

# BIRD NEWS

**Number 56 October 2002**



**Aquatic Warbler • 2001 SECOS Swift Survey  
Computerisation of Records Update  
Survey of Surveys - Request for Information  
Wirral & Ellesmere Port Barn Owl Group**

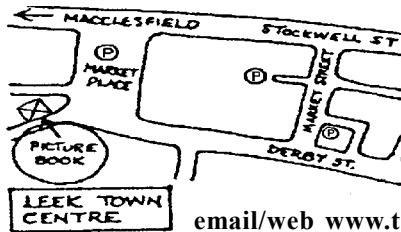
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*Bird News welcomes articles, letters and comments relevant to birdwatching in Cheshire & Wirral. Please either e-mail or post (on disc) your contributions to the Editor at the address shown above.*

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

Front cover: Little Swift, House Martins and Swallow by Tony Broome

Other illustrations by Tony Broome, Phil Jones, Ron Plummer and Thelma Sykes.

# Guest Editorial

Over the past few months, the *Database* and *Bird Report* teams have been working tirelessly to produce the 2001 *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report* on time. We are delighted to say that we have received upwards of 45,000 records from over 130 sources - and this a 'light' year due to foot-and-mouth! However, there have been *major* hitches. For some observers, the guidelines that were produced to help them to submit their records were either confusing or too much trouble and they were simply ignored. For others, they worked well and the inconsistencies in their submissions were relatively minor. The inputting of paper records caused more problems and doubled the work yet again. The amount of work involved this year for the few people directly involved with receiving and importing your records into the CAWOS database and producing reports to go to all the compilers involved with writing the *Bird Report* has been *truly huge*, totally time consuming and at the expense of their normal lives. Then there is the significant work undertaken by the *Bird Report's* Systematic and Technical Editors and dozen compilers (made slightly easier this year with no cutting and pasting!). I would like to think that everyone who receives a copy of the 2001 *Bird Report* takes a moment to appreciate the above comments.

Interestingly, several black holes have emerged as the work progressed. Perhaps one of the most alarming from a recording point of view is the apparent lack of co-ordination and/or co-operation when it comes to the results of independent surveys being submitted to CAWOS. It could be that we, as the county 'official body', should be more pro-active and supportive and it is with this in mind that we are carrying out a 'Survey of Surveys' (see page 8 for further information). With limited resources and volunteers, it would be nice to be sure that we're not replicating time and effort.

It is also apparent that relatively large surveys are not sent to us directly and the observers often assume, quite wrongly, that we get the information automatically. Surveys for the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust and the BTO are sent back directly to them and unless we receive a copy, the information is omitted from the *Bird Report*. This may also be true of ringing returns in some cases. They are gaps that require rather large plugs.

On a lighter note, I have had the privilege of having just visited South Africa, in particular, the Western Cape. Years ago, I used to collect a series of weekly magazines called *Birds of the World*. (I still have them.) As a youngster, I read each issue from cover to cover and couldn't wait for the next week's. The pages revealed species and places that were totally new and exciting to me. I made a mental note of those birds that, above all others, I would like to see in my lifetime. The seabirds fascinated me and one particular illustration showed a Pintado Petrel by Shackleton, I think. It was one of those species in my top 50, but my unfortunate ability to become seasick, even in harbour, meant that I was unlikely to ever see one. Imagine my thrill then on this trip, when, drugged up on new Canadian seasickness tablets that *actually* worked, I was surrounded by thousands of Pintado Petrels. Forty miles off the Cape, bobbing about in a seriously choppy sea, I marvelled at being able to enjoy the beauty and grace of a species that lives out its life in some of the most hostile environments in the world. A species that I truly believed I'd never see. The moment was one of sheer magic and one that will remain with me forever and that to me is what birding's all about.

But you don't have to travel great distances to experience the same kind of thrill. For people relatively new to birdwatching, it can often be the regular species that more experienced birders take for granted, that cause the excitement. Starting out can be a particularly confusing period for newcomers, who are unsure of their own abilities and grateful for help. Some of the areas that cause major upset are the submission of records, taking notes and writing descriptions. Over the next few issues I'll be trying to explain how to do these things effectively.

**Tony Broome**

**Note: the copy date for the next issue is 7<sup>th</sup> Dec - 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 Sheila Blamire know as soon as possible.

# Recent Reports

*Some of the records may be unauthenticated and therefore will require review by the Society's Rarities Panel or the BBRC. This report covers the summer period from June to August.*

## Site Reports

### Chester/Dee Estuary

392 Cormorants roosted at Heswall shore on Aug 31<sup>st</sup>. Up to six Little Egrets at Burton on June 16<sup>th</sup> increased to seven on July 30<sup>th</sup> with 10 at Neston (Aug 15<sup>th</sup>) and 12 at Parkgate (Aug 6<sup>th</sup>). Singles at Heswall (Aug 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>) were followed by five on Aug 29<sup>th</sup>. Burton hosted two Spoonbills on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, three on July 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> and four flew over on July 16<sup>th</sup>. One was at Parkgate on July 24<sup>th</sup> and daily from July 27<sup>th</sup>-Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>. A presumed escaped imm Greater Flamingo was at Aldford Brook on June 27<sup>th</sup>. A Red Kite was circling over Alvanley on Aug 4<sup>th</sup>. A Honey Buzzard was reported flying over the M53 on June 18<sup>th</sup>. A Marsh Harrier visited Burton (June 3<sup>rd</sup> and Aug 21<sup>st</sup>), Neston Old Quay (Aug 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>) and Parkgate (Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> with two on 23<sup>rd</sup>). An early Merlin was at Parkgate on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> with two at Heswall on Aug 18<sup>th</sup>. A calling Quail was at Burton on June 29<sup>th</sup> and 10 dates from July 4<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>.

1400 Oystercatchers were at Heswall shore on July 6<sup>th</sup> and an Avocet appeared at Parkgate (June 7<sup>th</sup>). A juv Curlew Sandpiper fed at Heswall shore (Aug 31<sup>st</sup>) with four Whimbrel, 2109 Curlew and 4550 Redshanks there on Aug 11<sup>th</sup>. A Marsh Sandpiper was reported at Farndon on July 21<sup>st</sup> with a Green Sandpiper and a Dunlin. 21 Greenshanks at Parkgate (July 24<sup>th</sup>) had increased to 55 by Aug 7<sup>th</sup>. A Wood Sandpiper was briefly at Decca Pools on Aug 6<sup>th</sup>. Two imm Little Gulls visited Gilroy Pool, West Kirby on July 8<sup>th</sup>. A Red-rumped Swallow was seen with several hundred hirundines near the Cheshire border at Shotwick (Aug 9<sup>th</sup>). A report of seven Fieldfares at Willaston on Aug 19<sup>th</sup> will be one of the earliest ever autumn records, if confirmed. A pair of Pied Flycatchers was confirmed as breeding at Beeston. Just outside Cheshire, a singing male Corn Bunting was at Shotwick fields on several dates in July.

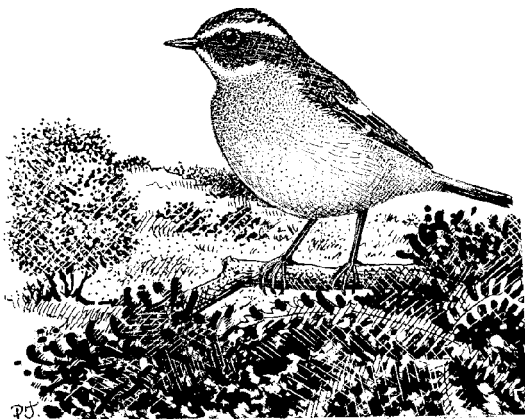
### Fiddler's Ferry

Two Garganey were seen on July 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, one on 26<sup>th</sup> and a further two sightings in August. A Marsh Harrier passed through (July 24<sup>th</sup>) with two more reports during August. Seven Buzzards was the peak count of the summer and a pair of Kestrels bred. A Hobby was seen (June 24<sup>th</sup>) and a report of a Little Crake (July 14<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>) remains unconfirmed. A Golden Plover was seen in July (with up to 1000 Lapwings) increasing to 22 in August. Three Little Stints appeared in August. The peak July count of Dunlin was 100 with up to 210 in August. A Ruff was seen in July. A flock of 17 Black-tailed Godwits appeared in June with up to 20 in July. A Whimbrel passed through in August and a Green Sandpiper appeared (June 24<sup>th</sup>). A Turnstone passed through in August. Returning Yellow-legged Gulls appeared from mid-June with three in July. Tern passage included a Sandwich in August, a Common in June with two in July, two Arctics in July, while a Little in July was the first site record. 300 Sand Martins in June was the peak count of the summer. A pair of Jays bred for the first time.

### Frodsham

A juv Black-necked Grebe was on the Weaver Bend (Aug 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>) with a Little Egret at No6 tank in August. A Barnacle Goose was with the Canada Goose flock (Aug 5<sup>th</sup>). Up to four Garganey were seen in August. Single Marsh Harriers were seen on June 15<sup>th</sup> and Aug 6<sup>th</sup>. An Osprey flew north on July 19<sup>th</sup> and single Hobbies were seen in June and August. A pair of Avocets nested on the Weaver Bend - the first county record of breeding. They hatched four young on June 17<sup>th</sup> and all six birds were present until July 27<sup>th</sup>. 11 Little Ringed Plovers were counted on July 21<sup>st</sup> and 700 Ringed Plovers passed through in August. Small numbers of Sanderling, Little Stints (up to three), Curlew Sandpipers and Turnstones moved through in August. The peak count of Black-tailed Godwits was 800 on July 27<sup>th</sup>. A dark-rumped Whimbrel was claimed over No6 tank on June 26<sup>th</sup>. Wood Sandpipers were seen most days from July 21<sup>st</sup> to Aug 8<sup>th</sup> with a peak of four on Aug 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>.

