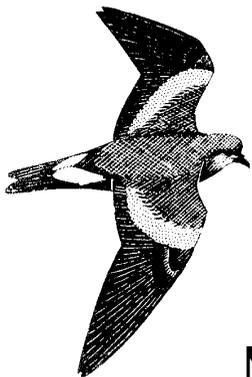


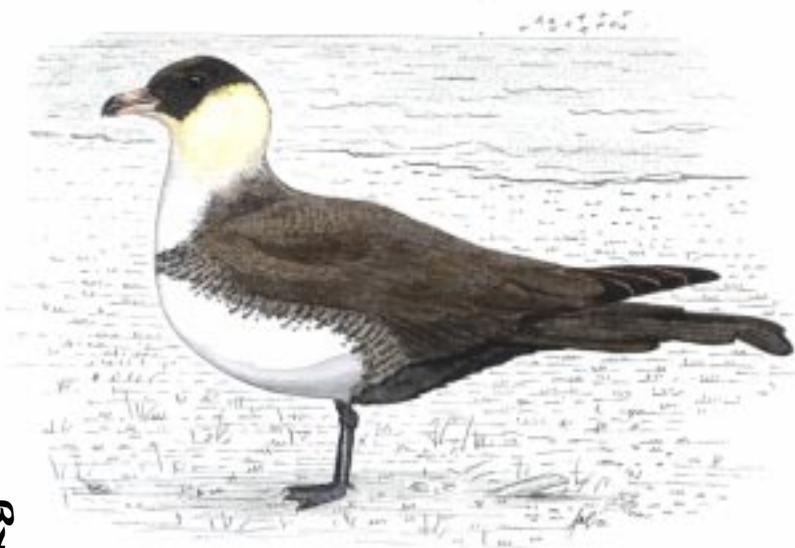
**Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society**

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# **BIRD NEWS**

**Number 48    October 2000**



**Honey Buzzard • North Wirral Shore  
County Rarities Request  
'Birds of Sandbach Flashes' Book Review  
CAWOS Committee Structure**



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Society, the Council of the Society, or the Editor.*

Front cover: Pomarine Skua by Tony Broome

Other illustrations by Tony Broome, Tom Lowe, Bill Morton and Thelma Sykes.

# Editorial

Towards the end of the 18th century, Samuel Taylor Coleridge penned the phrase “water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink” whilst describing his ancient mariner’s cursed journey through a stagnant sea. How strange it is to think that, some 200 years later, his words would so aptly describe the recent scenes of flooded devastation across the country, including some parts of Cheshire, following some of the worst weather seen in England during the latter half of this century. My daily commute to Chester and back takes me across the rivers Weaver, Gowy and Dee, all of which burst their banks inundating the surrounding countryside, farmland and towns. My sincerest condolences go to any *Bird News* readers from Northwich, which was particularly badly affected, whose houses were flooded. However, if you’ll pardon the pun, it is an ill wind that blows no good, and the temporary lakes that were formed south of Stanlow quickly became a Mecca for gulls, if not for gull-watchers - presumably, land surrounding a major oil refinery is not smelly enough for types more used to standing in the middle of landfill sites! Just how many Ring-billed, Iceland or Caspian Gulls went unrecorded, I wonder? Or perhaps, a *smithsonianus* Herring Gull brought across the Atlantic by the storms was missed?

So what caused the storms - global warming, the autumnal equinox, or was it just the fact that the British Isles lie at the end of the Gulf Stream? Probably a bit of all three, but we Brits seem to forget that we live on an island essentially located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean at roughly the same northerly latitude as Newfoundland, where brass monkeys are often ball-less and the population has polar bears in its gardens. Our relatively balmy weather is largely due to the warm, but wet, weather systems carried north-east by the Gulf Stream from the Caribbean. This also, let us not forget, supplies Britain with a steady stream of American vagrants during their migration seasons. So, perhaps, inclement weather is an acceptable price to pay for that once-in-a-lifetime Nearctic warbler.

However, let’s assume that global warming did have some major part to play in recent events. In this case, we should thank the fuel tax protestors for making us think twice about using our cars for non-essential, and often very short, journeys. They certainly had a greater impact on reducing this profligate waste of natural resources than high levels of taxation have done. However, their ultimate goal will undermine the good they did by getting unnecessary traffic off the roads and will complete a vicious ecological chain: lower fuel tax will allow increased car usage which will lead to greater levels of greenhouse gas emissions generating further global warming, the effects of which on man and nature are at best unpredictable.

It is obvious, though, that plants and animals, including birds, respond to climactic changes. Some become either globally or locally extinct being unable to adapt, whilst others alter their habitation ranges, migration routes or breeding behaviour. Is it possible that global warming brought about the weather system that carried around 1000 inexperienced juvenile Honey Buzzards across the North Sea from Scandinavia in September? The answer is absolutely not: but, it may be responsible for subtly altering the prevailing wind directions at different times of year. Maybe we will see more and more northern Palearctic vagrants grace our shores in autumn - what price a genuinely wild Pallas’s Rosefinch? Much has been written regarding how Britain’s avifauna might adapt in response to a changing ecology, though most of it is pure speculation. On the face of things at the moment, the next addition to the British List may well be a Wandering Albatross patrolling the sea around Worcester!

I have heard it said that birdwatchers are not environmentalists. Perhaps that might be true of those who race around covering huge distances trying to see as many birds as they can. (OK, perhaps there was an element of the pot calling the kettle black there.) However, I like to think that, as custodians of a wealth of knowledge regarding this country’s natural history, birdwatchers do appreciate the importance of the environment and act accordingly. Organisations like CAWOS are often the last line of defence in the protection of our wild spaces. As such, let’s compel every “wedding guest” out there to hear our story. Who cares if they think of us as “grey-haired loons”!

**Simon Edwards**

**Note: the copy date for the next issue is 8<sup>th</sup> December - please be prompt**

We cannot guarantee that material received after this date will be published in that issue.

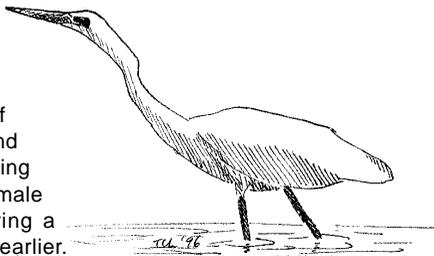
If you are aware that your material may be delayed, please let the Editor know as soon as possible.

# Recent Reports

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

## JUNE

Three reports of major rarities during the month await confirmation including a **Great White Egret** by the Runcorn/Widnes Bridge (28<sup>th</sup> - second county record, if accepted), a **Black Kite** over Ince Marshes (11<sup>th</sup> - second county record, if accepted) and a **Common Crane** flying over the M6/M56 interchange (11<sup>th</sup>). A well-twitched female **Red-backed Shrike** was near Stapeley (7<sup>th</sup>) mirroring a similar record of a male in Knutsford exactly 12 years earlier.



16 **Great Crested Grebes** at Fiddler's Ferry (24<sup>th</sup>) was a new monthly maximum. **Manx Shearwaters** were passing Hoylake at 1000+ per hour on 23<sup>rd</sup> and two **Gannets** were off Red Rocks (15<sup>th</sup>). Single **Little Egrets** were at Burton (20<sup>th</sup>), Frodsham (5<sup>th</sup> & from 16<sup>th</sup>), Inner Marsh Farm (21<sup>st</sup>), River Dee at Sealand Road, Chester (22<sup>nd</sup>) and Sandbach Flashes (18<sup>th</sup>). Two Eurasian **Spoonbills** were at Inner Marsh Farm (18<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>). A pair of **Pink-footed Geese** and one gosling were at Caldly Wildfowl Pond (10<sup>th</sup>). 30 **Greylag Geese** flew past Red Rocks (15<sup>th</sup>) and seven were at Arclid SQ (25<sup>th</sup>). Single pairs of **Canada Geese** bred at Fiddler's Ferry and Poynton Pool. 78 **Shelducks** at Fiddler's Ferry (18<sup>th</sup>) was a new monthly maximum. A drake **Mandarin** was at Rostherne Mere (4<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>) with one at Sandbach Flashes (29<sup>th</sup>) and a pair bred at Caldly Wildfowl Pond. At least five **Wigeon** were at Inner Marsh Farm. A pair of **Gadwall** bred at Marbury No1 tank while four birds were at Sandbach Flashes (21<sup>st</sup>). 100 **Teal** were at Frodsham (21<sup>st</sup>) with 12 at Fiddler's Ferry (24<sup>th</sup>). Pairs of **Garganey** were at Marbury No1 tank and Frodsham mid-month with a single bird at Inner Marsh Farm. **Red Kites** were reported at Alsager (1<sup>st</sup>) and Burton (25<sup>th</sup>). **Marsh Harriers** were at Fiddler's Ferry on three dates, Frodsham on four dates, Inner Marsh Farm (7<sup>th</sup>) and Woolston Eyes (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>). An **Osprey** was reported over Ince Marshes (11<sup>th</sup>). **Hobbies** were recorded at Budworth Mere (10<sup>th</sup>), Delamere Forest (16<sup>th</sup>), Nantwich (12<sup>th</sup>), Moore NR (24<sup>th</sup>), Rostherne Mere (several dates) and Sandbach Flashes (three dates). Two **Grey Partridges** were at Rostherne Mere (11<sup>th</sup>) and near Pym's Chair (24<sup>th</sup>).

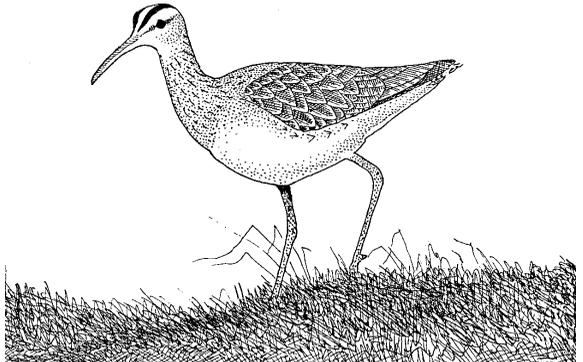
Three **Oystercatchers** were at Adlington (27<sup>th</sup>). 14 **Little Ringed Plovers** were at Sandbach Flashes (29<sup>th</sup>) and 10 **Ringed Plovers** visited Fiddler's Ferry (23<sup>rd</sup>). A **Grey Plover** was off Red Rocks (15<sup>th</sup>) and a **Knot** at Fiddler's Ferry (24<sup>th</sup>) was the first site record. Three **Sanderling** at Fiddler's Ferry (3<sup>rd</sup>) increased to eight next day. **Little Stints** were at Frodsham on three dates (max five on 18<sup>th</sup>) and one at Sandbach Flashes (23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>). 400 **Black-tailed Godwits** visited Frodsham (21<sup>st</sup>). Returning **Green Sandpipers** were at Marbury No1 tank (max six on 27<sup>th</sup>) and Sandbach Flashes (max six on 29<sup>th</sup>). The only **Wood Sandpiper** of the month was at Sandbach Flashes (20<sup>th</sup>). An **Arctic Skua** passed Hoylake (23<sup>rd</sup>). One/two **Mediterranean Gulls** were at Inner Marsh Farm and Woolston Eyes. A **Little Gull** lingered at Frodsham (12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>) and a **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Sandbach Flashes (10<sup>th</sup>). Up to three **Common Terns** visited Rostherne Mere and Sandbach Flashes. A **Guillemot** was noted off Red Rocks (15<sup>th</sup>). The largest count of **Swifts** was 2000 at Fiddler's Ferry (4<sup>th</sup>). A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was at Rostherne Mere (11<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>). A **Sand Martin** seen irregularly at Poynton Pool (1<sup>st</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>) was probably nest prospecting nearby. The pair of **Blue-headed Wagtails** remained all month at Frodsham. Fiddler's Ferry held a female **Black Redstart** on six dates between 4<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. A juv **Redstart** was at Sandbach Flashes (25<sup>th</sup>). A **Grasshopper Warbler** was at Inner Marsh Farm (14<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>) and nine **Sedge Warblers** held territory at Red Rocks mid-month. A pair of **Pied Flycatchers** nested at Timbersbrook and a **Nuthatch** at Sandbach Flashes (4<sup>th</sup>) was a local rarity. At least four **Tree Sparrows** were at Handforth (8<sup>th</sup>) with a pair nesting at Timbersbrook. Two **Redpolls** at Poynton Pool (4<sup>th</sup>) was an unusual mid-summer record there. Two **Corn Buntings** were at Brereton with singles at Walgherton and Weston.

## JULY

Reflecting on breeding successes during the summer, many declining/rare species did well including the nine pairs of **Black-necked Grebes** at Woolston Eyes which hatched at least 13 young. **Water Rails** bred at three sites. Up to four pairs of **Hobbies** bred. The pair of **Great Black-backed Gulls** hatched three young at Frodsham No6 tank. 13 pairs of **Barn Owls** nested and the pair of **Blue-headed Wagtails** remained at Frodsham to mid-month at least. On the down side, only one pair of **Turtle Doves** bred, **Ring Ouzels** are barely hanging on as a county breeder and **Spotted Flycatcher** numbers were again down.

60+ **Great Crested Grebes** were at Rostherne Mere (27<sup>th</sup>). **Black-necked Grebes** were at Arpley Tip Pool (23<sup>rd</sup>) and Rostherne Mere (19<sup>th</sup>) with two at Houghton Green Flash (19<sup>th</sup>). 10 **Fulmars** were seen off Hoylake (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>) with two **Manx Shearwaters** and 45 **Gannets** passed there (9<sup>th</sup>). A **Little Egret** was at Parkgate (9<sup>th</sup>). 18 **Greylag Geese** at Fiddler's Ferry (26<sup>th</sup>) were the first July birds there while 60 **Canada Geese** there (29<sup>th</sup>) was a new monthly maximum. The female **Ruddy Shelduck** was again at Inner Marsh Farm (irregularly from 19<sup>th</sup>). Two pairs of **Shelducks** bred at Sandbach Flashes while five broods at Fiddler's Ferry was the best ever breeding season there. One/two **Mandarins** were irregularly seen at Rostherne Mere. Two **Wigeon** remained at Sandbach Flashes all month and a post-breeding count of 330 **Mallard** was there (31<sup>st</sup>). Poynton Pool had 24 broods of Mallard totalling 113 young and a new July maximum of 168 on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Single **Garganey** were at both Frodsham (23<sup>rd</sup>) and Inner Marsh Farm (24<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>). A **Shoveler** at Poynton Pool (7<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>) was the first July record and two **Scaup** visited Frodsham (17<sup>th</sup>). Up to four **Common Scoters** were at Rostherne Mere (from 26<sup>th</sup>). A **Ruddy Duck** at Fiddler's Ferry (27<sup>th</sup>) was the first July record and c100 were at Frodsham (16<sup>th</sup>). **Marsh Harriers** were at Fiddler's Ferry (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>), Frodsham (to 17<sup>th</sup>) and Inner Marsh Farm (23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>). A **Hen Harrier** was seen at Frodsham. Two **Buzzards** were at Neston (21<sup>st</sup>) with one/two irregularly at Fiddler's Ferry (first July records there). A migrant **Osprey** flew over Rostherne Mere (23<sup>rd</sup>) and another was reported over Frodsham (22<sup>nd</sup>). **Hobbies** were at Antrobus (22<sup>nd</sup>), Arclid SQ (24<sup>th</sup>), Delamere (15<sup>th</sup>), Frodsham, Inner Marsh Farm (six dates), Ness (13<sup>th</sup>), Rostherne Mere (28<sup>th</sup>), Sandbach Flashes (12 dates), Shakerley Mere (4<sup>th</sup>) and Wybunbury (26<sup>th</sup>).

