunshine. They both flew down to the dung pile disturbing a hundred thousand flies. Not much of a food shortage, so it wasn't that that had caused the conflict. Possibly it was just youthful exuberance. I would have loved to see how it was resolved. I returned to my work mourning my lost moment of fame. Hall's contorting dung finch will just have to remain a dream. I chastised myself for my stupidity in thinking I would be lucky to discover a new species, especially one with three legs and two beaks.

Rabbits - a word which sends most farmers reaching for their guns. These adorable little creatures have over the years cost us many lost acres of corn. A concerted effort by the farmers and the estate to ring-fence the woods went a long way towards curing the problem. Rabbits still live in the woods but the reduced food supply has proved to be a good method of limiting breeding and family size, to a point where they no longer top the list of pressing problems. Myxomatosis no longer totally destroys colonies, but removes the old, weak and very young. So that though reduced in number from 10 years ago the general health of the family group is perhaps better than it was. The reappearance of the Common Buzzard in Cheshire as a breeding species has coincided with the change in rabbit population. However the Buzzards which I encounter seem in good health and capable of raising their offspring to maturity. On my regular walks about the estate I often encounter rabbit remains and have even witnessed the Buzzard taking a couple. The Buzzard also takes other prey. Young corvids are snatched from the nest or adjacent branches; squirrels are another favourite. Coot and Moorhen were more of a surprise when added to the casualty list, though to think about it they are in some ways similar to the rabbit in that they also graze under trees around field margins. All the Buzzard needs is patience to sit and wait and dinner will present itself on two or four legs.

During the summer of 1999 I was struck by the scarcity of both breeding and foraging Chaffinches. So few have there been in the farmyard that their presence has been of note. The winter flocks have now built up to reasonable numbers, indicating that the population at large fared rather better than our local stock. A few years ago I read a report based on research carried out in farmyards. This looked at the feeding and bedding methods used on various types of farm. The research showed that farms that were feeding their livestock on coarsely ground grain, rather than compound pelleted feed, supported a larger population of finches and a greater variety of species. Also farms bedding stock with straw rather than wood shavings fared better in both species and total numbers present. This was due to the greater chance of finding small grains amongst the chaff in the straw. Some years ago we stopped milling our own grain to feed the young stock when the mill gave up the ghost. However we continued to mill through another mill for the cows. The decline in finch numbers using the farmyard seems to date from about this time. House Sparrow numbers however have remained steady over the same period but their breeding performance remains poor.

The ridiculously low price for grain this year and last has, coupled with lower prices for all our other produce, encouraged us to mill barley once again for the young stock. This we are doing through the cows' mill, then carting it to the farmyard where we bag and store it. It will be interesting to see if this causes any improvement in the Chaffinch situation. Another change we have made this year is from small bales to the large round type. The benefits in handling have been appreciable, but also I have been interested to find that the large bale contains more of the chaff that the small baler used to shake from the straw. When the straw is shaken out in the beds the straw also fluffs up more. This seems to be caused by the fact that when picked up by the large baler the straw isn't cut. The more open structure of the bed and the increased amount of chaff have attracted the House Sparrows to forage more in the beds. Spending many hours hopping in and out of the straw they are definitely spending more time in the sheds, and I hope are better fed and will breed better as a result.

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

Society Spotlight

CHESHIRE & WIRRAL RAPTOR STUDY GROUP

The Cheshire & Wirral Raptor Study Group was established in 1994, the main reason for this being (apart from the success of similar groups in other parts of the country) that the status within the county of raptors, particularly regarding their breeding, was unclear and therefore proper liaison with landowners, etc. was not taking place. This mainly arose because not all raptor breeding records were being submitted to the County Recorder, probably for reasons of confidentiality. The Group would coordinate and liaise with raptor field workers, standardise the collection of data (leading to a reliable county database) and liaise with landowners and police to encourage raptor conservation and protection.

The Group's members are 'raptor enthusiasts'. Currently there are 26 members, though the twice-yearly meetings are usually attended by between 10 and 15 people. Apart from the Buzzard breeding surveys carried out in 1994 and 1999 [see article on page 13. Ed.], the Group has established a database for breeding records, published an internal annual report and effected successful liaison with other, related groups and key players elsewhere. Particular activities in the future will involve the wing-tagging of birds so that their dispersal can be monitored and the DNA analysis of feathers.

The confidentiality of breeding records is crucial; only the Group coordinator has access to the database and all reports are coded so that locations are not divulged. If you have raptor breeding records that you wish to submit, or if you would like to join the Group, please contact Colin Wells (office 0151 336 7681, home 0151 353 0172).

**Cheshire and Wirral Raptor Study Group
c/o Burton Point Farm, Station Road, Burton, Neston, CH64 5SB**

If you would like to see your group or society under the spotlight, send in all relevant information, including how you started and specific aims, plus any other interesting snippets! Ed.

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RUMOURS... RUMOURS...

One 'Frodshamite' recently came up with a new collective noun when referring to the wader roost on Frodsham No6 tank: "A dollop of Dunlin". Enter that on your 1999 recording sheet and see what the Editorial and Records Subcommittee makes of it!

Many birders struggle to get to grips with plumage terminology, trying to sort out primary projections and emarginations for example. However one member of the Rarities Committee must be starting a 'plain English' campaign when, during a discussion about the status and identification of Yellow-legged Gull, he said "It all depends upon the 'chunk' of mantle colour showing". Well, it's going to be easy from now on, isn't it?

At some time or another we must have all felt the frustration and growing panic at not being able to 'get onto' a desired rare bird, while it seems that all around are delighted birders 'ooing' and 'ahing' over the 'crippling' views they are experiencing. To be forced to listen to someone on one side relaying "showing really well out in the open" down a mobile phone to their pager contact, while on the other side are two birders discussing the finer points of the said bird's plumage, is more than the potential 'dipper' can bear. The fact that you can't even see the bird, let alone its dark-centred tertials or pale-edged greater coverts, seems to pass by the assembled group. We all know how difficult it is to give clear, precise, easily-understandable directions - what is patently obvious to one person might just as well be in a foreign language to another. I also fully appreciate that no one is infallible and that usually high standards can slip, especially on this occasion when this particular artistically-gifted county birder had been up working most of the night and had then driven to the east coast in search of a 'lifer'. But frayed tempers were nearly completely unravelled when, after pleas for directions to 'get onto' an extremely fast-flying, widely-ranging Pallid Swift, he gave what must be the most 'comprehensive' reply of all time: "It's in the sky!" "Where else would you see a **** Swift," was the sarcastic retort, "swimming in the sea or something?"

Sites to Watch

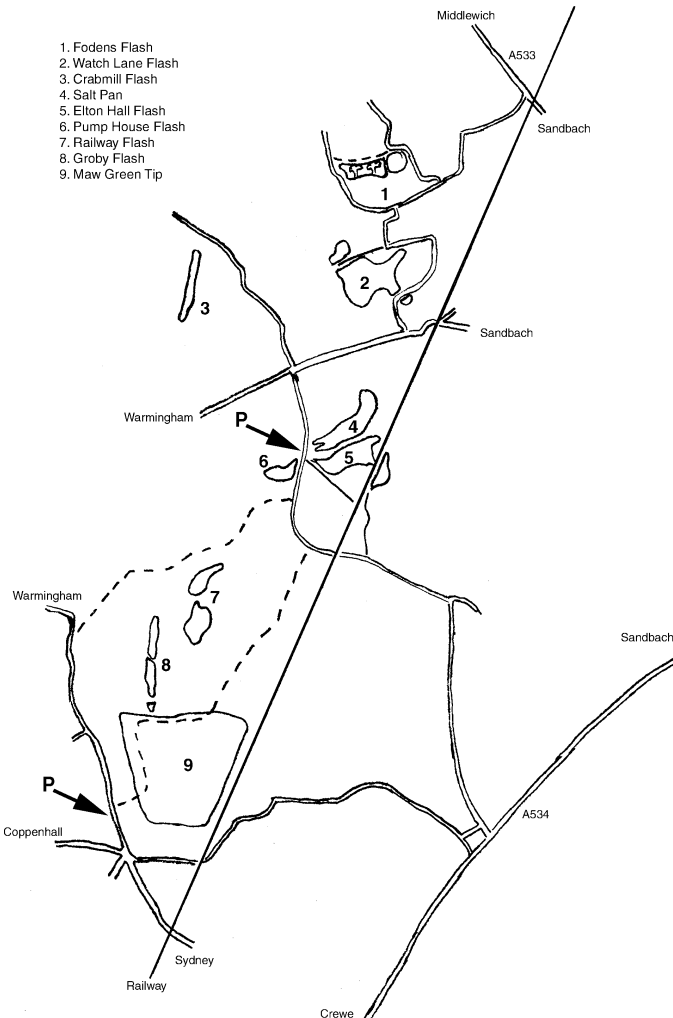
SANDBACH FLASHES

For many birders the name Sandbach Flashes conjures up images of just the two flashes which are the most watched. In fact there are at least 12 flashes in the area, which lies west of Sandbach and north of Crewe, all having been formed by subsidence caused by brine extraction. All the flashes are in an area designated as an SSSI, some having been notified for their botanical rather than their ornithological value. The flashes lie in the 'Cheshire Gap', a bird migration route between the Pennines and the Welsh Mountains. With 226 bird species recorded it shows what an important site this SSSI is.