10+ Common Sandpipers were at the Weaver Bend (July 7<sup>th</sup>) with 11 on Aug 4<sup>th</sup>. A moulting adult Grey Phalarope on the Weaver Bend (July 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>) was the first summer record of this species. Up to three Little Gulls visited the Weaver Bend on eight dates from July 20<sup>th</sup> to Aug 5<sup>th</sup> at least. A Common Tern was at the Weaver Bend in August with a Black Tern there (July 31<sup>st</sup>). A Long-eared Owl was at Frodsham on July 7<sup>th</sup>. A possible Pallid Swift was reported over the Weaver Bend on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. 14 Yellow Wagtails on July 31<sup>st</sup> was a good count with two Whinchats on No6 tank (Aug 17<sup>th</sup>).



## Hilbre

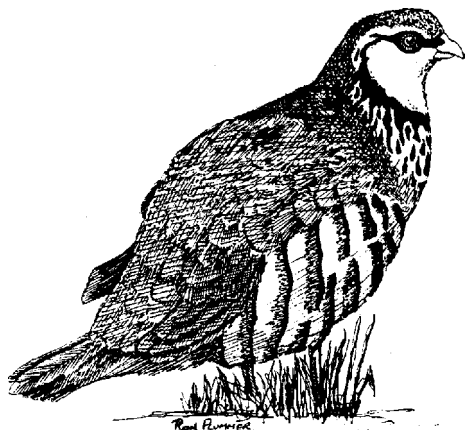
A Fulmar flew past (Aug 27<sup>th</sup>), a Sooty Shearwater (Aug 29<sup>th</sup>) and an early Leach's Petrel (Aug 31<sup>st</sup>). Gannet passage consisted of a peak of 45 on July 8<sup>th</sup>. 3000 Oystercatchers roosted on Little Eye (Aug 10<sup>th</sup>) and a Little Ringed Plover on June 1<sup>st</sup> was a good find. 200 Sanderling and an adult Curlew Sandpiper appeared on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>. The only Whimbrel reports in July were a single on 9<sup>th</sup> and two on 14<sup>th</sup>. Four appeared on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> with three on Aug 7<sup>th</sup>. Three Greenshanks on June 22<sup>nd</sup> were unusual with one on Aug 7<sup>th</sup> and four on Aug 9<sup>th</sup>. A Wood Sandpiper (Aug 9<sup>th</sup>) was a site rarity. A Turnstone remained (June 4<sup>th</sup>) with 120 on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Up to six Arctic Skuas were seen irregularly in July with a peak of 12 on Aug 29<sup>th</sup> and 11 on Aug 31<sup>st</sup>. An adult Long-tailed Skua was reported flying past on Aug 25<sup>th</sup>. Three Great Skuas flew past on Aug 29<sup>th</sup> and 50 Kittiwakes on Aug 31<sup>st</sup>. On July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1000+ Sandwich Terns were offshore and 350 Common Terns on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>. 120 Little Terns were counted on Aug 17<sup>th</sup>. A Black Guillemot offshore on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> was very unusual. A Tree Pipit, a Yellow Wagtail, three Whitethroats, a Garden Warbler and 20 Willow Warblers were seen on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>. On Aug 5<sup>th</sup>, a migrant influx included 150 Swallows, 10 Sand Martins, six Wheatears, a Grasshopper Warbler, a Reed Warbler and 30 Willow Warblers. The only other notable records were one Whitethroat and 25 Willow Warblers (both on Aug 7<sup>th</sup>) and a Spotted Flycatcher arrived on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## Inner Marsh Farm

Up to six Little Egrets were seen on many dates throughout the period with double figure roost counts including 12 on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 15 on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>, 25 on Aug 4<sup>th</sup>, 26 on Aug 5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> (a new county record), 23 on Aug 6<sup>th</sup>, 16 on Aug 7<sup>th</sup> and 18 on Aug 11<sup>th</sup>. An adult Spoonbill was seen irregularly from June 3<sup>rd</sup> to Aug 14<sup>th</sup> with two adults on July 1<sup>st</sup>, July 3<sup>rd</sup> and Aug 4<sup>th</sup>. The two adults were joined by an imm on July 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> and Aug 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. Four birds were seen on July 24<sup>th</sup>. A Barnacle and 36 Greylag Geese were seen on Aug 23<sup>rd</sup>. A drake Garganey was seen on June 7<sup>th</sup> with up to three seen irregularly from Aug 4<sup>th</sup>. One or two Pintail lingered into June. Two Marsh Harriers were seen on June 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> and again on Aug 19<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> with singles on nine other dates in August. The peak count was six Buzzards on July 27<sup>th</sup>. A Water Rail was seen on June 30<sup>th</sup> and several other dates in July/August with three on Aug 30<sup>th</sup>. A Spotted Crake was seen on eight dates from Aug 13<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> at least with two on 26<sup>th</sup>. A Quail was heard on July 15<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. Five Avocets (four juvs) appeared early morning only on July 31<sup>st</sup> and again Aug 1<sup>st</sup>. Up to four Little Ringed Plovers were seen in July with two Knot on Aug 1<sup>st</sup> and one on Aug 11<sup>th</sup>. An adult Little Stint was present on Aug 23<sup>rd</sup>. A Curlew Sandpiper appeared on Aug 18<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> with four next day. 750 Black-tailed Godwits was the peak count (Aug 17<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>). Spotted Redshanks returned from Aug 11<sup>th</sup>. An adult Marsh Sandpiper was present on July 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>. This is only the third county record. Six Green Sandpipers on July 27<sup>th</sup> increased to 11 on Aug 14<sup>th</sup>. A Wood Sandpiper was seen in early June with another on eight dates between Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> with two on Aug 8<sup>th</sup>. An adult Mediterranean Gull arrived on June 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Two Tree Pipits flew over on Aug 16<sup>th</sup> and a returning Wheatear was noted (Aug 23<sup>rd</sup>). A Garden Warbler passed through on Aug 21<sup>st</sup>.

## Macclesfield area

A Black-necked Grebe was at Rostherne (July 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>). A Bittern at Rostherne Mere on Aug 13<sup>th</sup> is probably the earliest ever autumn record for the county. The Little Egret at Rostherne Mere on Aug 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> was the third record for the reserve. A White Stork was reported over the A34 at Handforth on June 6<sup>th</sup> and over Alderley Park next day. A Sacred Ibis was reported at Redesmere on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Three pairs of Mute Swans bred at Chelford SQs with another pair at Redesmere. A Pink-footed Goose was with the Canada flock at Chelford all August. 25 Greylags were at Redesmere on July 14<sup>th</sup> with 145 at Rostherne (Aug 17<sup>th</sup>) and a Barnacle Goose also. A pair of Barnacle Geese hatched one chick at Tatton Park. Three pairs of Shelducks bred at Chelford SQs



with another pair at Tatton - the first breeding there. Five Mandarins at Rostherne Mere was an excellent count. A pair of Wigeon lingered at Chelford SQs in early June but then disappeared and a pair of Teal bred there for the first time. 16 Gadwall at Rostherne was the lowest August maximum since 1991. A pair of Tufted Ducks bred at Capesthorpe with 11 broods at Chelford SQs. Three Common Scoter were at Rostherne Mere on June 8<sup>th</sup> and Aug 10<sup>th</sup> with another bird seen in July. Single Marsh Harriers were at Rostherne on Aug 10<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. A very pale Buzzard hatched near Acre Nook SQ looked very much like a Rough-legged Buzzard. Hobbies were at North Rode (July 13<sup>th</sup>) with occasional sightings at Chelford SQs and Rostherne Mere. Two Red-legged Partridges were at Capesthorpe on June 28<sup>th</sup> with odd records from Chelford.

Two pairs of Little Ringed Plovers bred at one site. A Golden Plover held territory at Shining Tor in June and 1000 Lapwings were at Chelford on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>. Two Dunlin at Rostherne Mere in July were unusual. Two Black-tailed Godwits arrived at Chelford SQs on July 6<sup>th</sup>. A Green Sandpiper returned to Rostherne on June 26<sup>th</sup> with one at Tatton on Aug 12<sup>th</sup>. Up to four were at Chelford SQs from June 7<sup>th</sup> - an early date and two pairs of Common Sandpipers bred here. A Common Tern visited Chelford on July 14<sup>th</sup> and a 'Commic' Tern was at Rostherne on Aug 4<sup>th</sup>. A Turtle Dove was heard calling at Handforth on June 24<sup>th</sup>. One/two pairs of Tawny Owls bred at Rostherne. A pair of Yellow Wagtails bred at Chelford and a returning Wheatear visited Tatton Park (Aug 31<sup>st</sup>). Two Redstarts were singing at Lamaload Resr. A Grasshopper Warbler was at Tatton on June 18<sup>th</sup> and a Wood Warbler visited Lyme Park on June 10<sup>th</sup>. A pair of Pied Flycatchers was at West Park gate, Lyme Park on June 10<sup>th</sup> with a Spotted Flycatcher there on July 8<sup>th</sup>. Two Ravens were recorded at Chelford on Aug 11<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> with 2200 Starlings roosting on June 11<sup>th</sup>. An adult Rose-coloured Starling was reported in Macclesfield on June 29<sup>th</sup>; if accepted this will be only the second county record. A Tree Sparrow at Rostherne Mere on June 12<sup>th</sup> was unexpected.