A pair of **Grey Partridges** bred on Frodsham No1 bed. **Oystercatchers** bred at both Chelford SQs and Fiddler's Ferry. A peak of 19 **Little Ringed Plovers** was at Sandbach Flashes (2<sup>nd</sup>), while 20 at Fiddler's Ferry (7<sup>th</sup>) was a site record. A returning **Golden Plover** was at Sandbach Flashes (18<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>) and two **Knot** visited Inner Marsh Farm (15<sup>th</sup>). **Sanderling** at Hoylake grew from 105 on 23<sup>rd</sup> to 850 on 26<sup>th</sup> and 1275 on 31<sup>st</sup> with one at Inner Marsh Farm (10<sup>th</sup>). The only **Little Stint** reported was at Inner Marsh Farm (24<sup>th</sup>). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Fiddler's Ferry (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>) before visiting Frodsham No6 tank (9<sup>th</sup>) and one was at Inner Marsh Farm (30<sup>th</sup>). A **Curlew Sandpiper** was at Woolston Eyes. c2000 **Dunlin** roosted off Hoylake (31<sup>st</sup>). Inner Marsh Farm had a peak of nine **Ruff** (5<sup>th</sup>) while two were at Sandbach Flashes all month. A **Long-billed Dowitcher** was reported at Frodsham (22<sup>nd</sup>). **Black-tailed Godwits** began to increase with 28 at Fiddler's Ferry (16<sup>th</sup>), 250 at Inner Marsh Farm (5<sup>th</sup>), seven at Neumann's Flash (28<sup>th</sup>) and 20 at Sandbach Flashes (5<sup>th</sup>). Six **Bar-tailed Godwits** were at Hoylake (29<sup>th</sup>) with singles at Fiddler's Ferry (9<sup>th</sup>), Frodsham (16<sup>th</sup>) and Woolston Eyes. **Whimbrel** visited Hoylake, Sandbach Flashes and Woolston Eyes. A peak of 172 **Curlew** roosted at Chelford SQs (27<sup>th</sup>) with 1789 off Heswall (2<sup>nd</sup>). **Spotted Redshanks** were at Inner Marsh Farm and Parkgate. 23 **Greenshanks** at Parkgate (27<sup>th</sup>) was the peak count with three at Sandbach Flashes (4<sup>th</sup>). Eight **Green Sandpipers** were at Marbury No1 tank (25<sup>th</sup>) with six at Sandbach Flashes (20<sup>th</sup>). **Wood Sandpipers** visited Frodsham (6<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>) and Inner Marsh Farm (2<sup>nd</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>). Three **Common Sandpipers** were at Inner Marsh Farm (23<sup>rd</sup>) with four at Fiddler's Ferry (5<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>), five at Sandbach Flashes (25<sup>th</sup>) and one at Poynton Pool (4<sup>th</sup>) was possibly only the 4th July record there. A **Turnstone** visited Inner Marsh Farm (16<sup>th</sup>).



One/two **Arctic Skuas** were off Hoylake on four dates. One/two **Mediterranean Gulls** were at Inner Marsh Farm (5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>), Neumann's Flash (25<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>) and at Sandbach Flashes (five dates). 15 **Little Gulls** were seen off Leasowe (10<sup>th</sup>). An adult **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Hoylake (31<sup>st</sup>) with one/two at Neumann's Flash (24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>), up to five daily at Sandbach Flashes and up to seven at Fiddler's Ferry during the month. 175 **Kittiwakes** off Hoylake (9<sup>th</sup>) was followed by 45 next day. Terns off Hoylake included 250 **Sandwich Terns**, a possible **Roseate Tern** (both 31<sup>st</sup>), 350 **Common Terns** (29<sup>th</sup>) and 150 **Little Terns** (30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>). Elsewhere, four Sandwich Terns were off Thurstaston (28<sup>th</sup>). Up to three Common Terns were at Marbury No1 tank, Rostherne Mere and Sandbach Flashes with six at Inner Marsh Farm (19<sup>th</sup>). Two **Long-eared Owls** were at Woolston Eyes and c60 **Swifts** at Poynton Pool (14<sup>th</sup>) was a high mid-summer count there. Several pairs of **Sand Martins** nested along the River Wheelock near Sandbach Flashes and c30 nests were at Wybunbury SQ. A female **Redstart** was at Higher Whitley (28<sup>th</sup>) with a juv at Sandbach Flashes (9<sup>th</sup>). A male **Stonechat** at Fiddler's Ferry (9<sup>th</sup>) was only the second July record there and 50 **Mistle Thrushes** roosted at Poynton Pool (29<sup>th</sup>). A juv **Sedge Warbler** at the latter site (22<sup>nd</sup>) was a major rarity there. **Goldcrests** bred at Queen's Park, Crewe and Poynton Pool. 50 **Long-tailed Tits** at Fiddler's Ferry (9<sup>th</sup>) was a new July record. A **Willow Tit** at Chelford SQs (27<sup>th</sup>) was the only one so far this year of what was latterly a scarce breeding resident there. At least 500 **Jackdaws** roosted at Wigwam Wood, Poynton (27<sup>th</sup>). Four **Ravens** were at Bosley Cloud (23<sup>rd</sup>) and at least one pair of **Tree Sparrows** bred at Wybunbury SQ. 50 **Linnets** was the peak count at Fiddler's Ferry while four over Poynton Pool (18<sup>th</sup>) was unusual. Two **Redpolls** at Fiddler's Ferry (23<sup>rd</sup>) was only the second July record while a **Bullfinch** there (20<sup>th</sup>) was the first July record. A **Corn Bunting** was at Inner Marsh Farm (27<sup>th</sup>).

## AUGUST

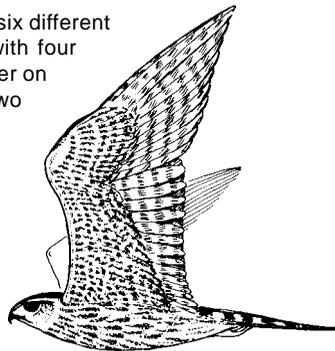
Woolston Eyes ringers hit Double Gold with a juv **Nightingale** trapped and ringed on No1 bed (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>) – first county record since 1993. This was followed by a **Blyth's Reed Warbler** trapped on No4 bed (26<sup>th</sup>), a county first if accepted. Elsewhere, highlights included a **Honey Buzzard** reported over Sandway (14<sup>th</sup>), a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Sandbach Flashes (27<sup>th</sup> into Sept), a **Reed Warbler** at Hilbre (12<sup>th</sup>- incredibly only the third site record, the last being in Sept 1995) and an unconfirmed report of a **Subalpine Warbler** at Lingham Lane, Leasowe (5<sup>th</sup>).



A post-breeding count of 85 **Great Crested Grebes** was made at Rostherne Mere (6<sup>th</sup>) with up to 20 at Fiddler's Ferry. Seawatching produced 10 **Fulmars** off Hoylake (9<sup>th</sup>) with 35 off there next day. 100 **Gannets** were off Red Rocks (24<sup>th</sup>) with 25 off Hilbre (26<sup>th</sup>) and 45 off Hoylake (10<sup>th</sup>). A **Little Egret** at Chelford SQs (5<sup>th</sup>) was a first for that area and was relocated at Bosley Res'r (6<sup>th</sup>) and one was at Hoylake (28<sup>th</sup>). Two **Mute Swans** were seen off Hoylake (25<sup>th</sup>) where this species is less than annual. 310 **Canada Geese** at Fiddler's Ferry (30<sup>th</sup>) was a new monthly maximum and other large counts

included c1000 at Frodsham Score (18<sup>th</sup>) and 206 at Poynton Pool (3<sup>rd</sup>). Inner Marsh Farm had a **Lesser Canada Goose** (21<sup>st</sup>) and 12 **Greylag Geese** (13<sup>th</sup>). Seven Greylags at Fiddler's Ferry all month was the first August record. Single **Barnacle Geese** were at both Frodsham and Inner Marsh Farm. An **Egyptian Goose** at Inner Marsh Farm (3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> and again 31<sup>st</sup>) was also seen at Frodsham No6 tank (16<sup>th</sup>). The female **Ruddy Shelduck** was seen irregularly at Inner Marsh Farm during the month (also visited Burton on 17<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>) and another bird was at Frodsham Score (2<sup>nd</sup>). A female **Mandarin** was seen at Sandbach Flashes (2<sup>nd</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>) with two there on 19<sup>th</sup> and a female at Poynton Pool (1<sup>st</sup>). Up to 200 **Teal** were at both Fiddler's Ferry and Sandbach Flashes with a max of 400 **Mallard** at the latter site. Nine broods of Mallard totalled 67 young at Fiddler's Ferry during the summer and Poynton Pool had an August record of 160 on 1<sup>st</sup>. Single **Garganey** were at Budworth Mere (21<sup>st</sup>), Frodsham (5<sup>th</sup>), Inner Marsh Farm (one on four dates with two on 28<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>) and Sandbach Flashes (28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>). Sandbach Flashes had up to 14 **Shovelers** while up to 100 were at both Fiddler's Ferry and Neumann's Flash. At least 40 **Pochard** were at Frodsham No6 tank during the last week. **Tufted Duck** numbers at Rostherne Mere increased to 218 on 6<sup>th</sup> with 217 at Chelford SQs (20<sup>th</sup>). A **Common Scoter** passed Hoylake (28<sup>th</sup>) with 11 past there on 2<sup>nd</sup> and up to four at Rostherne Mere (to 6<sup>th</sup>). A **Goosander** was briefly at Chelford SQs (26<sup>th</sup>) and 124 **Ruddy Ducks** at Frodsham next day was probably a new site record count.

**Marsh Harrier** sightings came from several sites including up to six different birds in the Astmoor/Cuerdley/Fiddler's Ferry area (from 11<sup>th</sup> with four birds on 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>). Three birds were at Frodsham (inc two together on 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>), one regularly at Inner Marsh Farm (from 7<sup>th</sup>, two birds on 17<sup>th</sup>) and finally singles over Marbury No1 tank (31<sup>st</sup>) and Rostherne Mere (25<sup>th</sup>). One/two **Buzzards** were at Fiddler's Ferry on 13 dates (where there was only one previous August record), with five at Inner Marsh Farm (2<sup>nd</sup>) and three over Sandbach Flashes (29<sup>th</sup>). An **Osprey** flew over Frodsham (26<sup>th</sup>). Several **Merlins** appeared with singles at Burton (30<sup>th</sup>), Fiddler's Ferry (19<sup>th</sup> – second August record), Parkgate (16<sup>th</sup>) and Weaver Bend (13<sup>th</sup>). Single **Hobbies** were seen at Denhall Quay (1<sup>st</sup>), Frodsham (18<sup>th</sup>), Haslington (16<sup>th</sup>), Inner Marsh Farm (2<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>), Marbury No1 tank (9<sup>th</sup>), Ness (3<sup>rd</sup>), Risley Moss (21<sup>st</sup>), Rostherne Mere (four dates), Sandbach (20<sup>th</sup>), Sandbach Flashes (nine dates), Twemlow (19<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>) and Tatton Park (23<sup>rd</sup>). There were numerous records of **Peregrines** during the month including four at both Fiddler's Ferry and Heswall, three at Sandbach Flashes, twos at Hoylake, Inner Marsh Farm and Parkgate, with singles at Chelford SQs, Frodsham, Tatton Park and Woolston Eyes. **Water Rails** were at Chelford SQs (13<sup>th</sup>), Inner Marsh Farm and Marbury No1 tank.



**Ringed Plovers** at Hoylake increased from 150 on 10<sup>th</sup> to 1200 on 31<sup>st</sup>. Elsewhere 1000 were at Frodsham, an August record of 34 at Fiddler's Ferry (20<sup>th</sup>), one at Rostherne Mere (7<sup>th</sup>) and six at Sandbach Flashes (28<sup>th</sup>). 15 **Grey Plovers** visited Hoylake (28<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>) with two at the Weaver Bend (29<sup>th</sup>). A return movement of **Knot** was noted during the last few days of the month when counts included three at Fiddler's Ferry (27<sup>th</sup> – the second August record), six at Frodsham No6 tank (30<sup>th</sup>), 20 at Hoylake (29<sup>th</sup>) and two at Inner Marsh Farm (26<sup>th</sup>). Small numbers of **Little Stints** were reported including 20 at Frodsham No6 tank (29<sup>th</sup>) and three+ at Hoylake (31<sup>st</sup>). A widespread influx of **Curlew Sandpipers** was reported including peak counts of c40 at Frodsham (29<sup>th</sup>), 30 at both Hoylake (30<sup>th</sup>) and Meols (29<sup>th</sup>). Elsewhere, up to three were at Fiddler's Ferry (26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> – only the second August record there), 13 at Heswall (30<sup>th</sup>), 17 at Inner Marsh Farm (31<sup>st</sup>), 19 at Parkgate (31<sup>st</sup>) and six at Sandbach Flashes (28<sup>th</sup>). 3000 **Dunlin** were at both Frodsham No6 tank (3<sup>rd</sup>) and Hoylake (10<sup>th</sup>). The peak count of **Ruff** at Sandbach Flashes was 12 on 31<sup>st</sup> with an impressive 60 at Frodsham (24<sup>th</sup>). An early **Jack Snipe** was at Frodsham (21<sup>st</sup>). 2000+ **Black-tailed Godwits** were recorded at Inner Marsh Farm (10<sup>th</sup>) with up to six at Fiddler's Ferry and 2500+ at Frodsham (15<sup>th</sup>). Returning **Whimbrels** were seen at Burton (20<sup>th</sup>), three at Heswall (31<sup>st</sup>), three at Hilbre (26<sup>th</sup>), Hoylake (1<sup>st</sup>) and Sandbach Flashes (10<sup>th</sup>). Heswall had a count of 5733 **Redshanks** on 20<sup>th</sup>. **Greenshanks** became widespread with up to four at Chelford SQs, Fiddler's Ferry, Heswall, Hoylake and Sandbach Flashes. Elsewhere, 11 were at Frodsham (26<sup>th</sup>), 13 at Inner Marsh Farm (3<sup>rd</sup>) and a record 97 were at Parkgate (29<sup>th</sup>). Up to six **Green Sandpipers** were at Chelford SQs, Frodsham, Inner Marsh Farm and Sandbach Flashes, with one over Poynton (11<sup>th</sup>) - the observer's first patch record and 10 at Marbury No1 tank (8<sup>th</sup>). The only **Wood Sandpiper** was at Sandbach Flashes (3<sup>rd</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>) and Frodsham held a peak of 12 **Common Sandpipers** on 10<sup>th</sup>.

A **Pomarine Skua** passed Hoylake (30<sup>th</sup>) with small numbers of **Arctic Skuas** there (8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>). One or two **Mediterranean Gulls** were at Chelford SQs (17<sup>th</sup>), Hoylake (9<sup>th</sup> & irregularly 23<sup>rd</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>), Leasowe (9<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>), Parkgate (26<sup>th</sup>) and Sandbach Flashes (2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>). A **Little Gull** visited Rostherne Mere (20<sup>th</sup>). Up to five **Yellow-legged Gulls** made daily visits to Sandbach Flashes and Fiddler's Ferry had six different birds during the month. 438 **Common Terns** were off Hoylake (31<sup>st</sup>) with small numbers of **Arctic** and **Little Terns** also seen. Nearby 200 Common Terns and 150+ **Sandwich Terns** were off Hilbre (10<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> respectively). An Arctic Tern at Watch Lane Flash (26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>) was a good local record. A **Turtle Dove** at Frodsham (6<sup>th</sup>) and a **Barn Owl** at the same site (22<sup>nd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>) were both excellent records. A **Short-eared Owl** had returned to Frodsham (from 22<sup>nd</sup>). The last **Swifts** were at Fiddler's Ferry (26<sup>th</sup>), Poynton Pool (19<sup>th</sup>), Sandbach Flashes (29<sup>th</sup>) with 30+ at Frodsham (27<sup>th</sup>). Up to 500 **Swallows** roosted at Woolston Eyes and an albino bird was at Sandbach Flashes (12<sup>th</sup>). **Tree Pipits** were at Hoylake and five flew over Woolston Eyes (19<sup>th</sup>). Passage **Yellow Wagtails** included 25 at Frodsham (24<sup>th</sup>), one at Hoylake (30<sup>th</sup>), five at Inner Marsh Farm (31<sup>st</sup>), two at Red Rocks (24<sup>th</sup>), three at Sandbach Flashes (18<sup>th</sup>) and two at Woolston Eyes (27<sup>th</sup>). A **Black Redstart** at Hilbre (13<sup>th</sup>) was a welcome record. Single **Redstarts** were at Hilbre

(26th), Hoylake (29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>), Red Rocks (24<sup>th</sup>) and Woolston Eyes (12<sup>th</sup>). Returning **Whinchats** were at Chelford SQs (26<sup>th</sup>) and Frodsham the next day. **Wheatears** were at Fiddler's Ferry (20<sup>th</sup>), Heswall (two on 28<sup>th</sup>), Inner Marsh Farm (3<sup>rd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>) and Sandbach Flashes (2<sup>nd</sup>). Post-breeding flocks of **Mistle Thrushes** included an August record of 50 at Fiddler's Ferry (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>), 45 at Rode Pool (18<sup>th</sup>) and 40+ at Poynton Pool (28<sup>th</sup>). Three **Garden Warblers** were at Sandbach Flashes (17<sup>th</sup>) with another at Hoylake (31<sup>st</sup>). Ten **Willow Warblers** were at Red Rocks (24<sup>th</sup>) with a **Spotted Flycatcher** at Frodsham (27<sup>th</sup>). 42 **Magpies** were at Poynton Pool (28<sup>th</sup>) and four **Ravens** were at Inner Marsh Farm (6<sup>th</sup>). 30 **Tree Sparrows** were at Sandbach Flashes (2<sup>nd</sup>) with 70+ **House Sparrows** at Weston (31<sup>st</sup>).