The three main flashes are Pump House Flash, Elton Hall Flash and the old lime-settling beds - commonly known as the salt pan - which are all adjacent to each other and can be considered as one site. Follow the map to arrive at the best viewing location and park safely on the grass verge. Birds you can expect to see vary according to the season. A visit in early spring will give the

wintering waders Ruff, Redshank, Dunlin and Curlew as well as the usual Oystercatchers, Little Ringed Plovers, Ringed Plovers, Common Sandpipers, etc. on passage and a chance of Black-tailed Godwits, which are now regular in spring. There is always keen competition to record the early migrants and the first Wheatear, Yellow Wagtail, Little Ringed Plover, Cuckoo, Swallow and martins are eagerly sought.

As spring progresses the wintering Wigeon flock of around 600 birds disperses northwards and the numbers of Teal, Tufted Duck and Pochard decrease. The resident Shelducks number up to 30 birds and two or three pairs will be inspecting holes in the banks ready for nesting. Summer is undoubtedly the quietest season with spring passage tailing off in June, leaving a few resident Redshanks and breeding birds, including Shelduck, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe and Mute Swan. The peace and quietness of the birds is frequently broken as one of the local Sparrowhawks flies over the flash where they regularly take a Moorhen or

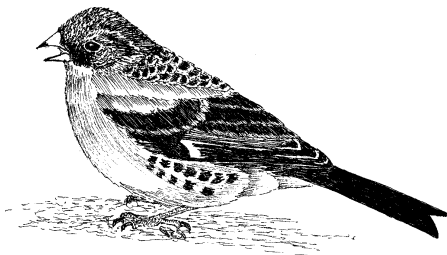


Teal. Or it may be one of the Peregrines, which now seem to be resident and would probably breed if they had a suitable nest site. In recent years Hobbies have brightened the summer evenings and, with juveniles seen in July, they possibly breed somewhere nearby.

Summer is also the shortest season, since autumn wader passage starts in July. This is much more extensive than the spring passage, with early-returning birds like Green Sandpiper and Dunlin present from mid-July. Black-tailed Godwit, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank and Greenshank are all regular: around 23 wader species are recorded in an average year. Also annual are Common Terns, with Black Terns in most years and Arctic, Sandwich and Little Terns recorded occasionally. As autumn progresses the duck numbers build up, with the first Wigeon arriving in September and slowly increase as more arrive each week. Numbers of Teal increase to around 500 and wintering Pintails and Shovelers also appear. Diving ducks are not common due to the shallow depth of the water, although Pochards, Goldeneyes and Goosanders are seen annually. Although the area is not noted for passerine species due to the lack of adjacent woodland, there are always a number of warblers passing through the area as well as pipits and larks overhead as winter approaches. Other winter visitors such as Redwing, Fieldfare and Brambling appear. Wader numbers build up with Ruff, Redshank and Dunlin resident and up to 100 Curlews flying in to roost each evening. The salt pan is also used as a roost by up to 2000 Lapwings with a few Golden Plovers sprinkled amongst them.

Winter is also the time for gulls and for any gull fanatic a visit to Maw Green Tip and Railway Flash is essential. Here you can pass a few hours searching through the several thousand gulls looking for the Glaucous and Iceland Gulls that are always present in mid and late winter. If you're really keen you can search for the various races of Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull that are usually present. Ring-billed and Mediterranean Gulls have also been recorded here. To visit Maw Green Tip, park in Groby Road (see map) and follow the public footpath over the tip. As well as the gulls there are always Meadow Pipits, Skylarks, Snipe and Jack Snipe on the grassy area and small pools. Lapland Buntings have also been seen here.

As mentioned above, the area is not noted for its passerine species. However, the bird-feeding station at Elton Hall Flash has proved to be very attractive. As well as the commoner tits and finches it also attracts up to 30 Tree Sparrows and also Bramblings, Nuthatches, Great Spotted Woodpeckers and even Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers. With care, these can all be seen at a few yards' distance. Most of the other flashes are either heavily disturbed by fishing or are not particularly noted for birds. However, Great



Crested Grebes manage to breed on most waters, albeit with a low success rate. Behind Fodens Flash there is important wet woodland, which holds breeding Willow Tits and Tawny Owls and wintering Woodcocks and Water Rails. It is particularly good for warblers and Cuckoos in spring. Watch Lane Flash is now important for breeding Reed Warblers in the small *Phragmites* reed-beds and also has up to 30 wintering Great Crested Grebes that provide great courtship displays in early spring. Railway Flash has turned up many rarities, and this site, together with Groby Flash, is good for breeding Tree Sparrows, Reed Buntings, Reed Warblers and Sedge Warblers.

Generally, only those species that are regular and that you could expect to see on a visit at the right time of year have been mentioned. However, the area has turned up many rarities over the years including, for example, such diverse species as Night Heron, Purple Heron, White Stork, Spoonbill, Marsh Harrier, Spotted Crake, Common Crane, Pectoral Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Lapland Bunting and Little Bunting. The Sandbach Flashes total presently stands at 226 species, including 39 wader species. Andy Goodwin and myself are currently reviewing this as we are writing a new book, *The Birds of Sandbach Flashes*, which we hope to publish around March 2000. So if you want to find out more about this excellent site, please make sure that you buy a copy!

Colin Lythgoe, 11 Waterloo Road, Haslington, Crewe, CW1 5TF

This is a site that holds certain significance to me, in that it's the site of my first twitch in Cheshire: Spotted Crake and Pectoral Sandpiper in August 1995 at Elton Hall Flash. The Editorial Team wishes Colin and Andy all the best with their avifauna of the area and hopes that all CAWOS members will support them in their endeavour. CAWOS will be making a grant towards the publication of *The Birds of Sandbach Flashes*. Ed.

Projects and Surveys

WINTER FARMLAND BIRD SURVEY - UPDATE

After my last article in the October '99 issue of *Bird News*, I was pleased to receive several enquiries for information about the casual recording for the Winter Farmland Bird Survey (WFBS). Thank you to all those concerned. If anybody else is short of forms then please do not hesitate to contact me.

A few people have asked for further details on other surveys, particularly the structured WFBS. Although it is probably too late for this winter, we will be looking for more participants in the forthcoming year. I have therefore summarised a few details for those who may be interested.

The structured WFBS is designed to monitor the 30 species listed below:

Grey Partridge	Stonechat	Greenfinch
Golden Plover	Fieldfare	Goldfinch
Lapwing	Song Thrush	Linnet
Snipe	Redwing	Twite
Curlew	Mistle Thrush	Redpoll
Stock Dove	Starling	Bullfinch
Woodlark	House Sparrow	Snow Bunting
Skylark	Tree Sparrow	Yellowhammer
Meadow Pipit	Chaffinch	Reed Bunting
Pied Wagtail	Brambling	Corn Bunting



British Trust for Ornithology

Each participant is allocated a specific 1km Ordnance Survey map square, randomly selected from the BTO computer. Primarily, the squares used are those covered by the Breeding Bird Survey and the Winter Skylark Survey with an additional number specifically allocated for this survey. Initially, a trip has to be made to the square to seek permission from the landowner(s), to define the route and record the habitat. Three more visits are made during the winter months between November and February, each one more or less evenly spaced throughout this period and at least two weeks apart and none should last longer than 4 hours. Simple really!

Essentially, each square is divided into patches of farmland, i.e. fields containing crops, set-aside or pasture etc. The route, which needs to be the same on each visit, should be around the perimeter of each patch combined with one straight transect through the middle of it. It is also very important to accurately determine the type of crop in the fields so that this can be matched to the bird populations. Detailed leaflets are supplied to enable informed selection and categorisation; however if in doubt, the farmer can usually help.

The number of patches actually surveyed is determined by how many can be walked in a 4 hour period. Due to the randomness of the selection process, there may only be one or two patches in a square; others however may have up to 20, so the time limit then becomes the limiting factor.