## Nantwich/Sandbach area

A late report was received of a Sacred Ibis at Cholmondeley on May 25<sup>th</sup>. A fem Scaup visited Deer Park Mere (June 2<sup>nd</sup>) and a male Common Scoter on Hurlleston Resr on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> was only the sixth site record. A Goldeneye lingering at Bar Mere in June and July was an exceptional mid-summer record. A Goshawk was at Cholmondeley on June 14<sup>th</sup> and Aug 31<sup>st</sup>. Hobbies visited seven sites within the area. The Peregrines raised four young at Beeston. Quails were heard calling at Burland (July 25<sup>th</sup>) and Hatherton (July 16<sup>th</sup>). A Water Rail appeared at Hankelow on Aug 27<sup>th</sup>. A Whimbrel flew over Bradwall (Aug 18<sup>th</sup>) and 13 Common Sandpipers at Doddington Pool (Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>) was a high count. Three Common Terns flew over Sandbach on Aug 17<sup>th</sup>. 60 Collared Doves were at Swanley on Aug 9<sup>th</sup>. A Spotted Flycatcher was at Nantwich Church (July 15<sup>th</sup>). Three pairs of Pied Flycatchers held territory at Peckforton Hill in mid-June with one at Deer Park Mere (June 8<sup>th</sup>). A pair of Redpolls was at Batherton Hall Farm on June 26<sup>th</sup>. 16 Crossbills visited Moss Wood on Aug 31<sup>st</sup> with 25 over Winterley Pool on Aug 13<sup>th</sup>.

## Northwich/Middlewich area

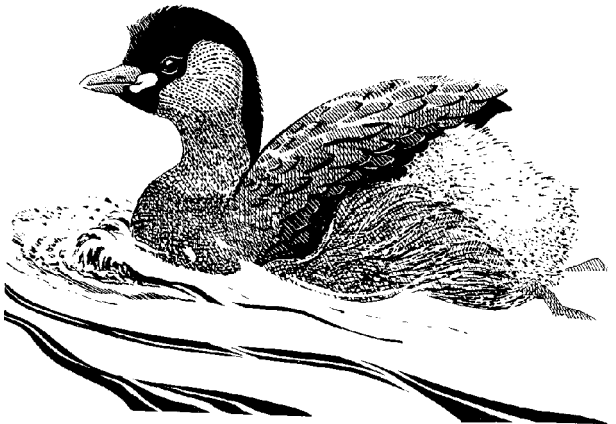
Eight Little Grebes at Marbury No1 tank (Aug 10<sup>th</sup>) were from two breeding pairs and a Black-necked Grebe was at Budworth Mere (July 20<sup>th</sup>). A Little Egret was at Middlewich Lime Beds on July 9<sup>th</sup> and a pair of Mute Swans bred at Pickmere with 131 Mallard there (July 22<sup>nd</sup>). A female Garganey visited Marbury No1 tank on June 30<sup>th</sup> and 14 Shovelers were there on Aug 10<sup>th</sup>. Five Common Scoters dropped into nearby Budworth Mere on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. An early Goosander flew over Neumann's Flash on Aug 22<sup>nd</sup>. A Water Rail was at Marbury No1 tank in early August and an adult Spotted Crake appeared (Aug 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>). A Marsh Harrier flew over Marbury No1 tank on Aug 17<sup>th</sup>. Single Hobbies were at Budworth Mere in June, Marbury CP and Neumann's Flash both in August. Three Sanderling were at Neumann's Flash on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Black-tailed Godwit sightings included nine at Neumann's Flash on July 8<sup>th</sup> with 12 on July 31<sup>st</sup>, one on Aug 6<sup>th</sup>, and one at Marbury No1 tank on July 27<sup>th</sup>. A Whimbrel visited Neumann's Flash (July 15<sup>th</sup>). The first returning Green Sandpiper at Marbury No1 tank was on June 22<sup>nd</sup> with up to eight by the end of the month and a peak of 15 on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Single Wood Sandpipers were at Marbury No1 tank (July 31<sup>st</sup>) and Neumann's Flash (Aug 6<sup>th</sup>). A Turnstone visited the latter site on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>. An adult Mediterranean Gull roosted at Neumann's Flash (July 7<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>) with an adult Yellow-legged Gull roosting on June 25<sup>th</sup>. Single Common Terns visited Budworth Mere (June 9<sup>th</sup>) and Neumann's Flash (June 25<sup>th</sup>). A Ring-necked Parakeet flew over Moulton (Aug 18<sup>th</sup>). A pair of Tawny Owls bred along Marbury Lane. 1000+ Swifts were at Budworth Mere (June 28<sup>th</sup>). A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was at Marbury Lane on Aug 12<sup>th</sup>. Two White Wagtails were at Marbury No1 tank on Aug 1<sup>st</sup>.

## North Wirral Shore

10 Fulmars, five Manx Shearwaters and 100+ Gannets flew past Hoylake on June 9<sup>th</sup>. A Fulmar flew over West Kirby on June 26<sup>th</sup> with peak counts of 46 Gannets off Red Rocks on June 4<sup>th</sup> and 58 on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Three Common Scoters flew past Red Rocks on June 29<sup>th</sup>. A male Red-footed Falcon was reported over Red Rocks Golf Course on June 7<sup>th</sup>. A Quail was heard calling at Hoylake on July 7<sup>th</sup>. Nearly 6000 Oystercatchers were at West Kirby shore on Aug 21<sup>st</sup>. Two Little Ringed Plovers visited Gilroy Pond, West Kirby on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>. Two Grey Plovers off West Kirby (June 9<sup>th</sup>) were unseasonal. 400 Knot flew past Red Rocks (June 16<sup>th</sup>) with another 500 over Gilroy Pond, West Kirby the same day. Hoylake hosted a Little Stint (Aug 11<sup>th</sup>), two Curlew Sandpipers (Aug 22<sup>nd</sup>) and a Whimbrel (Aug 10<sup>th</sup>). A Wood Sandpiper was heard calling over West Kirby on July 17<sup>th</sup>. An Arctic Skua was off West Kirby (June 9<sup>th</sup>) with three on July 12<sup>th</sup> and two next day. A 2<sup>nd</sup> sum Mediterranean Gull visited both Meols and West Kirby (Aug 11<sup>th</sup>) with two Little Gulls off Leasowe (Aug 11<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>) and one past Hoylake on Aug 10<sup>th</sup>. 570 Sandwich Terns offshore on July 14<sup>th</sup> and 470 on July 20<sup>th</sup> were the peak counts of the summer with 110 Little Terns offshore on Aug 11<sup>th</sup>. Two Short-eared Owls flew over a West Kirby garden on June 28<sup>th</sup>. 15 Sand Martins flew over Black Horse Hill, West Kirby on July 27<sup>th</sup>. A fall of 14 Wheatears was noted at Hoylake on Aug 20<sup>th</sup>.

## Poynton area

The Little Grebe remained at Adlington Driving Range in early June and the Egyptian Goose remained throughout at Poynton Pool. At least eight pairs of Canada Geese bred in western Poynton - a record total. A Teal at Poynton Pool on Aug 6<sup>th</sup> was the earliest autumn record there. A male Tufted Duck at Adlington on June 1<sup>st</sup> was followed by singles at Poynton Pool on June 11<sup>th</sup> and July 20<sup>th</sup>. Buzzard sightings at Prince's Wood and Adlington included six dates in June, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. This species was a local rarity until two



years ago. Kestrels were confirmed breeding at two sites. A Pheasant was heard from a Poynton garden on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Two pairs of Oystercatchers at Poynton/Adlington border hatched three young each with a record 11+ birds seen on June 1<sup>st</sup> with sightings on a further 12 dates up to Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>. Lapwing numbers at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton built up to 175 in early August. A Curlew was still holding territory at Adlington in late June. A Common Sandpiper at Poynton Pool (July 3<sup>rd</sup>) was probably a failed breeder. A pair of Kingfishers bred on Poynton Brook. Poynton Pool had single pairs of Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch and Treecreeper breeding with two pairs of Coal Tits also seen. A Sand Martin remained at Adlington Driving Range (June 1<sup>st</sup>) with two on June 11<sup>th</sup>. A Garden Warbler was seen occasionally near Prince's Wood until August. A Whitethroat adjacent to Poynton Pool (June 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>) was the first site record. Single pairs of Goldcrests and Coal Tits bred at Poynton Church with a Spotted Flycatcher there on July 10<sup>th</sup>. 50 Greenfinches were at Lostock Hall Farm, Poynton on Aug 5<sup>th</sup>.