If you would like to see your Cheshire and Wirral sightings featured here then send details to me, to arrive by the beginning of December. Please remember to send your rarity descriptions to the County Recorder.

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

Thanks/Acknowledgements for Recent Reports go to: - S. & G. Barber, Birdcall, *Birdwatch* and *Birdwatching* Magazines, A. Hearn, K. Kirk, B. Perkins (Sandbach Flashes Log), Keith Massey (Fiddler's Ferry Reserve), Rostherne Log, R. Smith ([www.deeestuary.co.uk](http://www.deeestuary.co.uk)) and anyone else who passed records on.

# County Rarities

## HONEY BUZZARD

Saturday morning, September 30<sup>th</sup>. Clear blue sky and virtually calm. A whole day at the Trafford Centre ahead of me, a promise to the children who had their own agendas planned out. A whole day .... a nagging feeling gnawed at me. The biggest influx of Honey Buzzards ever to be seen in Britain was entering its second week and if I was to ever see one at Frodsham, today was the day. The weather was about to change and further chances would become less likely. After delicate negotiations, which revolved around a fiver for each Honey Buzzard spotted, we were on the road, dollar signs in the eyes of my two young entrepreneurs.

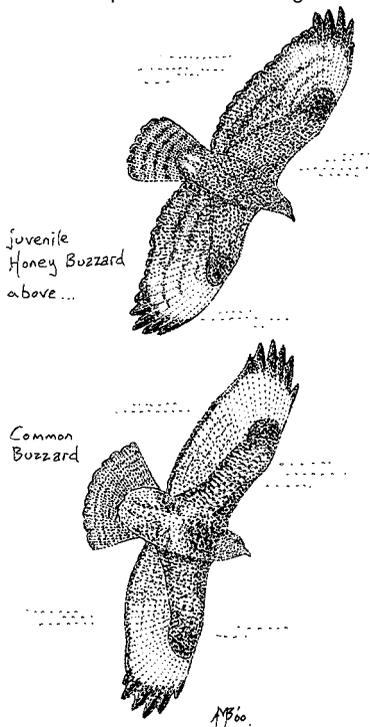
The first bird to fly over us as we got out of the car was a Saker Falcon, which tried to catch a Kestrel. Good start. Two or three Peregrines, two Sparrowhawks, a Marsh Harrier and several Buzzards later, interest in the sky was waning. Their raptor identification was improving though and there was still a hope. Big black cumulus to the east of us, in stark contrast to the bright blue sky above us, provided the backdrop to the moment I'd been waiting for. As the children fought a mock battle in the car, a shape appeared from the north, coming out of a glide to soar overhead. A quick glance was enough to suspect the ID, a lengthier look through binoculars enough to confirm it. Honey Buzzard at last! - a darkish juvenile, part of a huge movement of inexperienced birds of the year that had crossed the North Sea due to strange weather conditions.

The scream of 'Honey Buzzard' had got the two combatants out of the car and both looked at the dark shape, sharing views through my binoculars. They both agreed that it didn't look like one of the Buzzards that they'd been watching..... So why didn't it? Why was it so different, easily told, virtually at a glance? At long range, as I watched it out of sight slowly moving towards Chester, its silhouette was still Honey Buzzard, not Buzzard. I'll try to explain.

Honey Buzzard is perhaps misnamed. It's not a *Buteo* Buzzard and is within the *Pernis* group but the very fact that it is called a Buzzard gives the observer a preconception that it's going to look like one. To the inexperienced observer without past experience, difficulties could arise but having actually seen one, they do become quite easy. They are longer and broader winged than Buzzard, longer tailed and longer necked. Their wings are more parallel sided and look less 'carpally' than Buzzard, although in a glide they can press their wings forward at the carpals, rather reminiscent of Red Kite. The Frodsham bird also exhibited bulging secondaries, giving the wing a slightly curved 'S' shape on the trailing edge, indicating a young bird, rather than the straight trailing edge that adults show. The tail is long with rounded corners and when partly spread, as seen overhead No6 tank, looked very 'full', broad based and vaguely recalling Lammergeier.

Further subtle characteristics were that the carpal area was more 'centred' along the wing than Buzzard, the wings were 'pinched' in close to the body, exaggerating the bulging secondaries and the tail length was longer than the wings were wide, a feature more even in Buzzard. The long

neck completed a more 'crucifix' shaped bird, nowhere near as compact as Common Buzzard. Flight wise, gliding and flapping mode was with wings held flat never raised above the level and never 'veed' as in Buzzard. Soaring was the same, wings held flat. In active flight, the wings even drooped slightly, perhaps pressed forward as mentioned earlier. The long tail was held mainly closed except for when soaring.



Incidentally, a Honey Buzzard that appeared over Acre Nook Sand Quarry one April a few years ago reminded me very much of a Red Kite when I first picked it up coming towards me in the distance. The long drooped wings were pressed forward and the tail was continuously twisted from side to side, just like Red Kites do. In the strong wind and under the constant mobbing of Corvids, that bird actually soared with wings very slightly 'veed' as in Common Buzzard. The whole shape and jizz were, however, very definitely Honey.

If you're lucky enough to get good views of a Honey Buzzard, the plumage is also very different from Common Buzzard. Adults and young have a range of plumages from almost white to almost black. The 'usual' features are black wing tips with a broad black trailing edge to the wings, narrower on juveniles. The flight feathers show obvious cross bars, two or three in adult females, perhaps two in males and four or five in juveniles. The tail is broadly tipped dark, slightly narrower in juveniles which also show more even barring across the tail, rather than the uneven spacing between bars that the adults show.

The Frodsham juvenile exhibited a mainly dark body with heavily barred underwing coverts and looked overall dark below except for a big pale area across the primaries but even this was quite dull. The carpals were dark but contrasted little with the underwing coverts. Only a very basic few lines on plumage but this is dealt with thoroughly in the literature and I would make a bet that you'd pick a Honey Buzzard up on jizz, rather than plumage features.

It is interesting to note that an adult watched soaring at long range from West Kirby towards Caldy by Chris Butterworth on August 24<sup>th</sup> this year was indeed picked up on jizz, not plumage, which even through a 40 x eyepiece was, at best, no more than an 'impression'.

So there you have it. It's one of those species that has you questioning every Buzzard you see until you see a real Honey and then you have no doubt. To be fair, I have seen flocks of hundreds of Honey Buzzards in eastern Turkey, which does help but even in mixed flocks with Steppe Buzzards and Black Kites, the distinctive jizz of this species, once learned, makes them obvious.

## Honey Buzzard Records

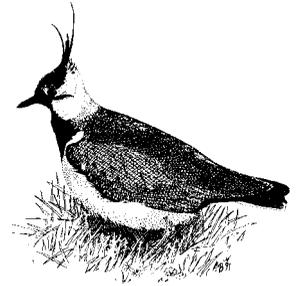
The last week of September and the first week of October saw a huge movement across the North Sea of Scandinavian or perhaps Russian Honey Buzzards. Hopefully, an article will deal with the bizarre phenomenon better than *Birding World* did in their September issue (Vol 13, No 9), which to my mind did little justice to the actual event. Backtracking weather charts, as used in the entomological magazine *Atropus* to show probable origins of transatlantic insects, would be great (but from the other direction of course!). I also suspect that their estimate of 500 was a little on the low side, over 300 being noted on one day alone.

Cheshire sightings were many, Honey Buzzards being noted in singles or pairs over several localities during the period. Many flew south over Seaforth, Merseyside, crossing Wirral on the way. How many did we actually have? Could observers not wait until next year but send me their records, with descriptions, now or a.s.a.p. so that I can get an accurate picture together. If you know anyone who saw one, badger them to send them in. **I'd appreciate your help in this unique opportunity.**

**Tony Broome, 4 Larchwood Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 2NU**

# The View from the Farmyard

Watching birds, as with other wildlife observations, reveals life at its most majestic, and at its most gory. The sheer beauty of flight, the marvellous colour and variety of species, the tender affection of adult for nestling, and the sheer raw brutality of bird to bird, within and between species. Magpies are suitably coloured black and white as it reflects their personality. They have long held a place in my affections. I love to watch their flight, and the amazing way that they bounce when they hop. I also admire their dedication to raising offspring, and their sheer persistence to win a meal. However when raising chicks and finding food are combined the Magpie shows its darker side. A hungry family drives the Magpie towards new standards of ruthless barbarity. One bird has appalled



me so much this summer that he is now known to me as Genghis. His singular determination to locate food coupled with his cold disregard for the suffering of other birds has failed to endear him to me, and were I of the shooting kind he would long since have passed away from lead poisoning. It was Genghis who found the nest belonging to the Mistle Thrushes. When I became aware of the goings-on around the nest the taking of the innocents was almost completed; a lone half-grown chick lay mutilated on the nest floor. The distraught parents swooped at Genghis, but all was in vain, they might as well have been gnats on an elephant for all the notice he took. His final pathetic victim was taken. I did nothing to stop him, the chick's fate was already sealed. Standing looking at the scene, the broken nest, and the distraught parents, the blooded branch, I felt disappointed, disappointed that birds can sometimes be so like humans.

Genghis continued to be around the farmyard. The Spotted Flycatchers were next, true to form. Over the years I would say that 75% of first broods failed due to predation. My next glimpse of Genghis came in the milking parlour. He was standing on the back of a cow that was waiting to be milked. The cow was in Cud mode when all senses are shut down. The eyes half close, ears droop and the jaw mechanically rotates on its eccentric chewing cycle. The Magpie's brain was likewise occupied, but his eyes were wide open and his senses engaged. All of a sudden he sprang vertically two feet, seized a Swallow chick from its nest against the beam, and without landing again on the cow left through the open upper stable door. During the following days three of the remaining four chicks disappeared, the battle weary parents in hot pursuit.

Now for my part in this sorry saga, and I admit to this in the hope that others won't be as stupid as me. Flies are an ever present problem where cows are concerned. Apart from the nuisance and irritation they carry bacteria, which when introduced into the teat canal, can if not spotted kill a cow within two or three days. Sprays are frowned upon in the milking parlour these days, so when a new kind of strip came on the market we decided to give it a try. Fly-strip is a long 5mm wide strip of sticky fabric, which is suspended over the cows when milking. Each time the cow flicks its skin or tail the flies are dislodged and take flight. In the field they would sit upon a leaf above the cow and wait for the next victim to stand beneath; in the parlour they rest upon the strip and are ensnared. So effective is the strip that it caught hundreds of flies in the first few hours. Unfortunately when I next entered the milking parlour my eyes were drawn to the pathetic sight of a female Swallow stuck on the fly-strip, its wings, tail and head all firmly stuck. It took quite some time to free it and still longer to clean the sticky unction from its body. Some feathers I had to cut away. When it was done she was released; she seemed to fly well enough, but that was the last time I saw her. The Swallow proved to be the female from the nest so ravaged by Genghis. My heart was heavy, as heavy as if I had driven to see the first Stone Curlew nesting in Cheshire, only to find that when parking I had done so with one wheel on the nest. The male Swallow continued to feed the one surviving chick, and was successful in encouraging it away from the nest 10 days later. Netting now protects the area with the fly-strip to prevent birds from becoming captives. Genghis, well, his young are on their own now all strong and healthy. As a successful parent he has served his purpose and cannot be condemned for his actions, which were all perfectly natural.

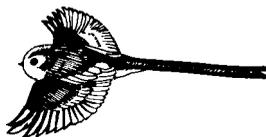
2000 has been an odd year as regards the House Martin colony on Toft Hall. After an encouraging early period when birds arrived back in good numbers, and with 59 first broods, things then departed from the normal routine. The young and adults remained in the general area of the hall. As the young gained in strength and confidence they ventured farther afield, returning to perch and roost. As the month of August wore on the adults showed no sign of commencing a second brood. When the time arrived for the young to start their migration the vast majority of the adults departed also. In fact only 27 adults remained and only three pairs of them reared second broods. The reason for this is not clear; I detected no more than the normal level of predation and no extra disturbance around the buildings. The Swallows on the other hand have had a bumper year with 13 first and 10 second broods; no shortage of food there. We will have to wait and see what happens next year; so far I have heard of no other colony showing this behaviour.

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

.....

A Long-tailed Tit got washed and dressed,  
Cleaned his teeth and set off on a quest  
To find 2000 pieces  
Without any creases  
And build a millennium nest.

**Hazel J Raw**



## Members' Noticeboard

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

### **COLLATOR**

The Society possesses an ancient collating machine, still in reasonable working order, which it is no longer likely to use. If anyone would like it for any organisation in which they are involved, please contact the Secretary for further details - otherwise it will go for scrap.

### **PEANUTS**

In a recent catalogue issued by CJ WildBird Foods, a notice pointed out that this year had been a very poor year for peanut crops, with all major peanut producing areas reporting unacceptable levels of aflatoxin contamination, which can of course be fatal to birds. They recommend that customers who usually feed peanuts to their birds find an alternative food source until the arrival of the new season's stock early in January. They say that if you buy peanuts, ensure that they have a recently tested UK certificate - not point of origin certificate, as many of these are invalid as aflatoxin can develop during transit.

### **MOLE CRICKETS (*Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*)**

Bryan Pinchen, Consultant Entomologist, is currently working for English Nature as a lead contact point for the 'Species Recovery Programme'. During the last twenty years there have only been four confirmed records of Mole Crickets in England, although at one time it was so common it had local names such as 'eve-churr' and 'jarr-worm'. The males give a distinctive song, which sounds similar to a Nightjar churring, or possibly Grasshopper and Savi's Warblers. They are most often heard on balmy, thundery evenings during the period from late April to early July (most often at dusk, but sometimes at dawn). Their typical habitat is along the edges of damp meadows and ditches and/or heaths, inhabiting the transitional zone between wetlands and drier ground around seepage lines. On the Continent and in the Channel Islands, they are often common in gardens and paths.

If anyone has any sightings, or has heard what they think have been Mole Crickets, Bryan would be delighted to hear from them. His address is: Mr B J Pinchen, 7 Brookland Close, Pennington, Lyminster, Hants, SO41 8JE. Tel: 01590 610799



# Species Spotlight

## THE BOVVER BOYS

Teenager Starlings — don't you love them when they strut their stuff sporting matching breast pockets of spangled black whilst the soft brown mantle and baby-white chin show them up for the youngsters they are. Like no other species they offer the chance to see the sequence of moult from the first black "armband" which stripes the wing, through to the diamond spangled black body beneath an infant-brown head.

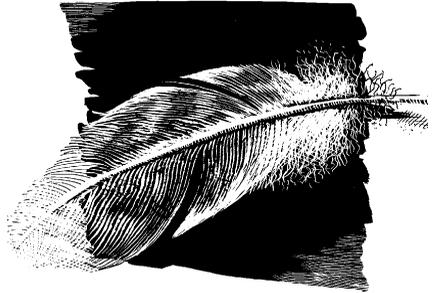
Throughout the autumn numbers of these youngsters build up on the saltmarsh and if you are on the reserve in the evenings you will see groups flighting in to pre-roost gatherings before moving on to the roost site proper. The pylons in the nature trail are a collection point and if you are close by when the signal triggers a mass exodus then your body vibrates to the thrumming of wings. Where are they bound? Who knows, but it may be Runcorn Bridge and we do know that some birds will have travelled up to fifteen miles to capitalise on the benefits of a large communal roost.