After the initial reconnaissance, the rest is plain birdwatching. You walk around the planned route and record all species from the list on simple-to-follow recording sheets. The number of each species is entered against its location in the field, i.e. on the hedge line, within the margin, within the interior or on the transect route through the field.

Feedback from current participants has been encouraging, with most finding the survey easy with valuable results being obtained. This should hopefully help fill a gap in our knowledge of wintering farmland birds to enable better planning for the future and prevent our common birds making their way onto lists of conservation concern in the future.

If the above has not scared you away and you can spare the few hours needed, then please come forward, we still have a number of 'vacant' squares which need to be surveyed during the coming winters.

**Paul Miller, BTO Representative,
6 Hunters Hill, Kingsley, Warrington, WA6 8DE. Tel: 01928 787535**

BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

The BBS is now well established and provides invaluable information about the birds' usage of our countryside during the breeding season. Unlike the WFBS, the BBS records all species seen within the allocated square. However the survey method necessitates only two 1½ - 2 hour visits per year for recording and one to reconfirm habitat details.

The survey has expanded over the years and squares also naturally become available. The first visits for the year 2000 are due to start around mid-April and I currently have a few vacant squares; in particular these are located around the Winsford area. Anyone who lives near to, or is willing to travel to, this area and is interested in taking part can do so by contacting me as soon as possible.

Paul Miller, 6 Hunters Hill, Kingsley, Warrington, WA6 8DE. Tel: 01928 787535

BUZZARDS IN CHESHIRE

Most birders will be aware that Buzzards have become much more common in Cheshire, particularly through the last five years. The Cheshire and Wirral Raptor Study Group carried out a breeding survey in 1994 with the intention of repeating it five years later, i.e. in 1999. This note summarises the key results of the survey, with a full account to be presented in the 1999 *Cheshire & Wirral Bird Report*.

How was the study carried out? The 1994 survey indicated about 18 probable breeding pairs of Buzzard in Cheshire. This was a marked increase over the Atlas survey of 1978 to 1984, when breeding was confirmed in just two 2km by 2km tetrads. Before deciding on the methodology for the 1999 survey, the Group invited Robin Prytherch from Bristol to talk to the Group. Robin has intensively studied Buzzards around his home area for the last 20 years. His input proved absolutely invaluable, as well as providing a fascinating and stimulating afternoon for those attending. His key point was that breeding pairs of Buzzards are highly territorial, staying in their territory throughout the year and defending it against interlopers. It was decided, therefore, that the prime objective of the study should be to determine the number of pairs of birds holding territory with a subsidiary objective to determine their breeding success where time allowed. The county was divided into nine areas with a coordinator for each.

So what were the results? The bottom line was that a minimum of 157 territory-holding pairs was found. This is probably an underestimate as the distribution of pairs was patchy and probably reflected the intensity of coverage as well as the suitability of habitat. The county's stronghold for Buzzards is in the south-west, where 35 pairs were recorded, with other significant hot spots around Burton/Shotwick, Frodsham/Delamere and Tatton/Macclesfield and along the south-east border with Staffordshire and Shropshire. This wasn't too surprising as Robin Prytherch had found that birds tended to infill all territories in an area before populating new areas. Only in the south-west did breeding density approach the level at which he had shown that the number of fledged birds significantly declined, i.e. the natural population limit. This means that we can expect a considerable further increase in the number of breeding Buzzards both within most existing hot spots and in new areas.

What about breeding success? In the south-west 14 of the 35 territories were looked at in detail to assess breeding success. Breeding was confirmed in 12 territories, with virtually every pair fledging two young. Similar results were found in other areas, which further underlines the view that we can expect considerable expansion in future years!

What next? Buzzards have spread so widely in Cheshire for many reasons. Obviously there must be plenty of food (mainly rabbits); there must also be sufficient nest sites (plenty of mature trees) and there must be freedom from persecution. Provided we can eliminate persecution, which must in the past have slowed the spread of Buzzards, we can expect most raptors to flourish in the county. Therefore, we can be optimistic that Buzzards will spread further. Similarly, other raptors should be monitored: we can expect Red Kites to colonise, Hobbies are now breeding in the county and Ravens (an honorary raptor!) continue to expand.

Thanks: The survey wouldn't have been possible without the help of so many people in providing records. Particular thanks go to the area coordinators: Richard Hargreaves, Colin Wells, Steve Barber, Brian Martin, Colin Lythgoe, Charles Hull, Roy Leigh, Neil Friswell and Bernard Wright. Many thanks also to Robin Prytherch and to CAWOS for funding his visit.

**Cheshire and Wirral Raptor Study Group
c/o Burton Point Farm, Station Road, Burton, Neston, CH64 5SB**

BIRD RECORDING ON SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE: BROSBI

We have received the following letter from Colin Lythgoe:

I am writing to advise you that I am no longer able to continue organising this project on behalf of the Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society and the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. However, the project is not completed and will continue to run! **Please continue to survey those sites for which you currently have details.** If you want new sites then contact CWT at Grebe House, Reaseheath, Nantwich, CW3 6DA or telephone 01270 610180. Although no longer able to take a proactive role I will still be reactive and pass on any results sent to me. CWT hopes to have a new organiser in the near future (see page 24).

A big 'thank-you' is due to everybody who has participated in this project. So far we have provided records for 137 SBIs with more to come from 1999. All records are held by CWT at Reaseheath and so are immediately available for use when required. This is particularly important when responding to planning applications, which often require a response within a few days. The records are also used by the Trust, together with the botanical records, to determine the value of each site; to assess its relevant status; whether its boundaries need revising and whether any conservation effort is needed.

This would not have been possible without you and your efforts so once again many thanks and carry on recording. Best wishes.

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

Notes & Letters

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

THE YEAR LIST - AND HOW TO COPE WITH IT

Oh, dear..... another year, another year list.....

Let us be clear at the start: if you are one of those birders who regularly and routinely racks up a year list of 250, 300, or whatever, this is not for you. You probably cannot understand someone who has never yet, as will become apparent, reached 200 in a year (indeed, someone who, after over fifty years of birding, still hasn't reached a UK life list of 300). If, though, you find that your year list makes you irritable, depressed, anxious, feeling inadequate - this may help you.

I guess all of us go in for lists of some sort: day lists, garden lists, birds-seen-from-the-Crewe-to-London-train lists (yes, I've done that one). I can handle all of those; they add to the enjoyment of life. But the year list has brought only grief and frustration, and has proved a destructive addiction which I have struggled to overcome, and at last learned to live with.

My late, lamented, friend Stuart Gibson probably bears the blame for starting me off. About the time that he chronicled, in his highly entertaining *Going for the Biggie*, his successful bid to notch up 300 in a year, I decided to set myself the more modest target of 200 - which I regarded as a reasonable standard, short of becoming obsessive. Came New Year's Eve, and I returned in triumph with number 200 (Black Redstart at Leasowe, if you must know) under my belt. I was keeping the score on one of those reusable plastic lists that the RSPB used to sell - and doing the final count as I drank a celebratory dram. Then I realised that I had *not* seen Osprey: the pencilled tick was something I had not rubbed out from the year before. Tasting the ashes of failure, I swore then that I would never again allow myself to be seduced into such nonsense.

But I was, of course. I shouldn't have been, as I realised the folly of it all one fine summer day when I was visiting Kingley Vale in Sussex with Keith Huxley (sometime Chairman of CADOS, then in internal exile in the Deep South). There we were, about to embark upon the circuit of one of the



finest sights in England - the haunted, twisted ancient trees of the Great Yew Forest, and I was getting all worked up because there were Marsh Tits about and I couldn't find them and it was August and the year was passing and I had missed out on them so far and I *needed* Marsh Tit and I thought "Get a life, Robert!" (or whatever the current expression was). This damned year list was, quite simply, spoiling my birding.

Despite these moments of revelation and disaster, I kept making the same mistake: every year saying I wouldn't bother; every year I started off again afresh. Keith, I regret to say, was and still is one of the bad influences upon me. An inveterate year lister, he still manages to provoke me into (ineffectual) competition. Late in 1998, a year in which his birding had been severely restricted by illness, I found myself driving him around North Wales to ensure that he reached the 200 mark - his absolute minimum for a year, and my long-abandoned goal. My reward? An eyebrow raised in polite surprise that my score was still well behind his (successful listers can make you feel so damned inadequate).

By then, though, I was immune. I have learned something over the years, and have developed two basic strategies for coping. First, I have accepted that total abstinence is beyond me. Come 1st January I will start a new list; but I know that *I won't keep it up beyond about April*. Recognition of this fact is immensely liberating: I can have the fun of starting the list off, but since there will be no end-of-year reckoning I no longer need worry if I have missed out on Marsh Tit; I can enjoy May and June, when birding is at its best and time seems so short, free from the shackles of the list.