## Sandbach Flashes

A Little Egret was seen at Elton Hall Flash on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>. Two Greylags appeared on Aug 20<sup>th</sup> with a Mandarin seen on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>. August counts of ducks included 356 Teal and 800 Mallard on 28<sup>th</sup> and 14 Shovelers on 11<sup>th</sup>. A Garganey appeared on July 21<sup>st</sup> and Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> with two on July 29<sup>th</sup>. An early juv Goosander lingered (Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>). Single Marsh Harriers were reported on four dates in August. The peak count of eight Buzzards was made on Aug 22<sup>nd</sup>. An Osprey flew over on Aug 5<sup>th</sup> with five Hobby sightings in August. A Little Stint (Aug 25<sup>th</sup>) and four Curlew Sandpipers (Aug 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>) were notable. 242 Black-tailed Godwits remained on June 2<sup>nd</sup> with 10 on June 16<sup>th</sup> and six on July 17<sup>th</sup>. A Wood Sandpiper arrived (Aug 26<sup>th</sup>) and five Common Sandpipers were noted on July 29<sup>th</sup>. Single adult Mediterranean Gulls were seen on July 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> with two on Aug 15<sup>th</sup>. A juv Little Gull on Aug 18<sup>th</sup> was unusual. Up to eight Yellow-legged Gulls were regular in August. Two Common Terns appeared on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 50+ Sand Martins were seen in mid-June. An adult and juv Redstart were seen on at least seven dates between July 13<sup>th</sup> and Aug 21<sup>st</sup>. Five Lesser Whitethroats and three Garden Warblers were seen during August.

## Warrington area

A wing-tagged Red Kite flew over Risley Moss (June 1<sup>st</sup>) and a Marsh Harrier was at Wigg Island, near Runcorn (Aug 18<sup>th</sup>). Three Hobbies were at Risley in mid-July. Two Whimbrel flew over Wigg Island (Aug 18<sup>th</sup>) and two Green Sandpipers were at Risley Moss on July 18<sup>th</sup>. At least two Turtle Doves remained at Rixton Clay Pits in late June. A Grasshopper Warbler was at Moore NR on June 1<sup>st</sup>. 60 House Sparrows were at a site in Runcorn during August. A Corn Bunting appeared at Risley Moss on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Woolston Eyes

14 Black-necked Grebes were still at No3 bed on July 2<sup>nd</sup> with one on No4 bed (Aug 16<sup>th</sup>). 80 Gadwall on July 20<sup>th</sup> was a good count. Three Hobbies were seen in June including one, which was ringed on 8<sup>th</sup> with another in late August. Two pairs of Grey Partridges bred at No1 bed and a Water Rail was ringed on Aug 31<sup>st</sup>. A Spotted Crake was reported (July 27<sup>th</sup>). 300 Lapwings were seen in late July with a Black-tailed Godwit on No4 bed on Aug 16<sup>th</sup>. A Short-eared Owl on June 7<sup>th</sup> was unusual. A Kingfisher was ringed on Aug 31<sup>st</sup> and a pair of Green Woodpeckers bred on No1 bed. A Tree Pipit was seen in late June with three over on Aug 30<sup>th</sup>. Single Redstarts were ringed on June 8<sup>th</sup> and July 19<sup>th</sup> with a Nuthatch ringed on June 8<sup>th</sup>. A Redpoll was seen in late June and July.

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

Thanks/acknowledgements go to: R.Adderley, S.&G.Barber, A.Booth, Birdcall, *Birdwatch* and *Birdwatching* magazines, J.J.Canovan (Rostherne), D.Morris (Tatton Park and Knutsford Moor LNR), M.&J.Parker, B.Perkins (Sandbach Flashes), R.Smith ([www.deeestuary.co.uk](http://www.deeestuary.co.uk)) and all the observers who passed records on.

As the hundreds of Whoopers descended  
To the mere, the last one was upended,  
With his feet in the air  
And a cry of despair,  
He sank, which was quite unintended.

**Hazel J Raw**





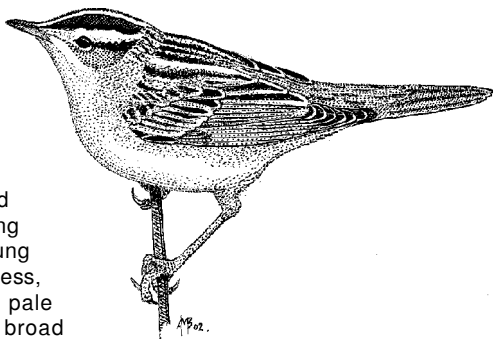
# County Rarities

## AQUATIC WARBLER (*Acrocephalus paludicola*)

Depending on which literature you dip into, separating Aquatic Warbler from Sedge Warbler is either said to be basically easy, listing several distinctive and notable differences, apparently immediately obvious and noticeable in the field, or classed as rather difficult, defined by subtle plumage and 'jizz' differences. For me, the reality is somewhere in the middle, and this is a rarity I have crossed swords with description-wise more times than I care to remember. I have found nine Aquatic Warblers in my time (although four were on one day at Marazion in Cornwall in the 1980s), but my first three back in the early 70s were deemed "not proven". I often feel that was a nice way of telling me I should have taken better notes and paid more attention to the bird in question rather than getting excited and enjoying the moment and the birding! They were Aquatic Warblers, honest, and two ended up being picked out of mist nets on subsequent days anyway, down at Radipole and Portland Bill.

So where did I go wrong; had I missed the point that 1st winter Aquatic Warblers (and most that reach the UK in autumn are this age), look like miniature Bobolinks? Great if you get to see Bobolink regularly, but not much use otherwise.

All this business about an obvious crown stripe, well yes okay, so it is much more clear cut and broader on Aquatic, bordered by darker feathering on the head, and not nearly so obvious on a young Sedge Warbler. Then there's the whole face business, Aquatic's appearing rounder headed, with a pale pinkish thick looking bill, pale lores, and a broad supercilium. Add the fact that Aquatic Warbler is a well-



streaked little warbler, with two rather broad creamy tramlines on the side of the mantle, with a yellowish rather than buff overall look to the plumage, and you might wonder how you can confuse them at all with Sedge Warbler. But this whole 'tiger striped appearance' business isn't much use when it's skulking in thick sedge or vanishing away into a reed-bed. Of course, if you get good views, and Aquatic Warblers do respond to 'pishing', and sometimes sit out in the open at the edge of reed or sedge beds, particularly in early morning to avoid the dew wet reed stems, then these features do all come together. Add a well-streaked rump, pointed tail feathers giving a real spiky effect to the back end, and very pale pinkish legs, and you can successfully eliminate Sedge Warbler, and enjoy a delightful bird. I have heard them call, but to me it was the same as Sedge Warbler.

Over the last couple of decades they have become far less frequent, even at south coast sites that used to record them annually and they are now back to being a real rarity. Not that we have had many Aquatic Warblers in Cheshire and Wirral but they have turned up elsewhere on the west coast in autumn. So next time you come across a young Sedge Warbler at some coastal migration point, do a sanity check of why it isn't an Aquatic Warbler, and who knows!

**Hugh Pulsford**

## AQUATIC WARBLERS IN CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL

There have only been four county records, peculiarly in four consecutive years from 1975 to 1978. One seen well: Weaver Bend, Frodsham Aug 31<sup>st</sup> 1975, and three trapped: Red Rocks Aug 28<sup>th</sup> - Sep 4<sup>th</sup> 1976, Frodsham Marsh Aug 5<sup>th</sup> 1977, and Frodsham Marsh Aug 20<sup>th</sup> 1978.

They are rarer countrywide nowadays, but regular trapping at west coast sites such as Frodsham would surely turn up more of these fine *acros*.

**Tony Broome**

# Projects and Surveys

## SURVEY OF SURVEYS

Many societies and groups within the recording area of Cheshire and Wirral carry out their own surveys on the county's avifauna, whether on specific species such as Swifts, or more habitat-based surveys such as 'Garden Birds'. Also national societies organise a variety of surveys and projects such as the many BTO surveys, RSPB's 'Birds of the Peak District', WWT's 'WeBS Counts', plus others from time to time from CWT, etc. etc. Then there are initiatives such as the 'Farmland Birds LBAP' (Local Biodiversity Action Plan), which is currently appealing for volunteers (see update on page 10). All in all there is a lot going on!

So that we can support, as appropriate, those surveys already in existence, and also plan and co-ordinate our own activities more effectively for the future, we are undertaking a 'Survey of Surveys' to establish exactly what surveys are or will be taking place within the county and by whom.

CAWOS also needs to develop a long-term strategy (5-year) and develop plans where possible to tie in with future national projects such as the atlas revisions to be undertaken by the BTO in a few years' time. By gathering information on what is in the pipeline, we can assess what is particularly relevant to our county and then organise, for example, more extensive coverage than the tetrad squares nominated.

If you have any information that would be relevant, particularly from the many societies within the county (not all are affiliated to CAWOS) please let us know! Please don't assume someone else has told us!! Please contact:

**Andy Harmer, 79a High Street, Frodsham, Cheshire. Tel: 01928 735847  
E-mail: andyharmer@cawos.org**

## SECOS SWIFT SURVEY 2001

Arriving late from their winter quarters, it is usually May before they are here in any great numbers, and they have mainly returned to southern Africa by the end of August. Whilst here they breed in inaccessible places and are very mobile. No wonder that the Swift *Apus apus* is a species that is not often surveyed.

However, in 1995 a survey was organised to try to determine the numbers of Swifts throughout Cheshire. Due to bad weather in June of that year the survey had to be completed in 1996. The results were duly published and gave a population in the SECOS area of 1479 pairs. The survey also formally recognised the existence of a colony in the west end of Crewe which, with a population of around 450 pairs, was amongst the largest in Britain. Because of this colony of Swifts the six streets in the area have been designated as a Site of Biological Importance, one of only two urban SBIs in Cheshire.

During the following years several members commented that the numbers of Swifts seemed to have declined and we decided to organise a follow-up survey covering the SECOS area. This was duly organised for 2001 using the same guidelines as the 1995/6 survey, i.e.

- count screaming birds at colony sites
- only count in good weather (warm, little wind and no rain)
- only count after 9.00 pm

This should enable the results of the two surveys to be directly comparable.