Spectacular en masse, yet individually beautiful too. For winter, the plumage sparkles as if in reflection of the Starlings' extrovert nature: active, attractive, matey, squabblesome, pushy, bubbly and bold. Starling feathers are quite over the top, being glossy black shot through with green, purple blue and bronze sheens. These iridescent colours arise from the structure of the feather, the tiny barbs which 'zip' up the feather are twisted to refract light. The result is a rainbow of colour but a weakening of the feather, and for that reason iridescence is usually confined to feathers of the head and body: it is in the Starling whose wings and tail are plain brown. Iridescence isn't all: the feathers are tipped with white, which spangles the winter Starling more strikingly than a circus clown. Yet the breeding dress is glossy black; how is this achieved? It is not by moult but by abrasion and in spring the progress of this wearing will tell you which of the birds on your lawn are your regular all-year round guys and which are your just here-for-the-winter immigrants from Russia or Scandinavia.

British Starlings have a distinct physiological difference from Continental birds. They respond to lower levels of daylight and come into breeding condition earlier. Under hormonal control the feather tips become brittle and wear away especially as the birds rush around exploring cavities in search of nest sites. They quickly assume their glossy black plumage whilst the Russians and Scandinavians stay cool and spangled for several weeks more. The breeding dress will also help you sort out the boys from the girls: the boys get a blue bill whilst the girls wear pink. Well nearly. The bill turns from winter dark to spring yellow with the base of the males' bill a distinct blue and that of the females pinkish - but this difference *is* noticeable and you can tell who is who.

The Starling's bill is marked in another way, too, in that the muscles, which open the bill, are extremely powerful. The Starling feeds in a unique way by "prying". The bill is thrust into the grass and then, even under this pressure, is opened, an action that pulls the eyes forward to give a clear view of the prey. It is a technique that the young Starling must wait to use until the bones of the skull are hardened sufficiently to withstand the pull of the muscles. The young must be content with screaming at an adult, with taking food from the surface, or with robbing a neighbour, and they excel at all three!

Man has long had a love/hate relationship with the Starling. On the eastern Continent its return is eagerly awaited as a herald of spring just as we anticipate the Swallow; yet city councils detest the many problems that a large urban roost brings in its wake. Farmers hated losing grain to the ravenous hordes of the 1960s yet loved the Starlings' talent for eradicating leatherjackets. Garden birdwatchers despaired on watching their offerings of nuts and scraps disappear when Starling flocks descended with all the grace of a posse of vultures. But we don't see these numbers now. By 1988 the farmland population had plummeted by 50% and the woodland population by 67% from 1960 levels. The decline continues and we must find out why. Love them or hate them we don't want to lose them, these bover boys of the bird world.



Thelma K Sykes, Blue Neb Studios

# Book Review

## THE BIRDS OF SANDBACH FLASHES 1935 TO 1999

by Andrew Goodwin & Colin Lythgoe

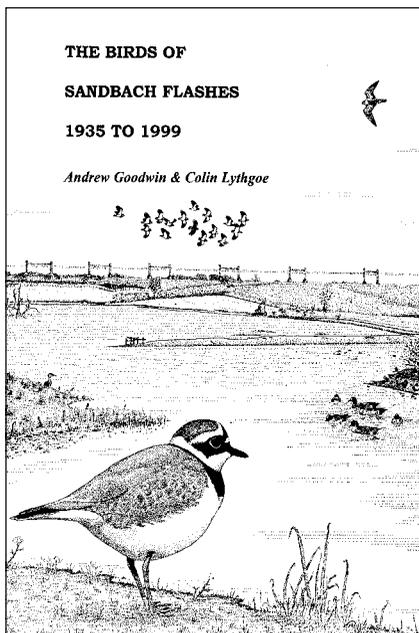
You either find them interesting and useful, or you have no time for them, site guides that is. I personally love to root through them. They give the kind of insight into individual areas that you often fail to appreciate unless you're a regular. Andy and Colin are regulars and their depth of knowledge on the Sandbach flashes and the birds that occur in the area, is obvious to anyone opening this handy-sized book.

The 127 pages are crammed with species' accounts, some 225 of them and also a general overview of the area. More than just an update of the last book on Sandbach flashes, published in 1985, it includes notes on the two authors, the local geology, the salt industry and bird recording, conservation and management. The section on early and late dates is interesting. In the 70s, the 'flashes', as they are known, were renowned throughout the country for producing rare waders. The Wilson's Phalarope in 1962 was photographed in colour and was perhaps the first to be so in the country. As pagers have become more popular, active birdwatching has definitely decreased and with changes in habitat, and a general lack of management, the 'flashes' have become less popular. Sadly, as with other Cheshire sites, lack of interest from major conservation and ornithological bodies has played a big part in this slow demise. Even so, the enthusiasm of the locals still means that bird recording is far from dead. The many hours spent in the field turn up surprises even today and a thorough census of the 'common' species has been done, providing valuable data as once abundant birds decline before our very eyes. Well-known species include Grey Partridge, Skylark, Tree Sparrow, Yellowhammer and Corn Bunting. Song Thrushes are given as having 'recovered', a welcome change to the fall of the above species.

But what about some others not recorded at the flashes since the 80s or early 90s? Northern Grey Shrike, Grasshopper Warbler, Stonechat, Water Pipit, Turtle Dove, Smew and Bittern. Surely encouragement enough to spend a little more time down there? And the rarities: just reward for the many hours spent searching, often with little to show for it. Purple Heron, Black-winged Stilt, Stilt Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Alpine Swift, Waxwing, Nightingale and Little Bunting to name a few. I remember seeing the latter, my first in Britain, in April 1976, a major rarity nationally at that time.

So, can you afford not to own a copy? I don't think so, it offers something for everyone, even a checklist and tick-boxes for you mad-keen listers! It provides a reference point for new birders to the area, as well as time-served veterans. It is liberally sprinkled with illustrations and has what some people have said is an apt front cover, but I couldn't possibly comment - could I?

All I will say is that there must be a great many records lurking in notebooks that have never seen daylight. Why not submit them to the authors with descriptions if required county-wise or nationally? At least now you'll realise the importance of your notes and you may be able to fill in some of the missing gaps - Black-throated Diver for instance. If you're keen, you may even be able to add to the British List. 'Baltic Gull' or the *fuscus* form of Lesser Black-backed Gull hasn't been accepted as yet even though birds answering the description were seen at the flashes on four dates in 1999!



So there you have it, a well-written account of the birds of the Sandbach flashes. I liked the layout, the use of 'Arial' as a typeface and the uncomplicated way in which the species are treated. It is nice and easy on the eyes. If I were to nit-pick, I'd have liked to have seen colour photographs of each site, possibly a front cover in colour, a location map showing the position of Sandbach in relation to the rest of the county or even to the country and, as an avid follower of the weather charts, a little more in the way of an explanation in certain cases, showing the correlation between the record and the weather conditions at the time. To be fair, I know that production costs did limit the authors, even with grants, and my own personal opinion is that the asking price of £4.00 is ridiculously low. It has however, set a very high standard for others to follow.

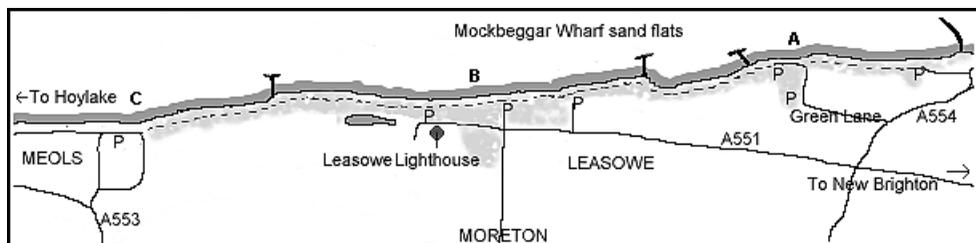
**Tony Broome, 4 Larchwood Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 2NU**

# Sites to Watch

## NORTH WIRRAL SHORE

To most of Merseyside the North Wirral shore is an area for walking, cycling, sailing or just sitting on the beach. Despite all this mass recreational activity the North Wirral shore is also an excellent place for birdwatching with a range of habitats including open sea, sand flats, sand dunes and both fresh water and brackish marsh.

Plan your trip to the North Wirral shore carefully as where and when you go must be closely tied to the time of the tide. The shore stretches seven and a half miles from Red Rocks in the west to New Brighton in the east, gently sloping downwards so that the shore at New Brighton is always the first to be covered by the incoming tide. This means that as the tide comes in the birds are pushed steadily westwards in the direction of Red Rocks. How far they are pushed depends very much on the height of the high tide. Below 8.9m the high tide roost is at Meols, between 8.9m and 9.3m Hoylake shore and at heights above 9.3m the birds can be pushed right off the shore towards Hilbre Island and Point of Ayr.



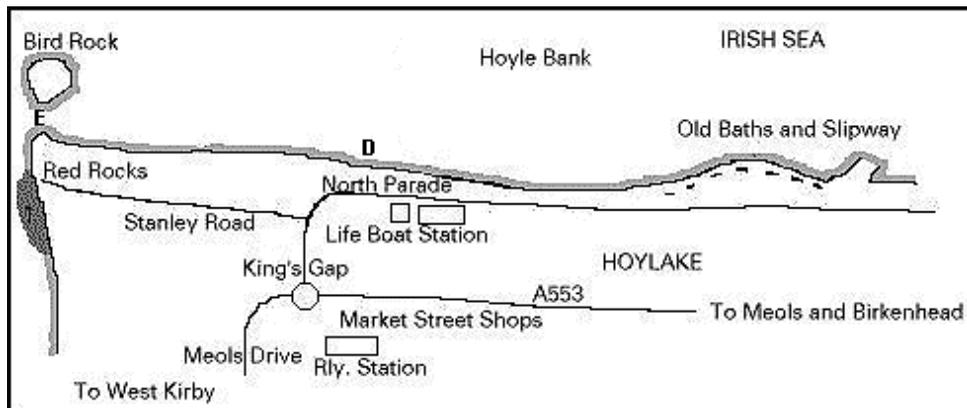
If your visit is in September during a period of strong north-west winds then undoubtedly the places to go are New Brighton and Leasowe. The car park at the end of Green Lane (A) in Leasowe is a good spot and has the reputation for being the best place in Britain to see Leach's Petrel. In force five to nine north-westerly winds and two hours either side of high tide large numbers pass westwards along the shoreline. Conditions during September 1997 were ideal with several days of strong winds (1), three hundred Leach's Petrel were seen in one day from Leasowe.

To see massive flocks of feeding waders the next port of call should be Leasowe Lighthouse (B) at low tide. The sea wall affords excellent views of the sand flats, here called Mockbeggar Wharf. The 'Wharf' is a major feeding area for Knot (12,000), Grey Plover (3000), Dunlin (18,000), Bar-tailed Godwit (5000) and Redshank (2000). Some species, namely Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey Plover and Sanderling feed here almost exclusively - as opposed to the Dee Estuary itself (2). As the sand flats are covered by the tide the birds are driven off in two directions, across the Mersey to the River Alt and westwards towards Hoylake. Now is the time to go to Meols (C) where the birds will be gathering to roost just across the channel, either temporarily or over the whole of the high tide, depending on the height of the tide. At high tide Meols is a good spot for seawatching

particularly during July, August and September. During a north-west wind you should see plenty of Skuas, Terns, Gannets and Shearwaters.

Hoylake shore (D) has become much more attractive to feeding waders in recent years due to the silting up of the shore. The mud has increased providing more food for the birds and discouraging walkers. There always seem to be plenty of Dunlin and Ringed Plover around and during late August and September many scarce waders can be present. I write this during early September and already there have been two White-rumped Sandpipers together with between 20 to 30 Curlew Sandpipers and 5 to 15 Little Stints which have stayed for over a week. In the winter months a very large high tide wader roost builds up here. In 1996 30,000 Knot were counted along with many thousand Dunlin and Bar-tailed Godwit. A sizeable post breeding tern roost is seen during late July and August with hundreds of Sandwich, Common and Little Terns either just off the promenade or further west towards Red Rocks.

Red Rocks (E) consist of two main habitats: south, towards West Kirby, are Red Rocks Marsh and sand dunes and to the north Hilbre Point overlooking Bird Rock and East Hoyle sand bank. Red Rocks Marsh is a nature reserve maintained by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust and is a 10 acre site of brackish marsh and sand dunes open to the public. The marsh attracts a considerable variety of migrants on passage in spring and autumn. The reed-beds contain breeding Sedge and Reed Warblers in spring and summer whereas the sand dunes are full of Skylarks and occasional Stonechat. The reserve is also home to over 50 species of flowering plants and the rare Natterjack Toad. Hilbre Point is an excellent place for seawatching. Arrive an hour and a half before high tide and the advancing sea should push a steady stream of species past you, including large flocks of Oystercatchers, Redshanks, Knot and Dunlin, some of which will alight on Bird Island just off the point. Among other birds regularly recorded during seawatches are Red-throated Diver, Manx Shearwater, Great Crested Grebe, Common Scoter, Guillemot, Kittiwake, Gannet and various terns and skuas. Long-tailed, Pomarine, Great and Arctic Skuas were all seen this last September.



Red Rocks isn't the only area of sand dunes along this shore. Much of the land immediately behind the sea wall between Meols and New Brighton is a mixture of sand dunes and scrub with a small amount of freshwater reed-beds, forming the North Wirral Coastal Park. Despite much disturbance a good number of birds rest here during migration, which in the past few months has included Siberian Chiffchaff, Subalpine Warbler, Tawny Pipit, Tree Pipit and Serin.

To keep up with the latest bird news from the North Wirral shore and the whole of the Dee Estuary see the Dee Estuary Birdwatching web site at [www.deeestuary.co.uk](http://www.deeestuary.co.uk). Send in your latest sightings from the Dee Estuary to me by e-mail ([richard@deeestuary.co.uk](mailto:richard@deeestuary.co.uk)) or by phone to 0151 625 2320; they will be most gratefully received.

**Richard Smith, March Wall, Kings Drive North, Caldy, Wirral, CH48 1LL**

1. *North West Region Bird Report 1997*, Birdline North West.
2. *The Wetland Bird Survey 1997-98*, BTO/RSPB/WWT/JNCC  
(numbers of birds were quoted from low tide counts for that year)

# Ringers' Notebook

One way in which ringers can increase the value of their work, and one which I find very enjoyable, is to locate nests during the breeding season, and ring the chicks (pulli) in their first few days of life. Not only does this allow us to record a particular pair of birds' breeding success, but also allows us the chance to follow a single, ringed bird from its very point of origin through its juvenile life and beyond, perhaps taking in migration routes, roosting sites and maybe even death. Thus, we can build a picture of a particular species' needs and habits, making it easier (in theory!) to protect them. When that species is one of high conservation concern, then nest finding and ringing become even more important and valuable.

At Woolston Eyes LNR, the Reed Bunting has become a particular target for this type of study as it is not only present all year round, but breeds in very good numbers and was recently found to roost here in high numbers also. Evidence from the BTO's Nest Record Scheme, ringing studies and Common Birds Census tells us that there has been an overall decline in numbers of some 52% in the last 20 years, and that the main cause of this is the decline in the survival rates of first-year birds. Although the number of fledglings produced per breeding attempt has actually increased in this time, the aforementioned loss of young birds is too great for the species to sustain itself at pre-1970 levels. This year I managed to find 12 nests of this species at Woolston and, despite the atrocious weather at times, 11 of these successfully fledged young - a high rate of success by any standard and confirmation of the information supplied by the BTO regarding nesting by the Reed Bunting as a whole. Catching birds at the roost site was only started in earnest last winter, so not surprisingly we have had little information regarding retrapped birds ringed as nestlings here, though of the 50 pulli ringed this year five (10%) have since been trapped again. This is fairly surprising, as it has always been thought that juvenile birds moved away from Woolston soon after fledging. As you can see, and the point I am trying to make, is that the results from the constant monitoring of individual species are continually changing, so there can be no let up in the study of birds as a whole or in individual groups.