Second, I have come to realise that it is not just seeing the species that is important; it is where and when you see it. There isn't much satisfaction in ticking off wild swans in front of a hide at Martin Mere, or a storm-blown diver on a gravel pit. Seeing the bird in the right context has become more important to me than the simple record, and so I have developed my personal "must-see" year list.

It is most easily explained with reference to summer visitors: even if I have come across Common Sandpiper or Ring Ouzel on passage, they don't really count until I have found them along an upland river or on the side of a hill; the inseparable trio of Redstart, Pied Flycatcher and Wood Warbler must obviously be seen and heard in an old oak wood on a late spring morning; terns, easy enough to list in spring, really belong to high summer, fishing and feeding young with the sun sparkling on the water. Others have to be seen twice: Golden Plover, Snipe, Curlew and Oystercatcher are all winter favourites - but different birds again when they are displaying over the moorlands; they must be seen (and heard), even if it means missing out on something rarer but less appealing.

Sometimes, too, place or even weather comes into it. Purple Sandpipers aren't really valid except on Hilbre (as I said, it is a personal list), but conversely some stray Eider off the island isn't a genuine year tick: that only comes with colourful, courting drakes in Northumberland or Scotland. A Cheshire Red Kite, excellent record though it might be, is not a substitute for the real thing, swinging across the Welsh valleys. Those wild swans demand a wild setting, and a bite in the wind; a mild, wet day is no good for Snow Buntings. In one case, I have almost narrowed it down to a date: tradition dictates that, if the evening is fine, Little Owl should be seen on July 6th, as we drive home from a meal on our wedding anniversary.

There is still disappointment, of course; the complete "must-see" list is far too long and involves quite a bit of travel; each year I miss out, because there isn't time to fit in everything. And spending time and money in this way means ignoring other possibilities and ending up with a pretty pathetic conventional list - but then I would have ended up with that in any case. Doing it my own way I can enjoy my birding far more - and have the satisfaction of knowing that I have controlled, if not beaten, my addiction. If you too have problems with your year list, don't despair: there may be no real cure, but you can learn to live with it.

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

SO YOU CAN COMBINE FOOTBALL AND BIRDWATCHING!

The inventor of the famous football game 'Subbuteo' originally wanted to call it 'The Hobby' (using the pastime sense of the word) but was unable to copyright this name due to the common English usage of the word. Being an avid birdwatcher he then chose the name 'Subbuteo', taking it from the Latin name of the bird Hobby *Falco subbuteo*. Things you never knew, eh!

Simon J Edwards, 24 Badby Wood, Kirkby, Liverpool, L33 7YQ

MOBBING OF KINGFISHERS

On reading F. Copenhall's letter in *Bird News* 44, a recent incident came to mind, again in the Vale Royal area and again involving mobbing behaviour directed at a Kingfisher. Whilst not answering the query raised regarding the reasons for a Swallow mobbing a Kingfisher, I offer the following observation as an addition to this general topic. At Vale Royal Locks I was watching a Kingfisher fishing a pool adjacent to the river, both hovering and perching in poplars alongside the pond. A group of four Mistle Thrushes arrived in the trees and proceeded to mob the Kingfisher relentlessly. The latter was driven from perch to perch and eventually flew off downriver to escape the unwanted attention. At the same time as this harassment was occurring, the poplars also contained two Magpies and a calling Nuthatch, all of which were ignored by the thrushes. For some reason, like the incident with the Swallow reported in *Bird News* 44, the Kingfisher seemed to induce attacks from another species. It is possible that its bright colours and dagger-like bill were perceived as threatening. In the same area I have witnessed more normal mobbing behaviour, such as corvids on Buzzards and a Sparrowhawk on a Peregrine, but this mobbing elicited by a Kingfisher does seem most unusual.

Paul Brewster, 23 Verdin Close, Moulton, Northwich, CW9 8RL

AGGRESSION HARD TO SWALLOW!

Having read the observations regarding a Swallow's aggressive behaviour towards a Kingfisher in *Bird News* 44, the following may be of interest:

Last August we were camping in a large field in Northumberland. Our tent was close to a sloping bank of fairly dense but very varied vegetation, bushes and trees, about 15 feet high and which ran the length of the field. Swallows were swooping and diving in their hunt for insects. Their young were perched on the branches of a hawthorn bush waiting for their meals. Sometimes they would fly off and try to catch their own food, but they were often fed in flight. The adult birds frequently perched near their young. On several occasions an adult bird would suddenly take off and attack one of the Goldfinches which were feeding on thistles not far away. The Swallows did not pursue the Goldfinches, but continued in their quest for aerial food.

In *Birds of the Western Palearctic* it says about the Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) - "In late summer and autumn commonly chases birds of various other species, especially food competitors; perhaps an exaggerated social response". Swallows have also been "recorded landing on thistle heads to take adult *Diptera* from them".

Hazel J Raw, 35 Beggarmans Lane, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9BA

BEESTON FULMARS - POTENTIAL CHESHIRE BREEDERS?

I read Tony Broome's note on the Beeston Fulmar records with particular interest. I was first shown inland-breeding Fulmars in Northumberland in the fifties, and still recall the surprise and fascination of hearing them chuckling away on low cliffs over a rural valley and seeing them launch off from their nesting ledges to beat about over farmland. Ever since I heard about the original Beeston records I have had this wistful hope (rather than expectation!) that we might see the same sight here in Cheshire.

Galloway & Meek (*Northumberland's Birds*, 1978) refer to these small colonies on "the escarpment of the Kyoel Hills and the Belford Moors (about 10km from the sea)" as well as another regular and some occasional (crag and quarry) sites. Britton & Day (*Where to Watch Birds in Northeast England*, 1995) confirm the continued presence of at least the Kyoel birds, and mention others at Roseberry Topping near Guisborough, North Yorkshire, which I reckon to be about eight miles inland. Thom (*Birds in Scotland*, 1988) notes a tendency in the 1970s to colonise low-level or inland sites - dunes at Sands of Forvie; Vane Crags, Loch Leven (about 15km from the Firth of Forth) in 1972; and Salisbury Crags in Edinburgh in 1982. Closer to home, Lovegrove et al. (*Birds in Wales*, 1994) say "Fulmars occasionally prospect about cliffs a few kilometres inland, such as Aber Falls and Craig Aderyn (Merioneth), 7km inland". The tendency to occupy atypical sites "as the population expands into more marginal habitats" is summarised by Walsh and Tasker (*The New Atlas of Breeding Birds*, 1993 by Gibbons et al.): "castle ramparts and even occupied buildings are sometimes used, particularly in E Scotland and NE England. Inland quarries or crags (for instance in the latter regions and Northern Ireland) are also occupied, although most are within 20km of the sea".

Obviously, all the examples quoted are closer to the sea than Beeston, and all are near coasts where there are Fulmar populations. However, it is interesting to reflect that in most cases (Northumberland, the Forth, Forvie, Cardigan Bay) much of the coastline is low-lying and sandy,

with occasional outcrops of cliff. That applies in the big arc from Caernarfonshire to Cumbria; Lovegrove et al. note that in Flintshire and Denbighshire Fulmars tend to nest in quarries just back from the (flat) coast. If inland prospecting and breeding result from a shortage of good coastal sites (as seems to be the case), are the Beeston birds prospecting? And could we one day see breeding Fulmars there?

Most, but not all, inland records of Fulmars refer to storm-driven birds: Hedley Bell (*Birds of Cheshire*, 1962) has a record of three inland at Warrington after fog. In other cases weather conditions are not stated: eg one at Woolston in May 1988 (*CWBR* 1988); a reference in Lovegrove et al. to one pursued by a Peregrine in the Tanat Valley in the Berwyns in 1976; and of course the Beeston records, as published. (A note on weather conditions might be useful in future reports from the site - and even state of tide? At high water the Dee extends a long arm of sea towards Chester, and Fulmars are more likely to be seen cruising south past the Hilbre islands then.) Galloway and Meek do not imply any correlation with weather when they write that "records of such a strikingly maritime bird flying over the Simonside Hills, or the Cheviot, still strike an incongruous note". At a quick calculation the Cheviot is about 20 miles direct flight from the sea - which suggests that there too they sometimes roam inland around high ground. The habit may be more common than we think (as Tony says, 25 miles isn't much to a Fulmar; maybe they just like a change of scene?), but sufficiently unusual to be rarely detected except by some systematic observation like the Peregrine watch.

Given the series of records from Beeston in both 1993 and 1998, it seems unlikely that weather is a factor. The birds could well be prospecting (though why a five year break in records from a well-watched site?). If they are prospecting, they could eventually breed, though I think it would set some sort of record for distance from the sea. I have to say that I doubt it will happen, though it is fun to speculate; my money is on the occasional-day-out-in-the-country explanation, perhaps combined with a bit of casual rubber-necking at possible nest sites.