The survey was completed during the first three weeks of June as planned. This is considered to be the best time for such a survey since at this time one of each breeding pair should be out of sight sitting on eggs and no young would be free flying. Each bird therefore should represent a pair. However, Swifts do not breed until two or three years old but some non-breeders return to their natal colony and may be in the screaming parties! This is now getting complicated and it is better to ignore these birds for comparison purposes!

18 intrepid members took part in the survey, walking the streets of towns and villages just as it was going dark, looking up at the eaves of houses and trying hard to make it obvious that they were not staring into bedrooms!

The results of the survey are given in the following table:

Locality	Street	Max no. of birds	Max no. in 1995/6	Difference
Alsager	5 sites	22	36	-14
Basford	Larch Avenue	10	25	-15
Congleton	everywhere	212	248	-36
Crewe Central	Alton Street	80	50	30
Crewe North East	3 sites	29	45	-16
Crewe North West	4 sites	55	97	-42
Crewe South West	9 sites	166	158	8
Crewe West	West end	120	450	-330
Elworth	School Lane	15	18	-3
Elworth	Marsh Green Road	2	3	-1
Haslington	Cartwright Road	35	90	-55
Holmes Chapel	London Road	5	0	5
Holmes Chapel	Macclesfield Road	0	12	-12
Middlewich	everywhere	130	142	-12
Sandbach	Town centre	20	22	-2
Scholar Green	Drenfell Road	0	6	-6
Wheelock Heath	Sandy Lane	7	31	-24
Willaston	Wistaston Road	0	16	-16
Wistaston	Church Lane	12	30	-18
<b>Total in 2001</b>		<b>920</b>		
<b>Total in 1995/6</b>		<b>1479</b>		
<b>PERCENTAGE REDUCTION</b>			<b>38%</b>	

It is immediately obvious that the numbers of Swifts have indeed gone down, and quite dramatically so, with an overall reduction of 38%. The super colony in the west end of Crewe has had a massive reduction from 450 in 1995 to only 120 in 2001. More worrying is the fact that the reduction in numbers is spread across the whole area with virtually every colony showing some reduction. This means that the reduction is not due to local difficulties such as building works restricting access to nesting sites under the eaves of houses but some other unknown cause.

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



## HOUSE MARTIN SURVEY

Please return this year's House Martin survey forms as soon as possible to:

**Brian Martin, 45 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2PF. Tel: 01925 264251.**

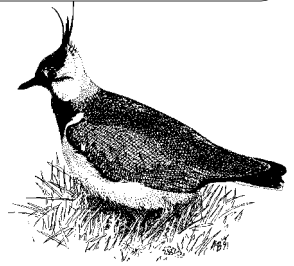
## HELPING FARMLAND BIRDS

Since the last *Bird News* I have had more information about what would be required of anyone who takes part in the Farmland Bird LBAP (Local Biodiversity Action Plan). They will need to walk a transect across the farm on five occasions during the year, two in the breeding season, one in summer and two in winter. Although we have volunteers for the two informal farm surveys at Twemlow and Alderley Edge mentioned in *Bird News* 55, we need more volunteers for this important initiative which aims to help secure the future of Cheshire and Wirral's farmland birds. It would be a pity if we could not find enough members to support work on threatened species which we all know have been in major decline. If you have not done this work before then don't be afraid to join - it is rewarding and a Training Day will be provided (probably in February 2003). If you are interested contact: **David Cogger on 01606 832517 or e-mail him at memsec@cawos.org**

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# View from the Farmyard

What have Starlings, Yellowhammers, Corn Buntings and myself got in common? Answer, we are all becoming endangered species, and agriculture is probably the main cause. Farm jobs are disappearing at a rate of about 400 per week, playing catch-up with our avian friends; the consequences of this will be uncertain for the wildlife. The loss of people from the land will in turn lead to either less intensive farming with the bulk of labour being provided by the farmer and his family, or further intensification with the added demands on labour being aided by increased mechanization. Most recently farmers leaving the industry in numbers I have certainly never seen in my 28 years on the farm have created the changes of greatest note in Cheshire. Farms vacated by tenants have seen their land scattered between other farmers, and the buildings sold for private residences or industrial units. Owned farms are either sold as going concerns or suffer the same fate as rented ones. You would think that following a run of years with declining farm gate prices farmers wouldn't want to carry on working such long hours, but in a bid to stabilize their income they must get bigger. Getting bigger and reducing the amount of labour on the farm in turn create the need for greater mechanization. Modern farm machines are growing rapidly in size as much harvest work is now carried out by contractors due to the shortage of on-farm labour at the busiest times. Farmers' demands for contractors are one of the growth sides of agriculture today; contractors find themselves under increasing demand at crucial times of the farming cycle, and so increase the size of their machines to cope.



What are the consequences of all this for wildlife? Well, with less labour on the farm and squeezed farm incomes, less time and money will be spent on conservation work, planting hedges, maintaining pits and hedge laying. Though a plus could be found if excessive 'cleaning up' comes to an end with hedges flailed less often and ditch sides and hedge bottoms left to grow a few weed plants for a change. Contractors are very good at what they do, but not living on the farm there is always the possibility that wildlife which the farmer knows about and would have avoided disturbing, gets caught up in agricultural practices being carried out by them. My way of ditch digging is already seldom practised by other farmers. It is a great deal less of a disturbance when I set off up a ditch with my shovel and billhook, than when it is done by a 250 horsepower monster. Granted the machine can do it in a fraction of the time, but at what expense to wildlife and plants? The next months and years will continue this change in farm practice; it remains to be observed as to what the consequences will eventually be for our wildlife. Few farmers and their workers will come out as winners, and I rather pessimistically feel that animal, plant and bird species will fare the same. What could become possibly the only bright point of light at the end of the very long and very dark tunnel Britain's wildlife is looking down, comes from the fact that the grants made from the EU to Britain's farmers look like they are going to be targeted toward environmental benefits rather than production. That's great comfort for the Starlings, Yellowhammers and Corn Buntings of this world, but what about me?!

On a very few occasions have I been able to say that a fall of migrants has happened in Toft. September 2002 was a very pleasant month, warm and with only one or two downpours to talk of; birds just quietly drifted away south almost unnoticed. October 3rd brought a night of light winds and gentle rain. The following morning the sun began to melt away the thin mist, the damp wood of the park rail fence steamed, wisps of vapour rose a few inches then vanished, literally into thin air. In the shade the air was chilled, the aged leaves of plants still dripped rainwater, whereas on the sunny south side of the bushes midges gathered in the warm rays, and wood steamed. The Robin's autumn song arose sporadically from several nearby individuals, each singing their claim to winter-feeding territory. Slowly at first a "pheet" or "wheet" from the undergrowth then gradually one after the other in no particular order Willow Warbler after Chiffchaff, Chiffchaff after Willow Warbler, their songs and contact notes emitted from every bush in every direction. In all there must have been dozens picking and flitting through the vegetation, reaching under leaves and into the rough bark for eggs and insects or flitting a few inches flycatcher like above the bush into the shape changing swarms of flies. 10.30am all were in song or eating; by 2pm there was no sign left of them, presumably they were on their way again, south to the next stopover with breakfast.

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



A Sparrow was starting to pine,  
 So he told his wife, "Things aren't too fine,  
 It is now up to you,  
 There's one thing you must do,  
 Lay more eggs, dear, we're on the decline."

**Hazel J Raw**



# Society Spotlight

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

## **WIRRAL & ELLESMERE PORT BARN OWL GROUP**

The Cheshire Barn Owl Project was launched in 1998 by Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The Wirral & Ellesmere Port Barn Owl Group is one of five voluntary groups which have been set up across the county to help implement the LBAP (Local Biodiversity Action Plan) for the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). The group is responsible for the geographical areas covered by Wirral Borough Council, Ellesmere Port and Neston District Council, and the Chester districts to the west of the Shropshire Union Canal. We are currently applying to become a registered charity and, if successful, will be known as The Wirral & Ellesmere Port Barn Owl Trust.

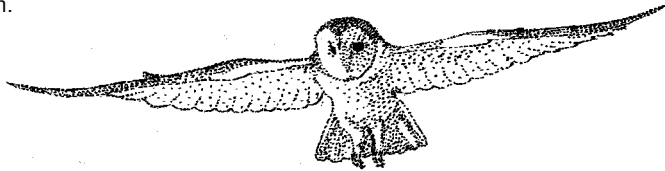
Prior to the Second World War there were around 240 pairs of Barn Owls in Cheshire (including Wirral). In 2001 only 29 breeding pairs were actually confirmed. The situation in the Wirral & Ellesmere Port area is even worse: when the Group was first formed in 1999 only one breeding pair was known, with scattered sightings of individual birds. Last year, the Wirral & Ellesmere Port Barn Owl Group had established that, in fact, there were five breeding pairs in the area, two of which were using nest boxes. There were a total of 17 young hatched, 16 of which were ringed by BTO members.

This year the number of confirmed breeding pairs has more than doubled to 11 but one of those pairs deserted the five eggs that had been laid, almost certainly because of disturbance. Of the other 10 pairs, approximately 42 young have been hatched and one died (a figure of  $\pm 3$  has been allowed for one site where the nest is inaccessible but breeding has been confirmed by observation of adults carrying in prey and hearing young birds 'snoring' in the nest). 37 young have been ringed. Clutches hatched ranged from three to six.