Ringing has been taking place at Woolston Eyes for the last 20 years and, of course, now and again a local rarity turns up unexpectedly in a mist net. These have included Bearded Tit, Firecrest, Bluethroat, Yellow-browed Warbler and - the two I have been lucky enough to personally take out of a mist net - Cetti's Warbler and Nightingale in August this year. Although locally rare, they are not birds to trouble the British Birds Rarities Committee with. On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August this year that changed, when after some 55,000 birds had been trapped at Woolston in total, a Blyth's Reed Warbler was caught in the Warmans pit area of Number 4 bed. Following two days of easterly winds, and during a fairly sharp shower of rain, the three ringers operating this site were removing birds from the mist nets before closing them up. Not taking any particular notice of the few birds being extracted, they completed the task in hand and returned to the ringing station, where all of the birds are processed and ringed before release. Within seconds of removing this bird from the holding bag, it became apparent to Scott Kennedy, the ringer who had initially taken it out of the net, that they had something special - the first indicator being the large pale supercillium extending from just behind the eye to the bill. Also noticeable were the short wings, with corresponding short primary projections, and the colour of the legs - dark grey, as opposed to the fleshy-blue cast of Reed Warbler. Needless to say, the bird was fully measured for all the various points to confirm its identity, there not being anything to suggest it was Reed, Paddyfield or Marsh Warbler, the other main possible confusion species. After several photographs and a video had been taken, the bird was released back at the capture site. It immediately flew up into a nearby tree, cocked its tail and started feeding - behaviour not noticed in Reed Warbler before by any of the ringers present and just another helpful confirmation of its ID. A full description and set of photographs will of course be submitted to the BBRC.

There is no news of any interesting controlled birds (caught in, but ringed outside of the area, and vice versa) in this edition as the autumn recovery sheets have not yet arrived. Anything of note will be detailed next time. I have, though, been informed of a Swallow of ours recaptured in southern Africa, the second such record in a short space of time, the details of which are something to look forward to in my next article.

**Chris Benson, 39 Redesmere Park, Flixton, Manchester, M41 9ER**

# 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.

## CHESHIRE BIRD RACE 2000 or “THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY QUAIL”

It all seemed like such a good idea at the time; four blokes, a jaunt around Cheshire and a hundred-odd species of birds thrown in for good measure! For “a good idea” read “complete madness”: this was not a jolly jaunt, but far from it! It all started with throwaway comments like “wouldn’t it be nice to do a bird race around Cheshire this year?”. Sensible folk would have ignored this as whimsical, but four madmen from the far-flung reaches of the county decided to take up the challenge and race. The lack of planning and late organisation were truly reflected in Jeff Clarke’s appropriate name for the team: Lastminute.pom! Jeff’s fellow inmates from the asylum were Simon Edwards, Phil Oddy and myself, all fine, upstanding CAWOS councilmen up for the task ahead. These four optimistic souls met up in Widnes on the, very late, night of 4<sup>th</sup> May to set out on The Quest for the Holy Quail! Well, one had actually been heard the night before.



The wee small hours gave up such gems as Mallard, Moorhen, Coot and Canada Goose; not very auspicious, but it was a start. These same hours also saw the first outbreaks of violence: blows were exchanged, albeit accidentally, between Jeff and Simon before the sun’s first rays broke the horizon. But were we downhearted? Probably not! Optimism still reigned supreme as Little Owl, Tawny Owl, Water Rail and Grasshopper Warbler all did their best to cheer us on. The fearless foursome was on a mind-blowing 15 species as we left Moore Nature Reserve behind, bound for Macclesfield.

The road traffic violations mounted as we sped along no-through roads and one-way streets the wrong way (only kidding if any police officers are reading this!) on the way to Macclesfield Forest. En route, we chomped our way through our vast quantity of supplies, which would have provisioned a polar exploration team for a month. Woodcock rode (or is that roded? No, rode is right!) overhead and a cock Redstart greeted the dawn at Tegg’s Nose Country Park. Wood Warblers and Pied Flycatchers gave neck-aching views in the oak canopy, and a drake Mandarin on Trentabank Reservoir brought a little colour into our lives. This Chinese takeaway typically left us wanting more as it became number 53, without chips or rice, on our menu (sorry, list).

The moors now beckoned us, but oh, the mist. OK, it was fog - thick stuff that enveloped us and made us wonder what the heck we were doing up there. We should have heeded the warnings of Wildboarclough’s Red Grouse to “Go Back, Go Back”, but we didn’t. In spite of the conditions Wheatear, Curlew and Ring Ouzel all made it on to the list - yep, we got ‘em! Wet and shivering, we returned to the sun-kissed Dane Valley to not dip on Dipper. 63 species down, half our provisions gone - would we make the hundred before starvation set in?

A slower return journey took us to Rostherne Mere, where winter and summer met in the guise of Goldeneye and Swift. Tempting as it was, a call at Sheila Blamire’s house to demand cake and coffee was resisted as we pressed on (head west debatably young men) to the open sea. Well, actually the top of the Wirral! Lesser Whitethroat and Bullfinch were nice at Rivacre Country Park, but no budgies, canaries or Pallas’s Rosefinches at this open-air aviary (sorry twitchers!). Windy New Brighton produced a red kite, a yellow kite and a blue kite, though all with strings and kids attached. A distant Seaforth conjured up images of weird and wonderful Yankee birds disembarking from cargo ships, but they were only dreams.

Inner Marsh Farm gave us Ruddy Shelduck and Barnacle Goose - I take back all that I said about Pallas’s Rosefinch; a lovely bird! Supplies were now down to a couple of six-packs of pork pies, 12 rounds of sandwiches, family packs of Mars bars, multipacks of crisps, etc.: the Lord help those starving waifs to carry on! Not only was hunger affecting us but two (who shall remain nameless) had contracted sleeping sickness, this being evident when Jeff and I had to wake them to see a Sparrowhawk circling over Helsby Hill. Who needs a nodding dog in the car when you’ve got a nodding Phil and Simon!

Bill Morton helpfully (!) told us what we'd missed earlier at Frodsham, but a Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stints, a Little Egret and two Black Terns were pretty good compensation. Frodsham? More like the Camargue! The picturesque beauty of Frodsham Marsh was sadly left behind for the even more picturesque Weaver Valley. This was Buzzard country: well, the day before was and also the day after, but on 5<sup>th</sup> May the Buzzards had buzzed off. Morale was now getting low. Where would the next species come from? Not only that, but we were slowly losing our sanity (I know it was questionable from the start): I couldn't remember my own home phone number and Phil and Simon were spending more time in the Land of Nod than in Cheshire!

The final throw of the dice was to return to Jeff's beloved Moore, where as if by magic he conjured up, not white doves, but Kingfisher and Peregrine as the total crept up to 118 species for the day. Then 'Mad Pig Disease' must have struck due to an overdose of pork pies. Phil was hallucinating old ladies' faces up in the clouds - what was he on? In a state of near-total collapse on Gatewarth's sunny, and slightly smelly, slopes we all dreamt of a hot bath and our beds.

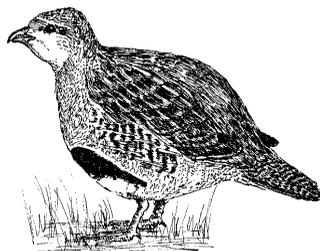
We finally admitted defeat at 9:30 and a dignified retreat was made. We do have fond memories of our '118', but know we "could do better" and "must try harder". Next year? Of course, it's a must after the fun we had this year and we'll plan for longer, know the short-cuts and definitely beat 118. It is fun - why not have a go and try to beat us. As they say, "come and have a go if you think you're hard enough"!

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

## **A CUNNING PLAN**

I had a rather chastening experience the other day. I was clutching the latest UDP. For the uninitiated this is not a contraceptive device. It is however an incredibly important publication that can predict the future. It can tell the likes of you and me which bit of our rapidly diminishing and hopefully cherished, countryside is about to be raped and pillaged by 'Robber Barons\*'. UDP actually stands for Unitary Development Plan. Every authority has to produce them. In this case it was the UDP for Halton. They have to go through several stages of public scrutiny before the final draft is published and passed. This is very inconvenient for the 'Robber Barons' and to some extent the planners, but for you and me it is a very important breathing space. It is the moment when Joe Public, or as the developers prefer to call them 'interfering bR R R R Rds', have their say. You actually get the chance to register your objections to particular elements of the plan. So long as you go through the formal process of objecting (or supporting) you are entitled to appear at the public enquiry. Once there you can place your evidence in front of an independent Inspector, who in some instances can force/persuade the planners to amend their plan. The actual initial process of objecting is not complicated; you simply tick a few boxes and write a few lines outlining the reasons for your objection.

Now the UDP often looks like a very imposing document to ordinary citizens. However as the 'good book' says, the 'good book' in this case being the *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, "DON'T PANIC!". You can prevent hours of unnecessary research by simply looking at the UDP map. After all somebody has spent diligent hours with a pack of Berol colour markers filling in all the previously open countryside with enough crinkly bits to keep Slartibartfast\*\* happy. These blocks of colour denote just where the next McDonald's Drive Through is likely to be located. Sadly we now have conclusive proof that Grey Partridges are not pre-adapted to the consumption of beefburgers. This is of course where you come in as those Grey Partridges will be rather hoping that someone will point out to the planners that they are about to commit 'countryside'\*\*\*.



Please do not assume that the proletariat is powerless in this process and that there is nothing we can do. It is also madness to assume that the planners who have constructed the UDP understand much, or in some cases anything, about the Natural Environment. They will mouth platitudes about being committed to maximising Biodiversity and Sustainable Development without ever comprehending the variable limiting factors which need to be taken into account if those aims are to be achieved. To have the maximum impact and the greatest likelihood of success in getting a

UDP altered, you should try to raise your objections at the first Deposit Draft stage. This will be publicly announced and copies made available at various public buildings, including libraries. Better still let the planners know that there are important nature conservation sites within your borough that are not currently designated. Let them know before they publish the next plan. In this way you can avoid going through a lengthy battle to save what little remains of your local natural heritage. This brings me to a very serious point. Planners need documentary proof that an area is biologically significant. In the next few months the Local Record Centre will finally become a reality. If you have notebooks with wildlife records from known localities I want you to consider passing this information to the LRC. Why is this important? Firstly your local patch, or even several of your favoured birding areas, may be moderately rich in bird life. But not rich enough to outweigh the need for a new industrial estate (after all everyone appreciates how important it is to devastate tens of acres of green belt in order to build galvanised metal structures that usually stand empty for several years before they are utilised). If you send your records to CAWOS they will then be passed on to the LRC; your records will overlay those of other flora and fauna from the same locality. It could just be that your favourite birding locality is saved because taken as a whole the area is excellent for wildlife, or that a rare beetle, moth or flower grows in the same locality and thus helps to save it from the bulldozer. It also works in reverse; your bird records might help to preserve a site that is excellent for butterflies but not quite SBI grade A standard. Nobody is saying you *have* to send in records but you would certainly regret a situation where you lost a favoured area because you never let anyone know just how good it was. Never anticipate that planners will understand just how important an area is for wildlife. It's up to us to keep them informed.

Just to keep you informed Halton Borough Council will be receiving a whole raft of objections to their UDP from CAWOS. I'm sure Halton can't be the only authority mad enough to designate an area as 'liable to flooding' and simultaneously propose to build on the same land. Don't assume that the planners in your authority have a better grip on their sanity.

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

\* Note: Roget's Thesaurus gives them the alternative name of 'developers'.

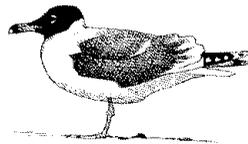
\*\* (ref. *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*) Slartibartfast was a planet builder from Magrathea who won awards for his Fjords.

\*\*\*The premeditated annihilation of green space.



Great Black-headed Gulls are quite rare  
 In this part of the world to be fair,  
 When we said they were breeding  
 It was rather misleading,  
 Are there any proof-readers out there?

**Hazel J Raw**



**OOPS!**

On reading Tony Broome's article 'Frodsham Marsh Update' in *Bird News* 47, I was bitterly disappointed to learn of the apparently successful, and suppressed, breeding of Great Black-headed Gull in Cheshire, at Frodsham's No6 tank.

Whilst I appreciate the necessity for giving rare breeding birds full protection, surely a major event such as this could have been witnessed by large numbers of birders, under controlled conditions. The way that the belated information was just 'slipped in' between Blue-headed Wagtail and Lapwing is beneath contempt. Should I be fortunate enough to discover Cheshire's first breeding pair of Great Snipe at Frodsham in the future, I now may well decide to release the news belatedly via *Bird News* the following August!!

Tony Broome's assertion that a misprint occurred in the article, and that the birds were in fact Great Black-backed Gulls, is as lame an excuse as I have heard in a long time.

**Mr Angry of Cheadle Hulme  
 (alias Geoff Lightfoot, 12 Bellfield Avenue, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, SK8 7AG)**

## 2000 NNHS YULE LOG & MAY BIRD RACE

Members of the Nantwich Natural History Society approached these two events in a somewhat different manner from that devised and we developed our own local rules and approach, thus sacrificing any possibility of achieving honour and glory in the longest list stakes! Instead of having teams ranging all over Cheshire, or even trying to cover the four 10km squares that comprise the recording area of the NNHS, we formed two 'static teams'. The NNHS has two permanent hides; one at Hurlleston Reservoir and the other at Bar Mere and a team was based at each of these two hides. These hides, in predominantly pastoral farming areas, were manned from dawn to dusk on 3<sup>rd</sup> January and from early morning to early evening on 6<sup>th</sup> May - civilised hours for bird observation! - and birds were recorded that were either seen or heard within the area of the reservoir or mere. All members of the society were encouraged to visit one or both of the hides during these two days to help with the observations, and to give the days the feeling of a "party atmosphere". As was to be expected, the events turned into a friendly low-key competition between the two teams to see which site could record the greatest number of species.

We found that an advantage of this static approach, besides being relatively restful and pleasantly sociable, is that it enabled a good assessment to be made of both the winter and summer species present at two of our key south Cheshire sites. The number of species of birds recorded during the two days surveyed were as follows:

	Bar Mere	Hurlleston Resr	Bar Mere & Hurlleston Resr combined
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> January</b>	60	48	71
<b>6<sup>th</sup> May</b>	51	55	64
<b>January &amp; May combined</b>	76	66	88

The top 12 birds of interest to the NNHS, that were recorded during each of these surveys, were as follows:

<b>3<sup>rd</sup> January 2000</b>		<b>6<sup>th</sup> May 2000</b>	
Barnacle Goose	Meadow Pipit	Ruddy Duck	Reed Warbler
Peregrine	Grey Wagtail	Buzzard	Lesser Whitethroat
Water Rail	Treecreeper	Curlew	Linnet
Common Snipe	Tree Sparrow	Green Sandpiper	Bullfinch
Little Owl	Brambling	Yellow Wagtail	Reed Bunting
Kingfisher	Redpoll	Sedge Warbler	Corn Bunting

The results showed, somewhat to our surprise, that we recorded more species overall during the winter survey than we did during the spring survey. Also of interest were the birds that were not seen during the May survey; no Greenfinches at Bar Mere and only one at Hurlleston, nor any Cormorants, Kestrels, Greater Spotted Woodpeckers or Tree Sparrows, which would normally be regarded as bankers at both locations. In addition to the birds we recorded during these surveys, a total of seven species of mammal and 11 species of butterfly were also noted.

The two surveys, which were much enjoyed by all participants, will now form part of the NNHS's annual programme of events and will help to develop our knowledge of the birds using these two areas in January and May. Finally, we can wholeheartedly recommend this approach, particularly to those who lean more towards being armchair ornithologists rather than fantasy Formula 1 drivers.

**Charles Hull, Edleston Cottage, Edleston Hall Lane, Edleston, Nantwich, CW5 8PL**

## COUNTY RARITIES IN THE MARBURY COUNTRY PARK AND WITTON LIMBEDS

During late 1991 a log book was sited at Neumann's Flash. Since then and thanks to the hundreds of visitors who have left records it has been possible to produce a complete annual summary of the birdlife of the area. It is my intention to likewise produce, after 10 complete years, a fully documented status for each and every species. This was attempted in 1992 but data was lacking at the time.

I strongly feel that the rarer species seen in the area need to be confirmed by CAWOS before the record can be recognised, so there follows a list of species requiring submission (1992 to 1998) that so far has not been submitted to CAWOS. Rarity submission is tedious but it needs to be done. Personally I have described and submitted well over 100 birds for the area and believe me I do not look forward to the end of the year.