But I hope I am wrong, and that they are doing some serious prospecting.....

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

GREY, DULL, NONDESCRIPT - KNOT LIKELY

It was the sort of morning when you have to retrieve the dustbin lid from halfway up the fence, its bid for freedom foiled by the clutch of the cotoneaster. It was dark, grey, wet and very wild: just the sort of morning when Lapwing choose to stay put, huddled glum and weather-beaten. The Reserve was bleak: all blacks and windswept gloomy greys. The only life, in keeping with the colour scheme,



was a Pied Wagtail who was hurtling up the middle of the marsh road, tail acting like the sail of a sand-yacht, legs a blur as he tried to keep running and at the same time turn himself head-to-wind to arrest his uncontrolled speed.

The sea, mirroring the sky, was leaden, and the tide pushed insidiously over the marsh, grey devouring green. Where were the birds? Nothing moved but the wind - until we glimpsed the guile of the Sparrowhawk. He hugged the banks of the channel bent on surprise then he himself was caught out and flung high on a sudden updraught, fluttering like a wind-tossed rag. With an hour to go before full tide, the landscape was reduced to two green islands in a sea of grey. There was a flurry in the wind, the blink of an eye, and the green switched to grey. It was as if the light went out. But it wasn't water which submerged the grasses, it was tightly-thronging Knot.

Not much of a wing bar, neutral grey mantle, ashen rump: it's a grey bird, true. But prise apart your globe of the world, flatten it out, the North Pole at the centre, then that charismatic wilderness of lands and islands which ring the Pole is home to the Knot: Siberia, the Taymir Peninsula, Alaska, Arctic Canada, Greenland. No wonder that until recently no man had seen a nest! We know so little about the Knot. Which parent incubates the eggs? There are conflicting accounts. Does the male or female tend the young? It's open to doubt. Like so much else about the Knot it's a grey area! And in winter? Where are they then? Not just on British estuaries. They radiate southwards: there are Knot in West Africa, in Australia, in New Zealand, in Argentina!

The Knot in front of us rest now, bills tucked into scapulars. What elongated bodies they seem to have, attenuated by long wings, the mark of a long-distance migrant. They have come from high Arctic Canada, perhaps a mere 500 miles from the North Pole; to reach us they have flown over the Greenland ice cap. That seems unlikely. Surely it is more probable that they have migrated down the Baltic coasts from Siberia along with Bewick's Swans and other of our winter migrants? The answer is a lemming.

Arctic Siberia has its own economy and its currency is the lemming. But the lemming population is never stable, their numbers escalate over a few years - then follows the crash. Arctic foxes prey on lemmings and as lemming numbers rise so does the number of foxes. Fox numbers are at a peak, then, when the lemmings crash and food is scarce, the foxes turn to prey upon wader chicks. This switch in diet has such a drastic effect that the birds leave Siberia with very few young that year. Brent Geese, Curlew Sandpiper, Sanderling, Turnstone and Knot, all are affected. These Siberian bird populations show marked changes in the proportion of young birds present in the wintering flock, and this cycle follows *exactly* the timing of the fluctuations in lemming numbers.

Now we know that those Knot wintering on the west coast of Africa do show this cyclic pattern of fewer young in poor lemming years: unmistakable evidence that this population comes from Siberia. But the Knot on European estuaries do not have this pattern and they come, therefore, from breeding populations not subject to this predation pressure, the populations in remote north-west Greenland and high Arctic Canada.

Suddenly the tide makes a last bid for the land and our Knot rise as one and are away. As they leave the landscape to the water they turn in unison and their underparts flash a silver salutation to an otherwise dark day. Grey birds they may be; dull - never.

Thelma K Sykes, Blue Neb Studios

THE GREAT CAWOS MILLENNIUM YULE LOG

This record of New Year list birding comes to us from James Walsh who, with Chris Done, comprised the team 'The Usual Suspects'. Whilst not the overall winners - Mike Holmes believes this was Hugh Pulsford with a score of 88 - their score of 84 was obtained primarily at Wirral sites. Both Mike and myself would be keen to hear from any unofficial 'Yule-loggers' who believe they may have beaten Hugh's score. Ed.

With high tide predicted for early morning on 2nd January, we made our way to the Red Rocks area for first light. We were disappointed with a very low tide, which meant few waders and no seabirds, but we were compensated with a fairly unseasonable Chiffchaff in the nursing home's garden and two flocks of geese: eight Brent Geese spotted flying over Hilbre Island and 11 'pink-feet' flying west at 9:30am. Just along the coast at Meols, a superb male Peregrine toyed playfully with the Dunlin and Sanderling flocks. After a bit of hard work, the New Brighton specialities of Mediterranean Gull and Purple Sandpiper were picked up by Harrison Drive and Fort Perch Rock respectively, though New Ferry was devoid of white-winged gulls.

Woodland species were playing hard to get around Stapleton and Thurstaston. However, the Neston area has always come up with the goods on previous winter bird races and this year was no exception: two Little Egrets out from the Harp Inn and Water Pipit with two Grey Wagtails by the Old Quay. The Burton area was also excellent, with a female Brambling amongst the large mixed finch flocks at the bottom of Denhall Lane; the Bewick's Swans were the closest we had ever seen here! A huge flock of Canada Geese could be viewed distantly scattered across the Shotwick fields from the hide at Inner Marsh Farm. Sifting through maybe 1000 birds produced a single Barnacle Goose and a 'lesser' Canada Goose, 20 'pink-feet' and 15 Greylags. A Buzzard and a Willow Tit showed well at Inner Marsh Farm, but we still managed to dip on the Mauritanian Spoonbill, Goshawk, Ruddy Shelduck and Smew!

Our final bird - number 84 - was Redwing, seen in the fading light by the Old Baths car park at Parkgate after the hoped-for raptors and owls had failed to show. It rounded off a good day's birding and proved to be an ideal way to chill out in some pleasant weather after the mayhem of New Year's Eve!

James Walsh, 3 Brook Way, Timperley, Altrincham, WA15 6RX

A much better start than mine to your year list, James. I only managed a rather pathetic 14 species during a short walk along Crosby shorefront on the afternoon of the 1st. My excuse is that I was not actually birding, but taking a relaxing walk with my heavily pregnant wife. It's a good excuse and I'm sticking to it! Ed.

PREY SILENCE

An interesting piece appeared in November in the *Daily Mail*:

'Noisy Starlings which gather on power lines in Altrincham, Cheshire and make a mess of washing lines underneath are being scared off by a bird of prey - a Harris Hawk - supplied by Norweb. His handler Tom McNally said, "Once a hawk perches in an area other birds can be scared away for years. But he's a softie really". Norweb said the situation was so serious that their usual plastic hawk [!!!] could not have coped.'

Plastic Hawk - a possible new addition to the county list. Has a full description been submitted to the Rarities Committee? Records of any sightings will be gratefully appreciated! Ed.

The following may sound fantastic
Stretch your mind like a piece of elastic,
But Starlings are wary
And find it quite scary
To be watched by a hawk made of plastic.
Hazel J Raw



LOVESICK PARROTS

Another item from the *Daily Mail*, this time in December:

A couple of lovebirds are causing tongues to wag in Wilmslow, Cheshire. The Indian Ring-necked Parakeets have set up home in a fir tree at the bottom of Julie Morgan's garden. "Apart from the odd squawk, they are model neighbours", she said.

Book Review

THE BUTTERFLIES OF CHESHIRE by Barry T. Shaw

This exquisite book is an essential buy for all naturalists in Cheshire and its neighbouring counties. Published by the National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, the design is elegant and has exemplary clarity. The species' photographs are all by members of the Cheshire and Peak District Branch of Butterfly Conservation and are of a very high standard. It is not by chance that Tony Pioli and Frank Bell dominate the annual Branch photographic competition! The map of Cheshire and Wirral will be familiar to CAWOS members: it is the one used in the annual *Bird Report*, loaned courtesy of Tony Broome.

The author will be well known to many CAWOS members. As well as being a member of CAWOS since its inception, he was Greater Manchester bird recorder from 1975 to 1987 and is still a voluntary warden at Rostherne Mere. Thanks to his diligence and dedication, Cheshire has a better coverage of butterfly records than anywhere else in the country, thus ensuring that this book is fully comprehensive. It is almost certain that no significant butterfly colonies or populations have been missed.