Although the species is undoubtedly under severe threat, it is thought to be often under-recorded and is capable of rapid expansion when conditions are favourable. Our aim is to encourage a viable population of breeding wild Barn Owls in the area and we hope to achieve this by:

1. Collecting and collating Barn Owl reports and sightings.
2. Locating and monitoring breeding pairs.
3. Assessing and recording the quantity and quality of foraging habitat, especially around known nest sites.
4. Protecting and enhancing foraging habitat and nest sites.
5. Creating and maintaining habitat corridors linking known pairs and foraging habitat, both within and outside the area.
6. Erecting nest boxes in areas of suitable habitat where there is a shortage of suitable nest sites.
7. Visiting farmers and land managers to publicise the problem, collecting sightings and encouraging assistance with 4, 5 and 6.

Erection of nest boxes has been under way in the area since 2000; six nest boxes are currently being used for breeding although many more are being used for roosting, judging from pellets found in them.



The group currently has a membership of 63 people from all walks of life, including Malcolm Ingham (Wirral Council Wildlife Officer), Colin Wells (RSPB Warden, Dee Estuary) and two BTO Ringers who all contribute their time and effort in different ways. We hold regular meetings on the last Thursday of every calendar month (except December) and often have guest speakers. A newsletter is sent to members each month.

Members can get involved as much or as little as they wish - it is their support and co-operation we value most of all. The membership subscription of £5.00 per year each is levied to cover public liability/personal accident insurance through the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (to which we are affiliated), administration and postage costs. There is also a small charge (50p) at the meetings for tea/coffee and biscuits.

The group liaises with Local Authority Planning Departments and Biodiversity Officers, the Barn Owl Conservation Network (Hawk & Owl Trust), Local Agenda 21 forums, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and many other bodies and sends annual reports to Cheshire Wildlife Trust, the BTO and other interested groups.

Anyone wishing to join the group or pass on sighting reports or other information should write to Steve Harris, Honorary Secretary, at PO Box 114, Hoylake, Wirral, CH48 8BX, or e-mail him at WEPBarnOwlGroup@aol.com or ring him on 0151 625 4881 (home).

**Steve Harris, Honorary Secretary, Wirral & Ellesmere Port Barn Owl Group**

## **MID-CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

We were sorry to hear of the death of Sheila Greenwood, a CAWOS member for many years and a leading light in the Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society. We are grateful to Harold Fielding for allowing us to reproduce the obituary notice that he wrote for the Mid-Cheshire newsletter.

"It is with great sadness that we record the passing of Sheila Greenwood, who died on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2002 after a long illness. Sheila was Secretary of the Mid-Cheshire Society for many years, with spells as both Treasurer and Chairman, arranging speakers, field trips and weekends away as well as compiling regular newsletters. She was a member of the Society for most of its 39-year history and was always active, enthusiastic, helpful and friendly. She also started the popular mid-week field meetings, a tradition we intend to continue. Sheila faced her long illness with great determination and always remained positive. We will miss her and send our heartfelt sympathy to Bob and the family."

# Ringers' Notebook

A species that I do not think has featured before in 'Ringers' Notebook' is the Curlew, because so few of them are ringed in Cheshire and Wirral. There was, however, a concerted effort to catch them in the late 1970s and early 1980s, including colour-marking to identify birds moving between feeding and roosting areas. One of these birds, ringed on 14 February 1981, has now been found freshly dead in Russia on 13 April 2002, a distance of 2377 km away.

No sooner had I reported, in the last 'Ringers' Notebook', a Kestrel moving to Warwickshire, than the BTO sent us details of a much more impressive movement. A female chick ringed in a nest box at Hargrave on the late date of 16 July 2001 was found as a road casualty near Orléans in France on 4 November 2001, 635 km away. The nest was in one of the boxes erected and maintained by the Broxton Barn Owl Group, and this brood did not seem to be doing very well. Although they were quite close to fledging when ringed, both of the surviving chicks were thin, and a sibling had recently died in the nest, suggesting a shortage of rodent food. Perhaps it was this that triggered the chick's emigration?

The increasing Barn Owl population is providing interesting information. One ringed as a chick in the north Wirral in June 2001 unfortunately drowned in a water trough at Daresbury, near Warrington, in December 2001. The dedicated work of volunteers in the county's Barn Owl study groups shows that the population is now growing quite rapidly. Out of the 106 nest boxes in west Cheshire covered by the Broxton Barn Owl Group, almost half were occupied, 15 by Barn Owls and seven by Kestrels, with a Little Owl and about 23 Stock Doves. 11 Barn Owls were known to have nested in natural tree holes as well. The Barn Owls in the boxes produced about 60 chicks. Trapping adults at the nest sites is also providing important information on survival and movements. For instance, the adult male breeding in a box at Stapleford Hall in 2002 wore a ring showing that he was born in 2001 in a box 2.5 km away. According to the reference books, breeding by one-year-old (or younger) birds is normal, but they might delay to age two if their first year is a bad rodent year. From the size of the owl and raptor populations, 2002 appears to have been a bumper year for rodents.

We are used to seeing lots of foreign Black-headed Gulls here, some of which are colour-ringed and provide interesting sightings, such as the one ringed in France as a chick in 2000 that was recorded at the River Dee in Chester on 1 December 2001. Less well known is that British-bred Black-headed Gulls may emigrate: one ringed as a chick at the Woolston colony in 1997 was found dead in Dublin harbour on 27 February 2002. It is over four years since large numbers of gulls were ringed in Cheshire but they are long-lived birds and still provide many recoveries. A Lesser Black-backed Gull ringed as a two-year-old bird on a Warrington landfill site in 1995 had its number read in the field by a ringer in the Algarve, Portugal, on 12 November 2001. Another of that species, ringed as a chick on the Isle of May, Scotland, in 1988, was found dead near Crewe in January 2002, while the corpse of a Herring Gull, also a Scottish-ringed chick from 1988, was on the tide line at Hale, near Widnes, in January 2001.

My colleague Paul Slater had a letter published in *Bird News* 54 (April 2002), seeking any information on Woodpigeons to help with his intensive study in the Liverpool parks and the farmland surrounding the city. A report has recently been received of what is by far the longest distance movement of a bird from this study, ringed as a chick in Sefton Park, Liverpool on 9 August 2001 and found dead in the Tamar Valley on the Devon/Cornwall border on 23 February this year, 326 km away. Although this bird was ringed and recovered outside the CAWOS area, Paul Slater's letter explained that many of the Liverpool-bred Woodpigeons move out into the edge of Cheshire to feed.

Ringling returns have shown that 25 March 2002 was obviously a big day for movement of finches through Cheshire gardens. One of the Goldfinches ringed that day at Hale, near Widnes, turned up three days later near Bolton, 40 km away, while another Goldfinch caught at the same time had been ringed at Newport in Shropshire six weeks previously. A Siskin caught the same day at Hale had been ringed in Buckinghamshire 23 days earlier, whilst on that day in my own garden at Sutton Weaver I caught a Siskin whose ring showed that he had been ringed in the Scottish borders on 8 July 2001. Other interesting movements of garden-ringed finches were a Goldfinch from Hale

(ringed there on 9 January), caught again at Gosforth in Cumbria on 7 April, 127 km north, and a Siskin from Bidston, Wirral on 26 February 2000 that was recaptured in the dunes on the Dutch coast on 9 December 2001.

Some of the most valuable ringing records are of birds handled several times at different stages in their lives. It is especially exciting when a bird returns after migration. Many CAWOS members will recall that my 'bird of a lifetime' was Sand Martin F912139 that I ringed in a Delamere sand quarry on 1 July 1990. I was then at Djoudj in Senegal when it was caught at roost on 12 March 1991 (4500 km away) and then I caught it again as a breeding male at the same quarry several times in summer 1991. Two recent examples of multiple trappings have come through, the first showing recurrence at a breeding site and the second referring to passage or winter sites. One of the Sand Martins that I caught at a colony near Norley on 1 June 2002 was wearing a ring showing that it had first been ringed at the same quarry on 1 July 1998. This was not surprising in itself, as this summer I caught 98 Sand Martins that had been at the colonies in previous years (two from 1996, two from 1998, eight from 1999, 36 from 2000 and 48 from 2001). What made this bird special was that in between it had been caught by Spanish ringers near Madrid on its return migration on 30 March 2002. As it happens, the Spanish team caught two other Cheshire-ringed Sand Martins at the same time, one from the colony near Wybunbury in July 2001 and the other from a roost at Woolston in August 2001. The other multiply-handled bird was a Siskin, ringed on 31 March 1998 on passage through a Bidston garden, which was caught again 18 days later on or near its breeding grounds in the Highlands of Scotland. A different Merseyside Ringing Group ringer was delighted to catch the same bird at a different north Wirral site on the early date of 7 January this year.

The Spanish effort on Sand Martins also extends to Swallows. A bird ringed in the Woolston roost on 20 August 1999 was caught near Zaragoza on 10 October 2001, while a bird ringed at Tarragona on 25 September 1999 was trapped at his nesting site, with three chicks in the nest, near Hoylake on 25 June 2001.

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# Conservation News

## HALTON AREA

- a) No new major items to report. Second bridge crossing investigations continue. No definitive route has yet been taken though it seems certain that the crossing will cross at least part of the Astmoor Saltmarsh.
- b) Second Deposit draft of Unitary Development plan has now reached consultation stage. Most of the negative impacts raised by CAWOS at the first stage have been resolved in favour of the CAWOS position. However, development of Halton Moss/Manor Park continues as the final say in this area rests with English Partnerships and not Halton Borough Council. English Partnerships have the capacity to grant themselves planning permission without consent from the Council and they have pursued that right vigorously in this case. There is not a thing CAWOS or anybody else can do about the matter.