A good example of a species which requires submission is Black-necked Grebe. If every bird seen had been submitted to and accepted by CAWOS the status so far would be annual passage migrant. As it stands it will have to be listed as occasional passage migrant or even local rarity....which it isn't. Green-winged Teal and Buff-breasted Sandpiper would be new to the area and there are more non-submitted records of Little Egret, Honey Buzzard and Goshawk than there are accepted.

#### **Red-necked Grebe**

1. Budworth Mere, one afternoon sometime between 1/2 & 14/2/96

#### **Slavonian Grebe**

1. Winter plumaged, Budworth Mere, 4/11/98

#### **Black-necked Grebe**

1. Winter plumaged, Budworth Mere, 16/8/98
2. Winter plumaged, Budworth Mere, 18/10/97
3. Winter plumaged, Budworth Mere, 16/11/97
4. Winter plumaged, Budworth Mere, 11/9/94

#### **Little Egret**

1. Neumann's Flash, 15/5/94
2. Budworth Mere, 29/5/94 at least

#### **Green-winged Teal**

1. Neumann's Flash, one date in Nov 92

#### **Garganey**

1. Female, Neumann's Flash, 28/4/98
2. Female, Marbury No1 Tank, 27/3/97
3. Eclipse male, Neumann's Flash, 14/7/97
4. Female, Budworth Mere, 27/8/95
5. Female, Marbury No1 Tank, 11/9/94
6. Female, Budworth Mere, 15/10 to 17/10/93
7. Female, Budworth Mere, 7/4/92

#### **Honey Buzzard**

1. Neumann's Flash, 10/7/96
2. Marbury No1 Tank, 15/9/96

#### **Goshawk**

1. ?, Budworth Mere, 5/10/98
2. Male, Budworth Mere, 20/12/98
3. Male, Budworth Mere, 17/3/97
4. Male, Tip, 31/3/96
5. Male, Witton Limebeds, 6/4/96
6. Male, Marbury Country Park, 11/5/96
7. Male, Neumann's Flash, 17/12/93

#### **Osprey**

1. Budworth Mere, 4/5/98

#### **Hobby**

1. Neumann's Flash, 2/9/93

#### **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**

1. Marbury No1 Tank, 31/8/97

If you saw any of these birds, or any other county rarity which may not have been publicised, please send a description to CAWOS. As it stands the following records cannot be included in a 'status' even though most of them are undoubtedly genuine.

This list allows for the following county rarity amendments made by CAWOS:

- Black-necked Grebe – winter plumaged only from 31/12/94
- Little Egret – to 21/12/94 only
- Hobby – to 31/12/95 only
- Iceland Gull – to 31/12/97 only
- Glaucous Gull – to 31/12/97 only

#### **Mediterranean Gull**

1. Juvenile, Budworth Mere, 25/7/98
2. Juvenile, Budworth Mere, 25/7/97
3. First summer, Neumann's Flash, 26/7/97
4. First winter, Neumann's Flash, 5/2/94

#### **Mediterranean x Black-headed Gull hybrid**

1. First summer, Marbury No1 Tank, 1/6 to 6/6 & 8/6/96

#### **Ring-billed Gull**

1. First summer, Budworth Mere, 26/4/96

#### **Glaucous x Herring Gull hybrid**

1. First winter, Neumann's Flash, 27/2/94

#### **Glaucous Gull**

1. First winter, Neumann's Flash, 29/1 & 14/2/93
2. Third winter, Neumann's Flash, 9/2/93
3. Adult, Neumann's Flash, 29/9/92

#### **Iceland Gull**

1. First winter, Budworth Mere, 11/1/97
2. Adult, Budworth Mere, 23/3/96
3. Second winter, Neumann's Flash, 19/2 & 26/2/94
4. First winter, Neumann's Flash, 21/2 to 28/2/93
5. First winter, Neumann's Flash, 28/3 & 29/3/93
6. Third winter, Neumann's Flash, 30/3/93
7. Second summer, Neumann's Flash, 17/5/92

#### **White-winged Black Tern**

1. First winter, Budworth Mere, 11/9/93 (additional date)

#### **Long-eared Owl**

1. Ashton's Flash, 14/12/98
2. Witton area, 7/4/97
3. Witton area, 22/4/97
4. Witton area, 8/8/97
5. Witton area, 22/6/96
6. Witton area, 17/8/96

#### **Water Pipit**

1. Ashton's Flash, four in November & 12/12/93

#### **Carrion x Hooded Crow hybrid**

1. Marbury No1 Tank, 24/7/94

In addition the following subspecies *L.a. intermedius* and *L.a. argentatus* and the species Mealy (Common) Redpoll were added to the list 1/1/97 and presumably earlier records do not require descriptions? And with over 100 non-submitted Yellow-legged Gulls (guilty) I think I'll worry about that one at a later date. Finally to the CAWOS editorial panel, summarising of county rarities in the annual reports makes extraction of usable data very difficult.

**Dave Walters, 43 Forster Avenue, Weaverham, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 3BJ**  
**Dave@ukbis.net**

## DATABASES

At the recent 'Tomorrow's World For Wildlife' conference held in Alderley Park, I was able to give demonstrations of Recorder 3.3 with 230,000 records on it, Recorder-2000, DMap and MapMate, to quite a few naturalists who were interested in moving over to computerised records. For me, the interesting thing was the number of 'suggestions' that were made on differing requirements that could provide useful feedback to the developers of these programmes.

If you are using a computerised package (especially MapMate ([www.MapMate.co.uk](http://www.MapMate.co.uk)) as many of you seem to have a copy of this programme) then please do provide the author(s) with feedback. They are usually naturalists themselves but we all tend to be focused on one or just a few small groups which we record. Consequently we ignore the requirements which we may not need, but which others, studying different groups, may require.

- \* If there is something the programme does not do that you need it to do then send in a request for an addition to the programme.
- \* If there is a species, or a species aggregate, which you need in the species list which is not there or which has a different synonymy then let the author know so that he can address the matter. Aggregates added by our own group here should really find their way into the main taxonomic listing as distributed by the author.
- \* If you have an idea about the development of the programme then send it in to the author. It may not be worthwhile or it may not be feasible but at least if the author knows then decisions can be made one way or the other and so be backed up with reasonable arguments. I know I have affected the development of a number of programmes (and not just in biological recording) in this manner. No suggestion is 'stupid' - all have value even if in the end they are not used, as they cause the author to think about problems and their resolution.

The new revolution that is now underway is the ability to share our information and thus maximise its usefulness and effectiveness in both the study of the organisms in which we are interested and also in conservation terms. However, not all programmes are currently particularly effective in allowing data transfer between themselves and other makes of biological software. Recorder-2000 has set the standard with its XML transfer format and MapMate has been the first to allow this route with its exports in XML format (as well as its ability to synchronise records between copies of the programme owned by different users/recorders). If you need the programme you use to be able to send and/or read data to or from another biological recording programme then let the authors know that you have such a requirement and suggest that the Recorder-2000 XML transfer format is the way to go for maximum usability.

As an aside, I suggested to Stuart Ball (JNCC) some time ago (a year?) that it would be useful to have a translator programme which would show an input file (say Excel or another database) down one side of the screen and the Recorder-2000 tables down the other. It would then be possible to drag links from one to the other to show which fields matched up and then this would be used to write the correct format file for importation (a universal translator). It seems this idea has been passed on as Dorset Software (the people who wrote Recorder-2000) are now beginning to look at it as a possibility. If you don't ask then things will not happen. Ask Now!!

Now that many, if not most, biological recording programme authors have pages about their product on the Internet, which means they have e-mail addresses, sending such information as feedback to aid development and bug tracking is not an arduous task. Each suggestion or bug sent in helps the whole of the user community. Please provide feedback whenever you can.

**Steve J. McWilliam (rECOrd Manager), rECOrd - The Local Record Centre for Cheshire, Halton, Warrington & Wirral c/o 4 Priory Close, Halton, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2BN**  
**Tel.: 01928 573697 [steve.mcwilliam@record-lrc.co.uk](mailto:steve.mcwilliam@record-lrc.co.uk) [www.record-lrc.co.uk](http://www.record-lrc.co.uk)**

## **GREAT CAWOS YULE LOG 2001 - ENTER NOW !!**

Blimey, I can't believe how quickly this has come round again. It only seems like five minutes ago that I was ringing people up to get their scores off them for the last one!! Anyway, as promised the next Yule Log will take place on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2001. For a copy of the simple guidelines and a checklist for the day you should contact me at the address shown below or phone me now. Last year plenty of teams took part and all enjoyed themselves - you can tell from how many of them write articles about it in each issue of this magazine. They all spent a day birding around Cheshire, seeing as many birds as they could and helping to prove that Cheshire is a first-rate county offering a wide range of habitats for our winter visitors - everything from estuaries to woods and from reservoirs and meres to rubbish tips. Basically, teams can be any size from two upwards. You get one point for each species and bonus points for having youngsters and non-CAWOS members on your team. The team with the most points is the "winner".

But really, I must stress that this event isn't just about getting loads of day ticks, it is about getting out, enjoying Cheshire's countryside and birds, and hopefully showing non-members and youngsters how enjoyable and fascinating birding can be. Once again, the event will raise some money for a worthwhile cause. It will cost £1.00 per person again this year, and so a birding charity will benefit from your efforts again. You will get your chance to vote for the most worthy Cheshire based conservation cause(s) when you get your checklist etc. Don't forget that Cheshire and Wirral *Bird News* is available from Birdline North West on 0891 700 249 then press \*08, and if you get any news then please try to ring it in; many of the teams taking part will be grateful for the chance to increase their enjoyment of the day. Come on, if you didn't take part last year make sure you don't miss out this time, ring me NOW before you forget. If nothing else, it will get your 2001 Year List off to a good start and you might find this year's Christmas Cracker!! (Yes, I know I say that every year, but it's about the best gag I can think of).

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

## **CALLING ALL BIRDWATCHERS**

Since last November Roy Eyres and myself have been using two-way radios around Fiddlers Ferry Reserve with excellent success. In particular with birds of prey, the number of times we have located Peregrines, Buzzards and this summer up to six Marsh Harriers is too numerous to mention, many of which we would have missed if we had not got in touch over the radio with each other. If there are any other birdwatchers out there with two-way radios and who cover the Mersey from the south side then get in touch with us so we can help each other to get the best out of our interest whenever we are out along the Mersey. From the south of the Mersey you will have a good view up and down river across from our hide, see what's coming and let us know, while we can always mention Peregrines, Buzzards and incoming Short-eared Owls, as well as any other species of birds on our side of the Mersey, marshes and lagoons.

The radios we use are 'Talkabout Motorola' so far using channel 8 code 36. If it gets to be used by many others we will change to another setting. Some of the other radio makes can communicate with the Talkabout so make contact with us and make your day's birdwatching more interesting.

**Keith G Massey, Reserve Warden, 4 Hall Terrace, Gt Sankey, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 3EZ**

## **RUMOURS... RUMOURS...**

- \* Congratulations are in order to one of our more 'conservative' Council members who obviously stepped outside of his usual 'Wirral range' to compete in the recent *Birdwatch* UK Bird Race. 'Lastminute.pom' (allegedly no links with the online late bookings business) was acclaimed as Cheshire County Champions with a respectable tally of 118 species. Of course the problem of all team members needing to see each of the birds was alleviated by having a team of one (as reported in *Birdwatch*)!
- \* Is it possible that one of the most-respected members of the CAWOS Council has been responsible for the suppression of a major national rarity and first for Britain? If recent reports of a Hooded Merganser present in a country park on Wirral in September are true, then maybe. OK, the bird was colour-ringed and tame and the Caldý wildfowl collection is not very far away. However, another Hooded Merganser (or perhaps the same individual?) has more recently been found on Anglesey. Like most Americans, maybe it was heading home after being ignored by an unappreciative British public!

## **BIRD NEWS 47 EDITORIAL**

As I settled down to browse the contents of my recently arrived copy of *Bird News 47* to see which bits would be of immediate interest and what to save for later, I read Simon Edwards's Editorial. Accepting the fact that all of the Council members do a sterling job for CAWOS, I felt an overwhelming desire to write a letter to him. This is so unusual that I first took our dogs out for a long walk in order to let my mind ramble upon the exact contents of this missive.

It appears that in Council's mind, because I am a member but generally not a worker (although I have participated in gull identification workshops and I attend the winter meetings when shifts allow), I am not pulling my weight. Strange as it may seem, I enjoy my birding as a hobby, although most of my observations are made when walking aforesaid dogs on a daily basis. I am neither particularly knowledgeable nor able to offer hours of my time. My main birding experiences are on holiday and these have been the instruments of travelling to places I would not have dreamt of 10 years ago. This hobby has also directly affected my personal life when I met my then-future husband on one of these trips. We are heavily involved in local Vale Royal environmental groups, and I also sent in butterfly records on an annual basis until I felt that this was becoming too much work.

My real point is this: all work and no play makes for discharged batteries and resentment at being urged to do more. For me, CAWOS is worth supporting as and when I can. Should there happen to be one small specific job that I could help with then I would consider it, given enough time to complete it properly. However, I reserve the right to remain an ordinary member who enjoys the winter talks and has the opportunity for one evening a month to be just that! Perhaps in the constant search for help, it would be better to approach individuals directly and show a bit of a human face rather than this drum-banging of how hard you all work. When you read this, can you put a face to the name? I wonder.

### **Hilary Woodhead, Bank House, 8 Wallerscote Road, Weaverham, Northwich CW8 3JN**

Thank you for your letter Hilary, which I have read with interest, although I do feel that to some extent you have misunderstood the points made in my previous Editorial. Nobody on Council is at all dismissive of those members who genuinely have no spare time to offer to the Society. Within any organisation there will always be a few dedicated and hard-working individuals, a few whose schedules are already too over-burdened to help, and a larger number of people who are potentially able to contribute and choose not to. It was to this latter group that I was principally addressing my comments.

To be honest, having a young family and a job that involves a daily 80-mile round journey and often sees me up at 6:00a.m. and in from work after 7:00p.m., I would love to be able to reduce my workload for the Society. The last time I did any sort of birding was a 24 hour bird race on 5<sup>th</sup> May. However, I try to find the time to edit *Bird News*, write articles, compile a section for the *Bird Report*, attend Council meetings, etc. because I believe that CAWOS is an organisation worthy of my energies. I am not saying this to gain any sympathy; rather, I don't believe that many members realise exactly what sacrifices are made by those - not all of whom are on Council - involved in managing this newsletter, the annual report, the Society's finances, the thousands of records we receive each year, etc., etc. Council has recently banged its drum loudly on this subject, but only because few have apparently listened to our quieter requests, as witnessed by the negligible response we have had to specific appeals for help made in the pages of this newsletter.

Many jobs exist within the Society: some of these are bigger than others. However, even limited offers of assistance are hugely appreciated and would help to spread the work more thinly, particularly with regard to the production of the annual report, the loss of which would see CAWOS's principal reason for existence disappear. Committee chairmen would much rather have willing volunteers than pressgangs. Ed.

## **BIRD SONG**

In reply to David Cogger's note about bird song in *Bird News 47*, it's a well-known fact that a species' song over a large geographical distribution changes quite noticeably. If you travel south and west, perhaps into North Africa, 'common' species such as Blue Tit not only sound different but also look different. DNA analysis may actually show that some of these birds that we take for granted as being the same species, actually aren't.

With regard to Blackbirds and Chaffinches, anybody who travels to the Highlands in Scotland will have noticed just how different the local Chaffinches sound. Perhaps the subject of song and call would make a nice article for a future *Bird News*. Does anyone know the proper reason for David's second question? Is song temperature dependent as well as hours of daylight dependent?

**Tony Broome, 4 Larchwood Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 2NU**

## RUDDY DUCKS CONTROL PROGRAMME

The arguments for and against culling Ruddy Ducks (RD) are similar to those for and against keeping animals in captivity, legalising cannabis, abortion, GM foods etc etc. There are compelling factual and emotional arguments on both sides of the debate. One thing is for sure, people have strong views and those strong views are determined by their individual values which are extremely unlikely to be altered by the advocacy of others. Even the addition of unequivocal genetic evidence to the pot of data will not alter what is essentially a moral rather than a factual debate.