After an introduction, the first three chapters cover the history of butterfly recording in Cheshire (which dates back to 1877), the tetrad recording scheme for 1990 to 1997, and descriptions of habitats and notable sites. These chapters are succinct, but nevertheless thorough, summaries. There are some surprises, such as the revelation that the top three sites in the county (based on variety of species) are all on disused railway and industrial land! Despite the usual sad tale of decline and extinction, there are ten species which have increased in numbers since 1900 – including Purple and White-letter Hairstreak.

The bulk of the book comprises the species analyses, including status and distribution, habitat and behaviour, and flight period. 33 species are given a whole page each, including a tetrad map of distribution during 1990 to 1997 and a histogram of their flight periods. These pages are the *raison d'être* of the book and fully justify the price – which is in any case very modest.

The final short chapters summarise species only seen before 1990 and some uncorroborated and miscellaneous records. These include an intriguing 1906 record of Green-underside Blue, which might have been Britain's first record if the collected specimen still existed. Finally, there is a comprehensive gazetteer of sites, a surprisingly long list of references, and a less surprisingly long list of contributors, many of whom are CAWOS members.

I have only two minor criticisms. Firstly, photographs of key habitats would have greatly enhanced the chapter detailing these and, secondly, the colours on the map showing the number of species recorded in each tetrad are not completely clear. In particular, the reds that indicate the top two levels are almost indistinguishable; anyone who is colour blind will have no chance! However, this is nit-picking – buy it!

Copies can be ordered from Barry Shaw at 87 Gleneagles Road, Heald Green, Cheshire, SK8 3EN. Please send £14.45 which includes postage and packing.

John Headon, 6 Holland Road, Bramhall, Stockport, SK7 2PQ

Membership News

Welcome to the following new members: R Elphick, Mr and Mrs Done, Dr PJ French, Ray Sexton, Mrs V Jackson, P Ballentyne and M Mulholland. Iain Main has resigned on leaving the district.

New members are reminded that they do not get the 1998 *Bird Report* that has just been issued. Their subscription for 2000 covers the report for 1999. If they want to order the 1998 *Bird Report* they can do so by sending me a cheque for £6, made payable to CAWOS.

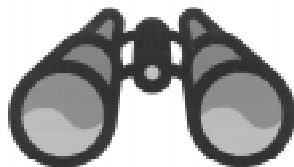
Thanks to all those members who have already rejoined for 2000. I would be grateful if those who have not already done so would do so in the next few weeks.

The last Council meeting on 11th November spent much of the time discussing 'The Way Forward' - details of its proposals are below. Jeff Clarke reported that the CAWOS exhibition at the Thurstaston Visitor Centre had been very well received; Clive Richards reported that the voluntary wardens at Rostherne had repainted the hide.

**David Cogger, 113 Nantwich Road, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 9HD Tel 01606 832517
e-mail memsec@cawos.org**

THE WAY FORWARD

In the last issue of *Bird News* I reported on progress so far in discussing the important issues facing CAWOS in the next few years. Council met again on 11th November and highlighted certain topics, which are outlined below. We are very much aware of all the suggestions made by members of the working parties and also by individual members of the Society over the past few months; we have chosen to select some which we feel we can implement fairly quickly and others which may take several years to put in place. Those ideas not mentioned have not been forgotten and will be reconsidered in the near future.



However, we have a problem. All these extra activities mean extra work. **Who is going to do it?**

Let me explain. We have about thirty members who make a practical contribution to CAWOS at some time during the year - as compilers of the *Bird Report*, as writers of articles for *Bird News*, or as helpers at meetings. They do invaluable work. Without them there would be no *Bird Report*, no *Bird News* and no meetings. In addition we have about eight or ten members, mostly members of Council, who do regular work throughout the year. Regular could mean a few minutes a week, or several hours - it all depends. These are the people who produce *Bird News*, arrange the programme, organise workshops, deal with membership and correspondence, look after finance, attend meetings about conservation on behalf of the Society, and so on. Many of them do not feel that they can take on much more, and some have been doing the same job for many years and would, quite frankly, welcome a change. The Society, too, would benefit from new ideas, whether from young or old members...

So the issue is quite clear. If CAWOS is to make progress, more people need to be involved.

Can you help?

At the Council meeting it was agreed that one or two Council members would look at each of the major issues and start them off; hopefully with the support of other volunteers:

- * One of the major issues discussed was the exchange of information among the many different organisations involved in birdwatching and bird protection throughout the county. In recent years the recording done by CAWOS and local societies has been supplemented by work done by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust and agencies such as the Mersey Basin Authority, the County and Borough Councils. We intend to organise a forum of all those concerned so that everyone knows what is being done, so that we can help each other and, above all, record the birds of Cheshire and Wirral in as much detail as possible, since we have no hope of influencing planning decisions or environmental management without firm evidence. Jeff Clarke and I are looking at the feasibility of organising such a forum within the next 12 months.
- * Many bird societies and other natural history organisations already have their own web sites on the Internet. We need to keep up with the rapidly developing technology of the 21st century. We already have a section on www.birdguides.com, which I hurriedly put together in response to a free offer. Sheila Blamire and Simon Edwards are seeking advice on setting up a CAWOS web site, in order to both promote our Society and birdwatching in Cheshire and Wirral, on the Internet (see page 22 for more details).
- * For several years now we have been talking about the production of an *Avifauna of Cheshire and Wirral*, a successor to the now out of print *Breeding Bird Atlas*. One reason this has not yet got off the ground is because of a manpower shortage - the same people who could contribute to it are those heavily involved in the annual *Bird Report*. Clive Richards undertook to look at the feasibility of the whole project and report back to Council in January so that a decision could be made before the March AGM.
- * Many members have asked about computerisation of records. There are problems here; problems with software, compatibility with the new Local Record Centres, and questions about access and confidentiality. Steve Barber is looking at the best way to computerise our records and, as a start, a simple spreadsheet will be offered to anyone who would find it useful for submitting their own records. By the way - have you submitted your records for 1999 yet? It is interesting, to say the least, that over half our members do not submit any!
- * Birdwatching is not just about meetings, sitting at computers or producing books! Some people actually watch birds!, and Jeff Clarke's guided walks and workshops at Parkgate and other places have been very popular. Jeff and Derek Kelly are to examine ways in which we can expand our range of workshops and birdwatches, and contribute to the Countryside Ranger scheme of guided walks. Could you help in this? Could you organise something on your own local patch?
- * Council is aware of the importance of knowing members' views. One of CAWOS's major difficulties is that its members are widely scattered and rarely come together - my only contact with the vast majority is when you pay subscriptions, and it is not easy to know whether views expressed are those of one or two individuals or of members as a whole. Bob Anderson is to work out a questionnaire that would be put to selected members by telephone. However since most of you probably like "cold calling" as much as you do the plague, we would write to members first before phoning them.
- * Finally Brian Dyke is looking at the way that Council runs its meetings. Often in the past we have spent too much time on passing on information and not enough time discussing important issues. We have already made a start on this by requesting Council members to submit written reports in advance to me, so that I can pass them on to other Council members who can read them beforehand. Hopefully this will give us more time for discussing key issues, including future developments.

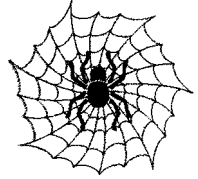
We have come forward with some concrete proposals which we hope to implement, but we cannot do so without your help. We are aware that in the past some people have offered help and their offers have not been taken up, but this time we want it to be different....

It's your Society. Can you help to run it at a higher level?

David Cogger, Membership Secretary

CAWOS WEB SITE - www.cawos.org

During 'The Way Forward' discussions, Council agreed that setting up our own Society web site was a priority action, and not just to keep up with the Joneses! We saw it as a way of promoting the Society, including its publications (*Cheshire & Wirral Bird Report* and *Bird News*) and organised events (indoor meetings and workshops etc.). It would also enable us to seek and exchange information on, for example, bird behaviour, surveys, recording, etc. And last, but certainly not least, it would encourage birdwatching in Cheshire and Wirral by giving information on sites, habitats and birds to be found within the county boundaries. But how on earth were we going to make it happen? Having sought the opinions of Phil Barnett, as of *Birds in a Cheshire Garden* fame (web address: www.abciisa.force9.co.uk/birds) on the likely costs involved, both in terms of workload, as well as financial, we were left with no illusions as to the task in hand.



Umbra Software (Geoff Blamire) was willing to set up our own domain name of www.cawos.org as an easily remembered Internet address. This address, now that it is up and running, can also be used for e-mails. For example: general enquiries should be addressed to info@cawos.org, membership queries to memsec@cawos.org and anything relating to *Bird News* to birdnewsed@cawos.org. No more trying to remember complicated, individual e-mail addresses! However this was not going to address the fundamental problem of who was going to take responsibility for developing and running a CAWOS site. Members of the Society will be well aware of the countless pleas made for more people to become involved in the day-to-day running of the Society, so, would this idea falter due to lack of willing volunteers?