**Jeff Clarke, Halton Area Representative**

## MACCLESFIELD AREA

- a) Macclesfield Borough Council is currently carrying out a Biodiversity Audit for their area, which CAWOS supports. However, time and manpower limitations could restrict the transfer of our current records to the Audit, due to the time limit set for its completion.
- b) Macclesfield Borough Council's contact on conservation matters is Cameron Crook, a Consultant Ecologist who works two days a week on conservation matters. Members who wish to raise issues with him should contact him on [c.crook@macclesfield.gov.uk](mailto:c.crook@macclesfield.gov.uk) or by mail care of the Planning Department, Town Hall, Macclesfield, SK10 1DP.



c) Financial support for groups within the Macclesfield area could be available via MAGNET (the Macclesfield Area Green NETWORK). An example has been the wild bird feeding station in the Bollin valley between Macclesfield and Prestbury. Contact Paula Revill at Groundwork Macclesfield and Vale Royal on 01625 572681 for further details. A web site will shortly be established on [www.macclesfield-valeroyal.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.macclesfield-valeroyal.groundwork.org.uk) for further information and application forms.

**Derek Kelly, Macclesfield Area Representative**

## **WARRINGTON AREA**

a) Things seem fairly quiet on the conservation front in this area though a likely issue in the near future will be the further attempt to develop Peel Hall, an outstanding area for wildlife adjacent to the M62 in north Warrington. The developers want to put over a thousand houses on the site, which is excellent for warblers and orchids in the summer and Snipe and Short-eared Owl in the winter. Warrington Council has been opposed to this throughout but the developers, Satnams, grubbed up a large area a year or two ago when they became aware that the 100-acre site was about to be designated as a local site of importance for nature conservation.

**Brian Martin, Warrington Area Representative**

## **WIRRAL AREA**

a) An article in the Liverpool Post said that the European Union is compiling a dossier of evidence of damage likely to be caused by developments in the Dee estuary.

b) The wind farm of north Wirral is to be moved a bit further west after complaints from residents in Crosby. Planned wind farms further north (off Southport and Blackpool) have been cancelled due to objections from the MOD the new Euro fighter cannot pick up windmills on its radar. This is a relief for the large concentration of Common Scoter in those areas as well as owners of windmills in any potential enemy territory.

c) Press reports indicate that the local cockle beds at West Kirby and Salisbury Bank may reopen again on Sept 16<sup>th</sup> for a period of six weeks, subject to the approval of the RSPB, English Nature and the Countryside Council of Wales. The Environment Agency for Wales is pressing the National Assembly of Wales to promote a 'cockle regulation order' which would allow them to limit the numbers and levy a charge. Personally I would have thought that it was essential that this regulation was in place before any cockling was to go ahead. Last year 800 people applied for a free permit with resultant over-fishing, disturbance to birds, extensive litter and damage to local property. Oystercatcher numbers in the winter of 2001/2 were low, barely above the lowest count in the past 20 years. (WeBS data)

**Richard Smith, Wirral Area Representative**

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA REPRESENTATIVES**

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# 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.

## A STRING IN THE TALE....

It's early autumn at Inner Marsh Farm. You fight your way to the hide against the strong westerly that's been blowing for days, looking for some shelter from the elements. You open the door to the hide and find it already occupied by: (1) a dishevelled looking, camouflage clad, middle-aged bloke, (2) a keen-looking young lad in his early teens and (3) an elderly lady wearing a Puffin sweater, corduroy trousers and walking boots. You notice a variety of optics in use by the assembled trio; (a) a pair of RSPB Compact 8 x 23 bins, (b) a second-hand Kowa TS 611 scope and (c) a Leica APO 77. Various other items are also visible including (i) a rather battered all-weather notebook, (ii) the new *Collins Guide* and (iii) the *Reader's Digest Pocket Book of British Birds*. In a whispered voice you ask politely, "Anything about?" and get, in no particular order, the following three answers; (A) "Quite a few different ducks" (B) "First winter Med. Gull on the border pool" and (C) "Not a lot".

Your task, should you choose to accept it, is simple - first, match the optics and other items to their respective owners and then identify who said what. Easy... Hands up who matched 'dishevelled camo-man' with (c), (i) and (C); 'elderly lady' with (a), (iii) and (A) and 'keen lad' with (b), (ii) and (B)? Well done. You're absolutely wrong of course. No matter, you've just proved a point and that is, that whether we like it or not we all, to some extent, make subjective judgements about others of our tribe based on simple (often misleading) clues. The way we dress, the bins we carry, what we say, even the above example, rightly or wrongly, all lead to judgements being made about a person's 'birding credentials' or lack thereof. I can almost hear the voices.... "Surely any self-respecting birder wouldn't even BE at IMF off the back of westerlies at that time of year. They'd be somewhere between Hilbre and New Brighton looking for Leach's Petrels, Sabine's Gulls and assorted skuas. Or, they'd be checking their pagers for the latest storm blown rarity. Or, they'd be on the Scillies or Shetland?" Like I said.... judgements, judgements, judgements.... so what?

Well, I guess that depends on where you are in the pecking order. Oh yes, believe me, there IS a pecking order and if you're a relative beginner, you're constantly reminded of it. It's challenging enough trying to find the picture of the bird you're looking at in your bird book without some hairy bloke next to you banging on to his mate about primary projection, lesser coverts and tertials. Besides, your book doesn't even HAVE a picture of a Broad-billed Sandpiper in it... and how can they tell anyway, it must be a mile away...and, which one exactly is it among the "330 Dunlin, 27 Sanderling, 4 Little Stints, 751 Redshank, 16 Ruff and a Curlew Sandpiper" scrawled authoritatively in the logbook?

Now, in a perfect world, the hairy bloke and his mate notice your puzzled expression, inferior binoculars and *Observer's Book of Birds* and 'Hairy' let's you have a look through his scope at the Broad-billed Sandpiper, tells you where you can pick up some DECENT second-hand optics and a cheap copy of the *Concise Edition of the BWP* and lets his mate explain why the 'BB Sand.' is different from the Dunlin feeding nearby - best still, in terms you understand and without a single mention of 'jizz'! Hairy then helpfully explains the bird's likely origin and why it's rare in these parts, whilst his mate (i) tells you about other good birding spots, (ii) gives you directions for a Grey Phalarope down the road and (iii) directs you to Richard Smith's excellent web site for future reference. Anybody recognise this scenario? Lucky you!

How about this one? "Hello", you say innocently. Hairy raises his head from his scope and looks at you stony faced. 'Trevor' meanwhile hasn't budged, he's still looking at the Broad-billed Sandpiper. As his eyes pause briefly over your leather cased 10 x 50s, Hairy grunts something and begins looking through his scope again. That's it - end of conversation. Pecking order reinforced. You want to say something back but decide not to; after all, these guys have probably forgotten more than you know. If only you'd had a Manfrotto tripod slung over your shoulder and a pair of Swarovski EL's around your neck. Perhaps then you would have been treated differently?

Maybe I'm being overly cynical. The above scenarios are, after all, rather extreme. Well, the first one certainly is. The second, I'm not so sure about! As a certain well-known Hairy once put it, "Birdwatchers are tense, competitive, selfish, shifty, dishonest, distrusting, boorish, pedantic, unsentimental, arrogant and - above all - envious" and I reckon you can add uncommunicative and downright elitist to the list too. Put that lot together and if you're a relative novice trying to hone your birding skills you're in for a very hard time. Well, I reckon that's a great shame. So to make up for being a bit of a grunting Hairy myself at times, I've decided to have the birding equivalent of a full body wax, to wit a personal tale of double standards to prick the consciences of experienced birders everywhere...

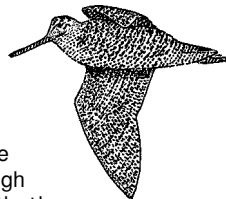
I was sitting on a rock one day (as you do) when a Black-tailed Godwit flew past. How odd the train of thought such a simple thing can trigger. It reminded me of the time I'd heard a chap talking to his friend about just such a bird. The conversation went something like this (it works best if you can imagine it in a West Country accent). "There's one Dave, on the mud at the back of the pool", he said. "What's that?" his friend replied. "Black-tailed Goblet", the chap announced. Goblet? Did he REALLY say Goblet?! At first I thought that maybe he had a cold. No such luck and a real shame too because I reckon I could probably have coped if he'd just said it the once. Unfortunately for me though there must have been about 30 'Goblets' hidden among the various waders present and he seemed determined to point out every one! Maybe you had to be there, but it DID seem funny at the time...

So too was the occasion when some students I was with were asked to identify a stuffed Starling (I can't for the life of me remember why). Answers included, Redshank, Kingfisher and Osprey - I kid you not. Now you have to be thinking 'phone-in-competitions-on-TV' to get the full impact of that one! You know the type of thing: "Is London, (a) a city (b) a country or (c) a planet?" because as mind-numbingly simple as the answer always appears to be, you just know that somebody will get it wrong - and still phone in!!! And then, of course, there was the one about the Missile Thrush *Turdus polaris* (!) and I'll tell you now, that this was not, as it might appear, simply the happy result of a game of Chinese whispers. Need I go on? The point is that people get things wrong and human nature being what it is, it's hard not to take a certain amount of cruel pleasure from their misfortune and feel just the teeny-weeniest bit superior as a result. But as I sat there on my rock, smiling happily to myself, I heard the gentle tap, tap tapping of skeletons in a closet somewhere, trying to get out. The mistakes OTHERS make? How easily we forget...