I find that I'm capable of having a heated argument with myself, let alone anyone else. For what it's worth I think I can summarise my conclusions as...

- ~ We should do whatever it takes to protect White-headed Ducks (WHD).
- ~ I'm not certain enough that culling RDs will achieve this. (Three doubts....they may not be the threat we think they are, we probably would not get them all and WHD may be finished anyway.)

It seems to me that there are two ways to stop the genes of RDs mixing with WHDs - prevent the RDs meeting the WHDs or prevent the WHDs meeting the RDs. To me the latter seems the easier. I'd like to see an extension of the captive breeding programme for WHD as an insurance policy while we see what happens. Even without the potential threat of RDs, the WHD populations throughout the world are in a precarious state. At least they are easier to breed than Sumatran Rhinoceros!

For those with the lucky position of seeing this issue in black and white, here are a few posers for you:

- ~ If Ruddy Ducks had arrived naturally rather than through human intervention, where would you stand and what if UK RDs are as genetically distinct as Spanish WHDs?
- ~ Should we let native hedgehogs eat Roseate Tern eggs, mink into shearwater colonies etc etc?
- ~ What if the healthy populations of alien Skylarks, Linnets and Yellowhammers were eradicated from New Zealand while we fail to stem the collapse in Western Palearctic populations?

**Jane Turner, 'Hoylake Bird Observatory'**

## RUDDY DUCK CONCERNS

For many years I have been a strong supporter of CAWOS and have always found the Society to be one of the best of its kind nationwide. In the last issue of *Bird News* I was pleased to see the non-committal stand taken over the "Ruddy Duck Controversy" – with such an emotive issue how else could CAWOS have reacted? However, I have, for some time, been trying to gain an answer to what I believe to be the most important question. "Has CAWOS or any individual passed on records of Ruddy Duck whereabouts which had originally been submitted to the Society for publication in the annual report?" So far the best response I have received was in an e-mail from Jeff Clarke:

"I have no knowledge of any Ruddy Duck information having been knowingly passed to the control/eradication programme from CAWOS as a Society. I cannot account for individuals but I do not believe that anyone has done so in a private capacity. There is a lot of published, publicly available, data on Ruddy Ducks in Cheshire so it wouldn't take a genius to work out where many of them are."

OK that sounds fairly promising but I would like to see a published definite yes or no statement in answer to my original question. This needs to be addressed as this eradication has been so well met by the "intellectual conservationists" who will drone on for hours about how there is no alternative that I do not believe it will be an isolated occurrence, just the first in a line. If CAWOS or any individual with access to CAWOS information can confirm that they have not assisted this programme using our records then fair enough.

Tony Broome's highly passionate piece contained at least two points which I feel I have to address. "*As humanely a way as possible*" - so killing the British population is considered humane. I certainly don't agree with that at all. How would you describe an inhumane action? I agree wholeheartedly that White-headed Duck as threatened by Ruddy Duck and action needs to be taken.

Too many people see this as a simple two sided issue – either kill the Ruddy Duck or allow the White-headed Duck to die out. This is not the case, there are other options. The only realistic and humane alternative is nest destruction. This was attempted in trials several years ago and was found to be too costly, due to the inaccessibility of the nests, therefore the easy death option was

taken. Ruddy Duck should not have been allowed to establish in the first place and those responsible should foot the bill for a nest destruction scheme. As a young man I owned and operated a 12 bore shotgun for many years. I have killed many things and I know the absolute agony caused. I feel sincere and deep shame for my actions during this time and I have vowed that I will never be responsible, directly or indirectly, for the death of any species which I consider to be capable of feeling pain (excluding the squirrel and bat species I ran over last year and the House Sparrow I accidentally stood on). This does not include New Zealand Flatworms or eggs.

*"I've yet to hear a public word against fishermen"* - for many years I have publicly campaigned against fishermen and the problems they cause. A few years ago, on Budworth Mere, a Mute Swan lost a leg through discarded line. I petitioned the local newspapers and personally spoke to every fisherman I could find in order to prevent this from happening again. This was also published in the *Marbury Country Park and Witton Limebeds Annual Report*, which I had rather imagined you would have read – being the County Recorder!

It is no secret that Ruddy Duck breed on my local patch. I cannot allow these birds to be killed therefore I will take every action necessary to disrupt any attempt to complete this species' eradication in its current form. I understand the need but I cannot condone the "solution". When the people behind this plan – whoever they are – decide that nest destruction is more desirable they will have my full support; until that day the Ruddy Duck of Marbury Country Park and the Witton Limebeds are perfectly safe.

**Dave Walters, 43 Forster Avenue, Weaverham, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 3BJ**

## **REPLY:**

Dave has a genuine concern over the issue of records being passed on to bodies with their own agenda. The Ruddy Duck saga is only one that has hit the headlines. Damage may well be done in other instances, i.e. Property/Land development if the wrong information was passed to the wrong people. However, in the case of the Ruddy Duck, the information would, from a society point of view, have to come officially from myself or perhaps Steve Barber. I haven't been approached by the DETR and neither, to my knowledge, has Steve. If we were, the final say would have to be taken by Council. Such an emotive issue would not be dealt with by individuals on Council and it has to be remembered that records are submitted by observers in good faith that the information is used for the report, not for the stance taken by individuals. I will give you a definite 'no', Dave. I, as Recorder, haven't passed submitted records (or any other up to now) to a government body. However, as Jeff Clarke pointed out, Ruddy sites are well documented anyway and any individual, including myself, could pass on their own sightings without compromising the official CAWOS position. Even with that option open to me, I haven't done so.

Onto the next point, the humane side of things. Unfortunately, as all of you reading this will say, there is no 'humane' way to kill any living creature. From the slugs you use slug pellets on, to the way cod are suffocated to arrive sometime later on your plate, all die an inhumane death.

It was brave for Dave to tell us of his previous and uninformed life as a shooter but at least he made the change. All credit to him. I wish the many dozens who shoot wildfowl, waders and "gamebirds" at Frodsham would do the same. So many times have we seen birds hobbling around wounded, waiting to die slowly (but interestingly without any protest, except from us, from anti bird shooting lobbies .... where are you all?).

It is more interesting that Dave elects to 'choose' nest destruction, which in itself is a lot more damaging to habitat and other species, than shooting. I've talked to a few people on the Ruddy subject and was surprised to find that most agree Ruddies should be controlled but are unsure of the best way forward. Someone said that we should follow the lead of other European countries and once proven effective, then shoot ours. Killing birds wasn't a problem. The grading from Bob Anderson's big "definitely not" to my "shoot the menaces" is across the whole birdwatchers' spectrum. Sorry Bob, you may have some support but there are a lot of people that want to save White-headed Ducks.

Fishermen: don't get me wrong. In the right place and at the right time, fishing damage can be limited. But as with shooters and land they are usually totally uncompromising when it comes to a patch of water. They have to fish it, no matter what damage to the natural habitat and disturbance to the water they do. Dave may have petitioned for his local water but few other waters are 'managed' when it comes to fishing. Money talks. It has been proven that artificially high levels of coarse fish

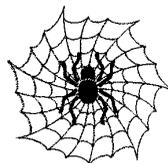
actually destroy the plant life and so the invertebrate population in the water body, thus making it less attractive to other wildlife. As an aside to prove a point, I don't see people like Bob and yourself Dave, petitioning to have all records of Cormorants deleted from reports so that fishermen can't shoot the "black plague" - that fabulous native species, the Cormorant. I have a certain sympathy with perhaps commercial fisheries which could also do more to protect their stocks but not with ordinary fishermen, who are selfishly not sharing their own bits of water. Most don't know much about wildlife in general.

I know the problem is not easily solved but would people trampling the phragmites beds at Marbury in summer, really be less damaging than selective shooting with rifles. I can't see it. I didn't see the report in the *Marbury and Witton Report* simply because it would go straight to the *Cheshire & Wirral Bird Report* compilers for processing. I don't see all the reports.

However, my own views are very personal and I respect your views entirely. If we can agree to differ and let the DETR get on with it, then so much the better.

**Tony Broome, 4 Larchwood Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 2NU**

## **EXCERPTS FROM CAWOS WEB SITE FORUM (www.cawos.org)**



### **1. LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS**

This afternoon (3<sup>rd</sup> August) at Neumann's Flash in Cheshire I counted eight dying and eight recently dead Lesser Black-backed Gulls (predominantly adults). Recently we have had around 100 Lesser Black-backs roosting each evening and on average we could expect to see one dead bird every seven days. The most likely cause may be a contaminant but this has not occurred locally or is species specific as large numbers of roosting Lapwing, Black-headed Gull and Curlew are not affected. The dying birds appear to be having breathing problems although this, of course, may be a secondary symptom. Has anyone noticed any similarly high proportions of mortality or any ideas as to what may be causing it?

Also, of interest, a wing-tagged Black-headed Gull (Green "7P" ) seen at Neumann's recently has been traced to North Holland.

**Dave Walters**

It always seems to happen this time of year; mostly to Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Herring Gulls. The tideline has two-three a day and there are five gasping in the spartina here today.... I have a theory - pretty unscientific but a theory all the same. Most of the corpses are adult females. They have just bred - an energy sapping experience and they are moulting.... both processes are heavy on calcium. They seem to get very weak and then dehydrated - then die. If you can be bothered to rehydrate them and give them a calcium rich diet, they often recover.

**Jane Turner**

### **2. PEREGRINE MARINER**

Yesterday (2<sup>nd</sup> July), as the tide washed over the last vestiges of the East Hoyle Bank, a female Peregrine waddled in a most ungainly fashion for about 20m ahead of the tide until it was just about to get its tail wet. Forced to fly it moved about 100m and landed on a railway sleeper which shortly afterwards was picked up by the incoming tide. Undaunted, the Peregrine sat tight and quietly sailed through a gull flock before losing its sea legs and flying inland. Apart from the usual terns and gulls, has anyone else seen birds on floating objects? Incidentally a Common Tern was perched on a high chair which is currently part of the assorted flotsam (or is it jetsam?) on the beach.

**Jane Turner**

You ask for other observations of birds residing on floating objects. The only time I have seen this, apart from gulls, was a Jack Snipe using a floating mat of assorted vegetation to escape the rapidly incoming high tide at Parkgate during a high tide birdwatch in '98. As the tide brought the mat into about 6ft from the car park it was possible, through a 'scope, to get exceptional views of the bird's plumage - assuming you could find it, so well was it camouflaged!

**Simon Edwards**

### 3. HOUSE MARTINS

In advance of the publication of his View from the Farmyard article, Pete Hall posted a query about House Martins on the CAWOS Web Site Forum page. Further comments would be welcome.

#### **Pete Hall's original query:**

Toft Hall's colony of House Martins had 59 first broods, about normal for the site. However when the first brood young left, so did all but 27 adults. Only three pairs have gone on to rear second broods; 40 would have been more normal. Any comments or similar tales would be of interest.

#### **Steve Holmes' comments:**

Pete, no data to match your own, but over the past couple of weeks, there have been hundreds of Swifts plus thousands of Swallows and Sand Martins at Frodsham - but only two-three House Martins. This we attributed to them still rearing second broods. This evening, (31<sup>st</sup> Aug) there were 3-400 House Martins at Inner Marsh Farm, yet only a handful of Swallows and a couple of Sand Martins - second brood now on the wing.

#### **Pete Hall's reply:**

I would have expected that the same could have been said for the Swallows. Do you know what proportion of the Swallows at Frodsham were adult birds? Another part of the puzzle at Toft is that the Swallows have enjoyed their best breeding season for 21 years, with 13 first and 10 second broods. It would seem that no shortage of food exists.

### HOUSE MARTIN SURVEY

Please remember to return your completed House Martin CAWOS survey forms asap.

Any information will be welcome, even if the colony is deserted or destroyed.

Further information and forms available from:

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

### CAWOS PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Open to members only and restricted to those photos taken in 2000.

**Closing date Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2001.**

There will be three categories which can be either slides or prints:-

1. **Foreign**
2. **Great Britain**
3. **Humorous** - all entries should be accompanied by an appropriate caption. There will be equal weighting regarding the originality and humour of the caption and the quality of the photograph.

**Make sure each entry is clearly marked with the following:-**

1. your name
2. where the photo was taken and approximate date
3. the species depicted

Please include your address and contact number with your entry. There will be an entry fee of 25p per entry with a prize of £5 awarded to the winner of each section. Winners and runners-up will be shown at the March AGM/meeting and reported in *Bird News*.

If you want your entries to be returned by post please enclose an appropriate S.A.E. We will take the utmost care of your photos but wish to point out that we cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage. If you require further details please contact Richard Gabb on 01625 262 946. Please hand or send your entries to:-

**Richard Gabb, 72 Chester Road, Poynton, Cheshire, SK12 1HA**

# Projects and Surveys

## HALE HEAD FARMLAND CBC: 2000 UPDATE

The population of breeding birds is remarkably stable in that the same 24 species as in 1999 established territories in 2000 (except that Greenfinch replaced Greater Spotted Woodpecker in the list). There are small falls in the number of some commoner species after the bumper year of 1999 but Corn Bunting, the commonest breeding bird at Hale during the early years of the census with up to 20 pairs, has now reached an all time low with only three pairs.

Those who complain that they no longer hear the Skylark's song should come to Hale where the Skylark sings over every field and is the most abundant of all the breeding species. In my Winter Farmland Survey of an adjacent estuarine farm (Oglet), Skylark was again the most numerous of the 14 species recorded. It is encouraging that other birds on the national danger list including Grey Partridge, Yellow Wagtail, Reed Bunting and Lapwing are hanging on at Hale with at least two or three pairs each year.

The BTO have decided not to continue the Common Birds Census now that the Breeding Bird Survey has been successfully established. They do, however, encourage participants to continue the census each year and report the results to their local bird societies. This I shall hope to do.