It was then that something extraordinary happened. After talking about our plans (or should I say hopes!) with Dave Walters - he actually agreed to help. This without being bludgeoned, cajoled or blackmailed!

Dave first began to teach himself the basics of HTML (Hyper-Text Meta Language to those uninitiated) and web site design during late 1997 and his first site, for Birdline North West, went online in July of 1998. Since then U.K.B. Internet Services (formerly UK Birding) has become increasingly popular and Dave has now designed and maintained seven sites including the CAWOS site and the following other bird-related sites: Birdline North West, Birding Tours with Ashley Banwell, UK400 Club, U.K.B. Web Ring & Mailing List site and the Witton Area Conservation Group site (WACG). All these sites can be accessed through a portal at <http://www.ukbis.net>, as well as through their individual site addresses. Whilst U.K.B. Internet Services is a commercial venture the WACG site was designed and is maintained free of charge, with just a minimal charge passed on for online time only. Dave was now offering the same terms for CAWOS. His mother always said he was too soft!

Besides a tremendous saving in both time and money, it meant that CAWOS would gain wider exposure by being 'checked out' by visitors to Dave's other sites. So far, the U.K.B. Internet Services sites have received over 20,000 'hits' from 44 countries across six of the seven continents. Apparently James Walsh tried to fill in the missing continent during a recent visit to Antarctica! Dave has received 27 awards for web site design, although by his own admission, most are not particularly prestigious (i.e. Cyber Teddies Favourite Web Sites!) and none are as desirable as those won by Phil Barnett, whose advice and designs have been a great influence on him.

Some of the categories already up and running include 'About the Society', 'Membership News', and 'Forthcoming Events'. 'Cheshire Rarities' shows photographs taken by Gary Bellingham, who is considered by many to be Cheshire's leading bird photographer. Others to be developed include 'Cheshire Map & Gazetteer' and 'Sites to Watch' - information will be taken from past *Bird Reports* and *Bird News* issues. 'Cheshire Habitats' will draw upon material prepared for the 'Cheshire - A Wealth of Birds' exhibition and will demonstrate the diversity of habitats and their birds to be found within the county. 'Surveys' will include all those relating to Cheshire and Wirral, whether run by CAWOS, BTO or RSPB, as well as individuals or groups within the county. Visitors to the site will also be able to see selected pages of *Bird News*, and a direct link will take them to old *Bird News* issues. A very important part of the site is 'Forum', where we will be able to request and share information, seek expertise and/or comments (both from within the county and nationally) and generally help the Society to keep in touch with what is happening on the general birding scene. So please check it out at www.cawos.org.

It is becoming apparent that the Internet will soon be a part of everyday life and Dave strongly feels that any company, group or organisation will need a web presence in order to survive. So, if anyone is considering a web site, whether bird-related or not, contact Dave Walters (his details are at the foot of this article). As he says - "It is looking likely that techno-fear may soon become terminal!"

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

Thanks and acknowledgements to: Dave Walters, 43 Forster Avenue, Weaverham, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 3BJ. Tel: 01606 853640. Fax: 0870 0637058. E-mail: dave.walters@virgin.net

A rather intelligent Twite
Surfed the Internet morning 'til night,
His web site was smart,
Very state of the art,
And he handled his e-mails in flight.



Hazel J Raw

CAWOS MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

As part of 'The Way Forward' exercise, to map out the future path for the Society, Council has decided to undertake a survey of members. The intention is to gather information, from a representative sample of the membership, about members' interests and their views on the Society's activities; this can then be used to assist Council in planning for the future.

A questionnaire has been prepared, and is currently being piloted; the final version will go out (probably by post, possibly by telephone) to a random sample of members late January/early February. All being well, it should be possible to provide a summary of the results in the next issue of *Bird News*, by which time Council will have the information for use.

If you are one of those selected in the sample, we hope you will find time to complete the questionnaire for us: it isn't a pointless exercise, but an attempt to ensure that planning for your Society reflects the interests of members. If you are not selected, don't be offended! You can always let a member of Council know your views, anyway.

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

RUDDY DUCK HOLDING POSITION

Council has received information from the DETR (Department of Environment, Transport & the Regions) about the Ruddy Duck cull taking place in the UK. Cheshire is one of the pilot areas and three sites are currently being tested with another six sites to be brought into the programme later in the year. To date the DETR has refused to reveal the locations. They are presumably all on private estates or MOD land. Council is currently requesting further information from the DETR. Putting the moral issue of the Ruddy Duck cull to one side Council has deep concerns about the methods of control being used and also the likely effects on other waterside wildlife, particularly during the breeding season, as this is a year round programme of eradication. When and if we finally receive some answers from the DETR we will inform the membership as soon as possible.

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

MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD

Do you have any helpful tips; requests for information; small items for sale (ornithological of course!) etc? Well, this is the place for you! Write in with your thoughts or requests.

The British List 2000

Should anybody out there not have received a copy of the British Ornithologists' Union's *The British List 2000* with one of the mainstream birding magazines, I have three spare copies available. Just phone or e-mail me and I'll post one out to you (for free!), strictly on a first-come, first-served basis. I also have four spare copies of the 1999 list available.

Simon Edwards: 0151 547 1895 E-mail: birdnewsed@cawos.org

BIRD REPORT DISTRIBUTOR

We are pleased to announce that Paul Brewster will be taking on the responsibility for the distribution of *The Cheshire & Wirral Bird Report*. If you require any back copies please contact Paul direct:

Paul Brewster, 23 Verdin Close, Moulton, Northwich, CW9 8RL. Tel: 01606 590491

ROSTHERNE MERE PERMITS

There is apparently some confusion regarding permits which needs clarifying. Would all members please note that the permits offered by CAWOS relate to access to the A.W. Boyd Memorial Observatory *only*. Rostherne Mere and the surrounding fields are a National Nature Reserve and are *not* accessible to anyone without authority. Permits do not entitle any access except to the Observatory.

The voluntary wardens, who also manage the Observatory and are appointed by English Nature, can, by prior arrangement only, take parties around the Reserve, or, without prior arrangement, individual visitors on most Sundays except duck counting days. Guided walks start at the Observatory between 9:15 - 9:45am. Parties wishing to visit should contact either Peter Day on 0161 973 0067 or Dave Clarke on 0161 973 7122. The fee is £1 per person for non-permit holders. Please note that waterproof footwear is essential.

Just to repeat: permits do not allow access onto any part of the Reserve, except to gain entry to the Observatory. We apologise if we have misled any members and hope that many of you will obtain a permit, take advantage of the facilities and enjoy the Reserve's birds from the elevated position of the Observatory on a regular basis.

Clive Richards, Fairhaven, 13 The Green, Handforth, Wilmslow, SK9 3AG

Situations Vacant

There are a number of people within CAWOS who would like to change their role within the Society. Some to release their time to pursue other activities within CAWOS; others to simply take more of a back seat. The following positions are the more pressing, but others will follow. If you feel you can contribute to the day-to-day running of the Society please ring David Cogger, the Membership Secretary, to express your interest in whatever capacity you feel you can help.

PROGRAMME SECRETARY

The Society is looking for a new Programme Secretary to take over from Sheila Blamire who, after 10 years, feels a change would be beneficial - for both the Society and for herself! It involves booking the venues (not necessarily in Knutsford), arranging the speakers, and organising appropriate publicity. **Please don't be shy in coming forward** - even if you feel you would be able to undertake only certain aspects of the role.

If you are interested, please contact Sheila to discuss exactly what is involved:

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

Tel: 01565 830168 or E-mail: info@cawos.org

BROSBI: BIRD RECORDING ON SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

Cheshire Wildlife Trust have asked CAWOS to help find a replacement for Colin Lythgoe who is no longer able to continue in his role as organiser for BROSBI (see page 14 for further details). **Please offer your help** for this ongoing and important project. Colin will be delighted to talk through exactly what is involved with anyone interested. Please contact Colin to find out more:

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

OCTOBER 9 5 APR Sat 15 Diary May 7th 3 Jan Sun 28 7 SEPTEMBER

FEBRUARY

- 20 **High Tide Birdwatch, Parkgate - 10:00am (HT 11:47, 10.0m)**
 20 SECOS Derwent Ings, ring for details
 20 HPRSPB Hilbre Island, meet at Marple at 8:00am or West Kirby Marina at 9:30am
 23 HPRSPB 'VISIBLE MIGRATION over the SOUTHERN PENNINES' by Keith Clarkson, at High Lane
 24-27 NCRSPB Caerlaverock Weekend, contact Cliff Gibson 01925 817874
 25 KOS 'A CORNER OF THE ISLAND OF ANGLESEY' by Rev. Hugh Linn
 25 WGOS 'BIRD HAUNTS IN WILDEST IRELAND' by Jo Moran
 25 LOG Annual General Meeting
 25-28 CADOS Millennium Special, contact Nick French 01978 856522

MARCH

- 2 CADOS AGM & MEMBERS' EVENING
 3 **CAWOS AGM & MEMBERS' SLIDES**
 3-5 SECOS Norfolk Weekend, ring for details
 3-5 HPRSPB Lindisfarne Weekend by car, contact Joyce Wilson 0161 427 1932
 5 CRSPB Frodsham Marsh, contact Margaret Bain 01244 389447
 5 WGOS Seaforth & Southport by coach, departing at 8:00am – ring for details
 7 MCOS Frodsham Marsh, contact Bob or Sheila Greenwood 01928 788475
 8 HO 'SWANS FLY IN' by David Cummings
 10 SECOS 'BIRDS AND ANIMALS OF INDIA' by Mike McKavett
 11 NCRSPB Shropshire Meres, meet Frodsham Station Car Park at 8:30am
 12 KOS Parkgate/Inner Marsh Farm, meet Sessions House at 9:00am
 13 CADOS Tregaron, contact Don Coan 01244 660621
 13 HPRSPB 'IT'S A FUNNY WAY TO MAKE A LIVING' by Michael Leach, at Marple
 13 SRSPB 'THE ART OF BIRD MISIDENTIFICATION' by Tim Melling
 13-20 MCOS Eilat, Israel, fully booked!
 15 CRSPB 'BIRDS OF THE FAR NORTH' (+LIPU) by David Lingard
 17 NCRSPB HOT POT SUPPER & GENERAL KNOWLEDGE QUIZ
 17-20 LOG Anglesey weekend, contact Peter Tonge 01606 891274
 19 HPRSPB Pennington Flash/Hope Carr, meet at the Memorial Park car park, Marple at 8:30am
 21 **High Tide Birdwatch, Parkgate - 11:30am (HT 12:08, 9.9m)**
 24 KOS 'BIRD HAUNTS IN WILDEST IRELAND' by Jo Moran
 24 MCOS 'IN SEARCH OF DOTTEREL' by John Linton Smith
 26 SRSPB Blacktoft Sands by coach, contact Jayne Skelhorn 0161 282 8758
 31 WGOS '35 YEARS OF LEIGHTON MOSS' by John Wilson
 31 LOG 'FROM COAST TO CANYON' by Malcolm Edmunds
 tbc **CAWOS Gull ID Workshop, contact Jeff Clarke for details 0151 648 4371/3884**
 tbc SECOS Connah's Quay, ring for details
 tbc HO Weekend trip to Fort Belan, Caernarfon, contact Ann Ramsey 0161 980 4459

APRIL

- 4 MCOS Connah's Quay, contact Bob or Sheila Greenwood 01928 788475
 9 SECOS AGM & MEMBERS' EVENING
 9 MCOS Blacktoft Sands, contact Paul Grimmett 01925 268770
 9 CRSPB World's End and Quarries, contact Bernard Wright 01829 782243
 10 SRSPB AGM followed by 'STRAIGHT FROM THE OLD WIFE'S MOUTH' by Brian Hallworth
 12 HO 'THE BARN OWL IN CHESHIRE' by George Bramhall
 12 HPRSPB 'THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SPAIN & THE PYRENEES' by Colin Twist at High Lane
 14 MCOS AGM & MEMBERS' SLIDE EVENING
 15-16 KOS Blacktoft Sands/Spurn Point, optional overnight stay, ring for details 01565 634193
 15 NCRSPB World's End, meet Frodsham Station Car Park at 6:00am

- 16 WGOS Top Hill Low Nature Reserve, Yorks, by coach departing at 8:00am – ring for details
- 16 LOG The Wirral, contact Peter Tonge 01606 891274
- 18 MCOS Marbury Park evening walk, contact Bob or Sheila Greenwood 01928 788475
- 19 CRSPB AGM followed by 'THE ART OF BIRD MISIDENTIFICATION' by Tim Melling
- 23 HPRSPB Haweswater RSPB Reserve, meet at Memorial Park car park, Marple at 8:00am
- 28 KOS AGM & MEMBERS' SLIDES
- 28 WGOS AGM followed by 'BIRDWATCHING IN THE GAMBIA' by Mike McKavett
- 28 NCRSPB 'IT'S A FUNNY WAY TO MAKE A LIVING' by Michael Leach
- 28 LOG 'A NEPALESE EXPERIENCE' by Patrick Milligan
- 29 Dawn Chorus at Moore NR - 4:45am, ring 01925 444689 for details**
- 30 SECOS Woolston Eyes, ring for details

MAY

- 2 MCOS Mere Sands Wood, Rufford, contact Bob or Sheila Greenwood 01928 788475
- 4-8 KOS Suffolk weekend, ring Roy Bircumshaw for details on 01565 634193
- 6-13 HPRSPB Scotland Birdsearch holiday, contact Alan Monks 0161 427 5105
- 8 HPRSPB 'A CORNER OF THE ISLAND OF ANGLESEY' BY Rev. Hugh Linn, at Marple
- 10 SECOS Local Evening Walk, ring for details
- 10 NCRSPB Woolston Eyes, meet at Weir Lane, Woolston at 7pm
- 10 HO 'AUTUMN INTO SPRING' by Mike Wilkes
- 12 LOG Slovakia, contact Peter Tonge 01606 891274
- 13 CAWOS Bird Song Workshop at Moore NR - 6:30am, ring 01925 444689 for details**
- 15 SRSPB Redesmere, meet at Redesmere car park off A34 at 7:15pm
- 21 SECOS Lake Vyrnwy, ring for details
- 21 NCRSPB Bolton Abbey, meet Sainsbury's Car Park at 8:30am
- 21 HO Hodbarrow RSPB Reserve by coach, contact Babs Vercambre 0161 980 8362
- 21 SRSPB Coed Garth Gell, near Barmouth, by coach, contact Jayne Skelhorn 0161 282 8758
- 21 WGOS Anglesey by coach, departing at 7:30am – ring for details
- 22 SRSPB Teggs Nose, meet Bottoms Reservoir car park, Langley, Macclesfield at 7:15pm
- 23 MCOS Conwy RSPB Reserve, contact Bob or Sheila Greenwood 01928 788475
- 28 HPRSPB Coombes Valley/Churnet Wood RSPB Reserve, meet at Marple 8:00am or Chapel 8:15am
- 26 LOG To be announced
- tbcc MCOS Kent Weekend, contact Mike Hems 01606 888525

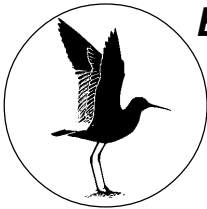
JUNE

- 7 NCRSPB Marbury, meet at Marbury Car Park at 7pm
- 11 MCOS Bempton Cliffs RSPB Reserve, contact Ray Evans 01829 752494
- 11 HPRSPB Old Moor Wetland Centre, meet at Marple at 8:30am or Chapel at 8:45am
- 11 LOG Coombes Valley, contact Peter Tonge 01606 891274
- 12 SRSPB Bosley Reservoir, meet at Bosley Reservoir car park off A54 at 7:15pm
- 14 SECOS Local Evening Walk, ring for details
- 14 HO 'THIS BLESSED PLOT' by Andy Harmer

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 John's 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 Peter's 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



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Opening times 9.30am - 6.00pm Mon - Fri / 9.30am - 5.30pm Sat / 10.30am - 3.30pm occasional Sundays.

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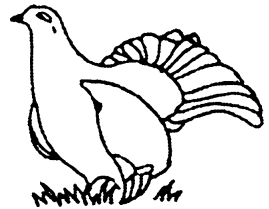
80 PARK ROAD, TIMPERLEY, CHESHIRE

Tel: 0161 905 1619 Fax: 0161 962 0625



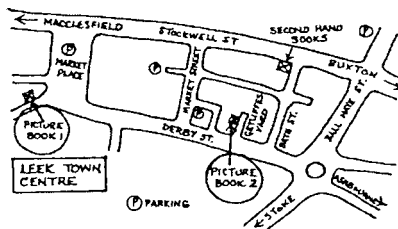
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Natureview	10x42	£ 108

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10x42 BGA	£ 285
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10x42	£ 105

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Imminent dates for your diary:-

Sunday 20th February

High Tide Birdwatch, Parkgate - see Diary page 25 for details

Friday 3rd March

CAWOS AGM & Members' Slides - see Diary page 25 for details

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