### **SPECIES HOLDING BREEDING TERRITORIES AT HALE HEAD IN 2000 (in descending order of territory numbers and 1999 numbers in brackets)**

Skylark	15	(17)	Wren	12	(15)
Chaffinch	8	(8)	Shelduck	8	(8)
Linnet	7	(12)	Blackbird	6	(7)
Whitethroat	6	(9)	Blue Tit	5	(7)
Robin	4	(4)	Grey Partridge	4	(3)
Corn Bunting	3	(8)	Great Tit	3	(3)
Yellow Wagtail	3	(2)	Sedge Warbler	3	(2)
Pheasant	2	(4)	Reed Bunting	2	(4)
Reed Warbler	2	(2)	Lapwing	2	(2)
Dunnock	2	(2)	Meadow Pipit	2	(1)
Mallard	1	(1)	Woodpigeon	1	(2)
Greenfinch	1	(0)			

Colin Ogilvie, The Riffel, Woolton Park, Liverpool, L25 6DR

~~~~~ **REQUEST** ~~~~~

**Send your records in NOW don't wait!**

**\*Honey Buzzards\* ~ \*Honey Buzzards\***

**Tony Broome, 4 Larchwood Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 2NU**

# Membership News

Welcome to the following new members: Frank Gleeson, PJ Davenport, John Rayner, David Simmons. The final membership tally for 2000 stood at 338, a drop of 15 upon last year.

Since the last *Bird News* Council has held two meetings, one in July and one in October. A detailed report of CAWOS's new committee structure follows this. At the October meeting it was decided to make financial provision in the forthcoming year's budget for grants for conservation purposes, including supporting local projects. As a start grants were made to the Swan Study Group and to support the feeding station maintained by members of the South-East Cheshire Ornithological Society (SECOS) at Elton Hall Flash, which is attracting numbers of Tree Sparrows. The Swift Study would also be supported. An article about donations over the last two years and future policy guidelines will appear in the January *Bird News*.

Following on from the successful Recording Forum meeting in June, at which representatives from many local groups saw a demonstration of Recorder 2000, it was decided that CAWOS should buy a copy to evaluate. At this June meeting it was not possible to fulfil one of the purposes of the meeting, which was to discuss the logistics of recording, because of the interest shown in Recorder 2000. We intend to have another meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February at which we can discuss how and to whom records are sent and kept. We feel that as CAWOS is the one organisation covering ornithology in the whole county it is uniquely positioned to do this. We hope that members of interested groups will come along to share expertise and above all to discuss practical ways of keeping records and making them accessible. Now it is more than ever important that records be easily available if sites have to be defended, often at short notice. We shall be writing to all groups who were invited to the original meeting but if anyone who is a member of a group not represented wishes to contact the secretary, they will be put on the mailing list.

We recently received a letter from the West Midlands Bird Club that should be noted by anyone visiting their reserves: "Against the wishes of the West Midlands Bird Club, the Department of the Environment and Transport for the regions (DETR) are to pursue their policy of culling, by shooting, Ruddy Ducks on our reserves. We have no control over this situation, neither do we have dates on which culling will take place or on the likely duration of this activity. Therefore when visiting our reserves may we advise you to take great care and be aware at all times that shooting may be taking place. Notice should also be taken of any warning or relevant information which may have been posted. Members will be kept informed of the situation as it develops."

Those of you who are members of other charities will probably recognise the foot of the subscription renewal form! Since the law was changed we can reclaim tax on all donations to charities (which includes subscriptions) from those who pay tax at the standard rate. So your subscription of £10 could give us an additional £2.82 if you fill in and return the form. Thank you in advance!

**David Cogger, 113 Nantwich Road, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 9HD. Tel: 01606 832517  
E-mail [memsec@cawos.org](mailto:memsec@cawos.org)**

## BRITISH BIRDS SUBSCRIPTION

Enclosed with this copy of *Bird News* is a leaflet offering members a substantial discount in the price of a subscription to *British Birds*. Please send the form direct to the address given if you are interested.

## CAWOS COUNCIL AND SUB-COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Over the last couple of months Council has attempted to rationalise the structure and hence the running of CAWOS. Hopefully the make-up of the various sub-committees and teams will be clearer (although not all members have job titles!), but we would appreciate comments and suggestions.

**There are some vacant positions listed below**, plus some sub-committee members are seeking to change their roles, so if any CAWOS members are interested in any of the positions please contact the appropriate Council member to discuss the matter. You may wish to 'shadow' a position initially to see exactly what it entails, or to become an assistant to the person concerned and to take on certain aspects of that role. All can be accommodated, with full support given.

**Please do not hesitate to come forward - WE REALLY DO NEED YOU!!!**

# COUNCIL

## A. EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| Chairman      | - Sheila Blamire |
| Vice-chairman | - Jeff Clarke    |
| Secretary     | - David Cogger   |
| Treasurer     | - Clive Richards |
| Recorder      | - Tony Broome    |

## B. ELECTED MEMBERS

|               |
|---------------|
| Bob Anderson  |
| Steve Barber  |
| Paul Brewster |
| Brian Dyke    |
| Phil Oddy     |
| Tony Parker   |

## C. CO-OPTED MEMBERS

The following members have been co-opted on to Council due to their expertise in specific areas. Others may be asked to join Council as co-opted members as the need arises.

|                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Simon Edwards   | - Newsletter Editor   |
| Derek Kelly     | - Conservation Team   |
| Colin Schofield | - Bird Report Editor  |
| David Steventon | - Editorial & Records |

## CAWOS SUB-COMMITTEES (Chairmen in bold)

### 1. EDITORIAL & RECORDS SUB-COMMITTEE

#### a. Bird Report Team

|                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Technical Editor          | - <b>David Steventon</b> |
| Systematic Editor         | - Colin Schofield        |
| Recorder                  | - Tony Broome            |
| Records Secretary         | - Phil Oddy              |
| Compiler representative   | - <b>vacant</b>          |
| Recording Liaison Officer | - Tony Parker            |
| Council member            | - Steve Barber           |

#### b. Rarities Team

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Recorder        | - <b>Tony Broome</b> |
| Secretary       | - <b>vacant</b>      |
| Steve Barber    |                      |
| Hugh Pulsford   |                      |
| David Steventon |                      |
| Jane Turner     |                      |

### 2. ACTIVITIES SUB-COMMITTEE

|          |                     |
|----------|---------------------|
| Chairman | - <b>Brian Dyke</b> |
|----------|---------------------|

#### a. Conservation Team

|                                      |                    |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Conservation Officer                 | - Jeff Clarke      |
| Co-opted member                      | - Derek Kelly      |
| Local Authority Area representatives | - <b>vacancies</b> |

#### b. Programme Team

|              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| Speakers     | - Sheila Blamire |
| Civic Centre | - Brian Dyke     |
| Civic Centre | - David Cogger   |

#### c. Survey Team

|              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Phil Oddy    | - House Martins |
| Brian Martin | - Swifts        |

#### d. Workshop Team

|                  |
|------------------|
| Jeff Clarke      |
| Bob Anderson     |
| <b>vacancies</b> |

### 3. PUBLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

|          |                         |
|----------|-------------------------|
| Chairman | - <b>Sheila Blamire</b> |
|----------|-------------------------|

#### a. Newsletter Team

|                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Editor                   | - Simon Edwards   |
| Art work                 | - Tony Broome     |
| Computer work and layout | - Sheila Blamire  |
| Printing                 | - Geoff Blamire   |
| Proof-reading            | - Hazel Raw       |
| Folding and stapling     | - Geoff Lightfoot |
| Posting                  | - David Cogger    |
| Advertising              | - <b>vacant</b>   |

#### b. Promotions Team

|                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Materials               | - Sheila Blamire |
| Bird Report Distributor | - Paul Brewster  |

#### c. Web Site Team

|          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| Host     | - Dave Walters   |
| Material | - Sheila Blamire |

### 4. FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

|                |                         |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| Treasurer      | - <b>Clive Richards</b> |
| Chairman       | - Sheila Blamire        |
| Vice-chairman  | - Jeff Clarke           |
| Secretary      | - David Cogger          |
| Auditor        | - Norman Scott          |
| Council member | - Brian Dyke            |

### 5. ROSTHERNE SUB-COMMITTEE

|                                  |
|----------------------------------|
| <b>Clive Richards</b>            |
| Peter Day                        |
| Voluntary Wardens representative |
| English Nature representative    |

Diary  
 OCTOBER 9 5 7 SEPTEMBER 8 MAY 7TH 3 JAN 19 SUN 28

**NOVEMBER**

- 3 **CAWOS** 'OWLS OF THE WORLD' by Michael Leach
- 4 'From Wildfowl to Waders', meet at Moore NR at 9:00am or 1:00pm, 01925 444689
- 5 CRSPB Martin Mere by coach, contact Margaret Hough 01829 770567
- 8 HO 'ISLANDS' by Val McFarland
- 10 MCOS 'BIRDS OF NORTHERN INDIA' by Mark Hamblin
- 10 SECOS 'MOMENT IN TIME' by Andy Harmer
- 10-11 HPRSPB Solway Weekend, contact Pat & Anne O'Mara 0161 449 8299
- 11 NCRSPB Autumn Fair, Frodsham Church Hall, 10am
- 12 KOS Mere Sands Wood & Marshside, meet Sessions House at 9:00am
- 12 LOG Shropshire Meres, contact Peter Hale 01244 341074
- 12 WGOS North Wales by coach departing at 8:00am - ring for details
- 12 MCOS Gigrin Farm, contact Les Goulding 01925 265578
- 12 SECOS North Wales coast, ring for details
- 13 SRSPB 'SEABIRDS OF SUMMER' & 'BIRDS OF THE PENNINE FORESTS' by Gordon Yates
- 14 ADNHS 'A WALK THROUGH STYAL COUNTRY PARK' by John Hill-Watson
- 15 CRSPB 'A BIRD ARTIST IN ISRAEL' by Philip Snow
- 17 NCRSPB 'BIRDING IN CENTRAL SPAIN' by Allan & Sue Parker
- 18 ADNHS Martin Mere, meet public car park, Cecil Road, Hale at 9:30am
- 19 NCRSPB Foryd Bay, meet Frodsham Station Car Park at 8:30am
- 19 HPRSPB Blithfield Reservoir, meet Marple at 8:30am or Chapel at 8:45am
- 24 KOS '50 YEARS OF BIRDWATCHING' by Clifford Heyes
- 24 LOG 'ISLAY - JEWEL OF THE HEBRIDES' by Gordon Yates
- 24 WGOS 'U.K. - SCILLY WEEK' by John Raines
- 25 CADOS Leighton Moss, contact Dave Goff 01244 345043
- 25 HO Fairburn Ings, by coach, contact Diana Grellier 0161 928 9165
- 27 HPRSPB 'A CELEBRATION OF BIRDS' by Gordon Yates at Marple
- 28 ADNHS 'A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY' by Graham Sinagola

**DECEMBER**

- 1 **CAWOS** 'A BIRD PAINTER IN ISRAEL' by Philip Snow
- 3 CRSPB Pennington Flash/Hope Carr by car, contact Peter Stevenson 01352 716886
- 7 CADOS 'THE FASCINATION OF BIRDS' by Rev Hugh Linn
- 8 LOG 'TANZANIAN SPECTACULAR' by Mike Wilkes and Christmas Party
- 8 WGOS 'BIRDS OF N.E. INDIA' by Mark Hamblin
- 8 MCOS 'FOLLOWING FALCONS' by Terry Pickford
- 8 SECOS 'BIRDS OF A WELSH MOORLAND' by John Lawton Roberts
- 9 KOS Leighton Moss, meet at Sessions House at 8:30am
- 9 NCRSPB Frodsham/Moore, meet Frodsham Station Car Park at 8:30am
- 10 LOG Tatton Park, contact Peter Hale 01244 341074
- 10 HPRSPB Marshside RSPB Reserve, Southport, meet at Marple at 8:00am
- 10 CADOS Marshside, contact Don Pawlett 01244 677477
- 10 SRSPB Sale & Chorlton Water Parks, meet Visitor Centre (jnc 8 M60) at 10:00am
- 10 MCOS Seaforth/Marshside, meet Seaforth Docks gate at 9:00am
- 10 SECOS Blithfield Reservoir/Belvide Reservoir, ring for details
- 11 HPRSPB CHRISTMAS EVENING at Senior Citizens' Hall, Marple
- 11 SRSPB 'THE STORY OF CONWY RSPB RESERVE' by Ian Higginson
- 12 ADNHS 'TRAVELS IN 2000 AND BEFORE' by Hilda Summersgill
- 13 HO 'THE ARCTIC SUMMER - GREENLAND & SPITZBERGEN' by Gordon Yates
- 13 CRSPB MEMBERS' EVENING
- 15 KOS CHRISTMAS PARTY
- 26 HPRSPB Boxing Day walk, meet at Disley Station car park at 10:30am

## JANUARY 2001

- 4 CADOS 'RAPTORPHILIA' by Keith Offord  
5 **CAWOS** '**BIRDS OF DERBYSHIRE**' by Mark Hamblin  
6 **CAWOS** **The Great Cawos Yule Log, contact Mike Holmes 01270 216890**  
6 CADOS North Wales Coast, contact Alun Harley 01925 269430  
7 **CAWOS** **The Great Cawos Yule Log, contact Mike Holmes 01270 216890**  
8 SRSPB 'A MOMENT IN TIME' by Andy Harmer  
9 ADNHS 'SOUTH AFRICA - LAND OF CONTRASTS' by Margaret Ledger  
10 HO 'MIDSUMMER MEXICO' by Adam Davison  
12 MCOS 'WHERE GRIFFONS SOAR' by Keith Offord  
12 SECOS 'A FLORIDA SPRING' by Steve Knell  
13 KOS Marton Mere & Rossall Point meet at Sessions House at 8:30am  
13 ADNHS NEW YEAR DINNER, details from the committee  
14 MCOS Point of Air/Gronant, meet Point of Air at 9:00am  
21 SECOS Gigrin Farm, Rhayader, ring for details  
23 ADNHS 'FOLKLORE' by Brian Hallsworth  
26 KOS 'MIDSUMMER MEXICO' by Adam Davison  
26 WGOS 'SEABIRDS OF SUMMER' & 'BIRDS OF THE PENNINE FORESTS' by Gordon Yates  
TBC WGOS Car Trip - date, venue & time to be advised - ring for details

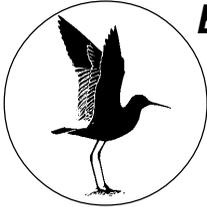
## FEBRUARY

- 1 CADOS 'BIRDING NORTH AMERICA' by Steve Holmes  
2 **CAWOS** '**AN ALASKAN JOURNEY**' by Tom Lawson  
9 **High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 10:30am (HT 12:02, 10.1m)**  
10 **High Tide Birdwatch, Parkgate - 11:00am (HT 12:47, 10.2m) followed by lunch & talks at the Boathouse Inn, details from Lynne Greenstreet on 0151 648 5011**  
9 MCOS 'THE SEARCH FOR THE SYLVIA' by David Cottridge  
9 SECOS 'THE WILD BEAUTY OF SCOTLAND' by Mark Hamblin  
11 KOS Tatton Park, meet at Mallard Close layby (Dog Lodge entrance) at 9:00am  
11 CADOS Pennington/Richmond Bank, contact Chris Done 01298 724994  
11 MCOS Marton Mere/Rossall Point, contact Mike Allsopp 0151 348 4500  
12 SRSPB 'THE HOME LIFE OF A GOLDEN EAGLE' by Terry Pickford  
13 ADNHS 'INSECTS' by Steve Garland  
14 HO '(NORTH) RONA - ISLAND ADVENTURE' by John Roberts  
18 SRSPB North Wales by coach departing at 7:30am - ring for details  
18 SECOS Blacktoft Sands RSPB Reserve, ring for details  
23 KOS 'SIBERIAN SUMMER' by Steve Woolfall  
23 WGOS 'THE HOME LIFE OF A GOLDEN EAGLE' by Terry Pickford  
24-25 CADOS Norfolk Weekend, contact Dave Goff 01244 345043  
24 ADNHS Broadbottom Historical Trail, meet public car park, Cecil Road, Hale at 9:30am  
25 HO Rutland Water, by coach, contact Marion Haigh 0161 903 9163  
27 ADNHS 'MOUNT KENYA & KILIMANJARO' by Geoff Brammall

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. Nick French 01928 856522  
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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- Repairs--- ✓
- Books----- ✓
- Clothing-- ✓
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- Part Ex--- ✓

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*(Very easy to find with ample free parking, unique & unrivalled viewing.)*

M56 jct 10, take the A559 towards Northwich for 1 mile, when you reach the Birch & Bottle (public house) turn right into Bentleys Farm Lane. We are on the left after 1/2 mile, through the Marbury House Farm gates.  
*Opening times 9.30am - 6.00pm Mon - Fri / 9.30am - 5.30pm Sat / 10.30am - 3.30pm occasional Sundays.*

Phone 01925 730399 / Fax 01925 730368

Alpha dial **07000 BIRDWATCHER (247392)**

E-mail focalpoint@dial.pipex.com / Web site <http://dialspace.dial.pipex.com/focalpoint/>



## **THE BIRD I.D. COMPANY**

THE BIRD I.D. COMPANY run daily tours designed to help birdwatchers improve the skills needed to find and identify birds in the field. The tours are based along the north Norfolk coast, with Cley, Titchwell and Holme being the most popular tour sites as a wide variety of species are seen here and almost any species could turn up at any time. The tour is led by a tour guide with over 25 years' birdwatching experience around the world. During the day this guide will explain both the basic knowledge and also the rather more technical information for example topography and jizz, in a clear and precise method that gives birdwatchers an excellent basis to develop their own skills in bird identification and is an ideal basis for beginners. In fact many birdwatchers take part in three or four tours during the year as we cover all seasons and visit over seven prime birdwatching sites and our tours are for a maximum of six-eight birdwatchers.

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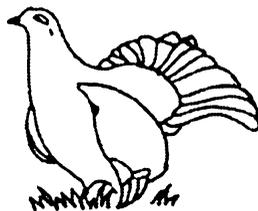
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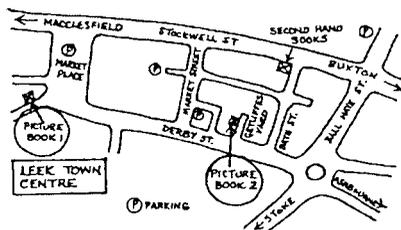
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*Imminent dates for your diary:*

Fri 1<sup>st</sup> December 'A Bird Painter in Israel' - see Diary page 30 for further details

# Waxwings

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