Many years ago I had the privilege to be studying Dippers in Scotland. It was part of my PhD on nestling birds and the deal was that my friend (let's call him Trevor) would help me with my fieldwork and I'd help him with his work on Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts. Well, we'd just finished ringing some Dipper nestlings under a bridge and it was getting dumpy. The colours had faded from the landscape and the night sky was upon us. Time to head off. The problem was we'd driven down a track to get to the Dipper nest site and had not left ourselves enough room to turn the car around and so had, instead, to do a 180 in an adjacent field. An adjacent, muddy, field. It was whilst we were pushing the (now stuck) car out of the field that a small owl flitted by, giving the odd squeak as it did so, before disappearing behind the silhouette of a nearby wood. We both said "Little Owl" and thought nothing more of it. That was until the next day when we happened to mention it to the Prof. who was supervising us. He told us that you just didn't get Little Owls that far north; in fact, and this was the killer... Tengmalm's Owl was more likely! I guess, in retrospect, he was being sarcastic. My friend and I, however, took this particular piece of information at face value and neither knowing at the time what a Tengmalm's Owl was, nor its extreme rarity in Britain, easily convinced ourselves with a quick trip to the university library that a Tengmalm's Owl was indeed what we had seen.

So, did we keep this to ourselves? And miss the perfect opportunity for some serious street cred? Of course we didn't! I'd like to be able to say that we showed a little restraint, a little caution, that we at least used the word 'possible' in the context of the aforementioned owl. But I'm afraid I'd be lying. No, we simply told a friend who told a friend who told a friend about the owl, until when we arrived at the site the next evening, a sizeable crowd had gathered, scopes at the ready. Fortunately, as it turned out, we knew none of the assorted assemblage of dedicated twitchers, some of whom had travelled considerable distances for the chance of this sought after little gem. So, without further ado, and relishing the prospect of a little fame, we made our way anonymously through the crowd and took up position. For what seemed like an hour, nothing much happened. Then as it

began to get dark the owl flew past, silhouetted against the night sky, intermittently squeaking as it had the evening before. BUT, nobody said a thing. We looked at each other, questioningly. Had everyone missed it? Sensing that something was amiss, we too said nothing. By now it was getting really quite dark and many people if not disgruntled, were, shall we say, far from grunted! The one-liner uttered by the huge Scot next to me summed up the mood nicely. "Oh well," he growled "No owl. Still the roding Woodcock was nice."..... OOPS!!! Let's just say there was enough egg on our faces to keep us in sandwiches for a month, and leave it at that!



And the moral of the story? It's that we all had to start somewhere and painful as it may sometimes be, we shouldn't forget our birding pasts. Perhaps that way we'll all be that little bit more tolerant of each other and especially of people who have yet to enjoy some of those finer birding moments that we've taken for granted for so long. So next time you're putting the finishing touches to the notes on that Caspian Tern that just flew east, spare a thought for the chap with the brand new bins who's just been wowed by his first close-up views of Chiffchaff. And please, for goodness' sake, explain to him, as tactfully and as sympathetically as you can (!), why it's really not a good idea for him to tell the world about the 'Greenish Warbler' he's just found - and if you're feeling really brave...well, I'll leave that to you.

**Mark Feltham, 39 Brookfield Ave, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 5RE**

## **ON A POSITIVE NOTE....**

I read the article requesting volunteers to survey farmland birds in *Bird News* 55. I currently take part in the BTO summer and winter farmland survey, although I am not particularly an expert. I would like to help out with this new survey if possible. As I do occasionally have to work away from home, some indication of the time involved would be welcome before I committed absolutely. Are the farms spread throughout the county? Is it possible to contribute by applying the survey procedures to a farm near to one's home?

I joined CAWOS a year or so ago. I remain impressed by *Bird News* and hope to get along to an indoor or outdoor meeting soon (the talk on 'The Merlin' has caught my eye). I fully appreciate the work done by yourself and the rest of the committee; I was the first secretary of the Chester RSPB group some 15 years or so ago and therefore realise that a small group of people constantly take on a considerable amount of work. Having said that, the first couple of editions of *Bird News* I received as a member came across, at least to me, as a little negative with too many desperate requests for help and pleas from the overworked team. I don't know whether you have made a policy decision, but this seems to have changed and the last few editions have been more positive; well done!

*Bird News* should, and currently does, motivate the ordinary member. I appreciate that you do need to request assistance and in no way am I saying there should be less requests; only that these requests should be phrased carefully and positively. I simply picked up on a few gloomy comments in the first couple of editions I received and thought I would pass this observation on, hopefully not too critically.

**Simon J. O'Connor, 3 Gorse Close, Norley, Cheshire, WA6 8PY**

## **SPOTTED CRAKES LIKE MIST NET RIDES!**

The interesting articles on Spotted Crake by Hugh Pulsford and Tony Broome (*Bird News* 55, July 2002) did not mention a noteworthy facet of their habitat preference, namely the species' apparent liking for disturbed mud. Many of the birds at Woolston, Frodsham and Rocksavage have been reported from mist net rides in reed-beds, and Spotted Crakes can sometimes be seen only seconds after a ringer has walked through, churning the mud. Of course, the birds in these rides are more likely to be found than those elsewhere deep in reeds, so the frequency of this habit might be overstated, but certainly several Woolston birders have seen their first Spotted Crakes by looking along muddy mist net rides shortly after ringers have moved through.

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## **GOLDEN PLOVER A CHANGE IN BREEDING PATTERN?**

I was interested to read 'Golden Plover - A Change In Breeding Pattern' by J V Oxenham in the July 2002 issue of *Bird News*. My wife and I compiled the Golden Plover accounts for the *Cheshire (& Wirral) Bird Report* for the period 1984-1999. For the years 1994-1999, to help with compiling, I entered records from individual contributors on to our PC and still hold copies of the files I created (the original records have of course been archived). Two of these records, not published in the *Reports*, may be of interest:

1995 - two males at Tagsclough on March 12th.

1998 - one male at Tagsclough on March 22nd.

In addition, although a record of nine Golden Plover in flight at Allgreave on 9th March 1997 is included in the *Report*, the fact that some song was heard is not mentioned.

The above appear to be the only relevant records for the years 1994-1999 other than the 1996 record mentioned by John. However, taken with some others of the records tabulated by John, they may lend support to the idea that return to the breeding grounds has been creeping gradually earlier for at least the last twenty years.

It could be the case that arrival became slightly earlier in the first years of the 20th century. Coward and Oldham in *Birds of Cheshire* (1900) gave the arrival on the breeding grounds in East Cheshire as "early in April". Whereas, in the *Fauna* (1910) Coward wrote "The birds reach the moors at the end of March or early in April". It is impossible to know whether this apparent small change in arrival date is due to additional information becoming available to Coward or was a real change. Only time will tell if the much earlier return noted from 2000 will be maintained but it is certainly well worth monitoring.

A check in the record files for 1994-1999 on late dates on the breeding grounds was disappointing for the lack of information submitted. The latest date was in 1994 when two pairs with young were by the Cat & Fiddle on August 1st. Otherwise 'last' dates vary from 30th May (in 1997) to 12th July (in 1999). Although the first birds do return to their Cheshire wintering grounds in July and August only very small numbers are usually present in these months and it is September or October before large flocks gather. There appears to be no data in the CAWOS archive, at least for recent years, on which any safe conclusion about a possible earlier return to wintering grounds can be based.

Note: While looking through Golden Plover accounts in past *Cheshire (& Wirral) Bird Reports* and the previously mentioned record files, I noticed what appears to be a very irregularly reported spring passage of sizeable numbers through the East Cheshire hills. 224 were near the Cat & Fiddle on 22nd April 1984, 110 were at Bakestonedale on 16th April 1994 while 50 were at Axe Edge (just outside the Cheshire boundary) on 9th April 1995. Certainly the first two flocks seem too large to be local birds prior to breeding dispersal. Does anyone have any similar records or thoughts on these?

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## **BIRDS AND ALCOHOL INTAKE**

In *Bird News* 53 (January 2002) Richard Gabb noted an apparent case of intoxication in a Green Woodpecker that seemed to enjoy feeding on fermented apples. I have no information on woodpeckers, but this must be an occupational hazard in all species that feed on fruit.

I noted in my Hamlyn book on Fieldfares\* that occasionally I have found birds to be disoriented, apparently intoxicated from the effects of eating over-ripe, fermenting, apples, and twice I caught 'drunken' Fieldfares by hand at Daresbury Fruit Farm, both of which flew off strongly after being kept for about 30 minutes in a dark place. Similar behaviour has been reported in American Robins, another member of the thrush family. The orchard-feeding Fieldfares show a clear preference for certain varieties of apple. The softer, yellower ones are taken first, with Golden Delicious the most favoured, while harder, redder varieties are left until last. The former type tends to ripen quickest, and to rot sooner than the harder varieties. The softer ones are obviously easier to eat but perhaps their earlier selection indicates that Fieldfares prefer to take the sweeter apples before the sugar turns to alcohol?

Alcohol intake in birds has been the subject of some scientific study. German researchers at the University of Frankfurt reported in 1997 in the *Journal für Ornithologie* that they had fed Starlings with a diet laced with alcohol. After half an hour the birds were sober again, despite their blood having shown a remarkable turnover of alcohol. Even when given the equivalent in human terms of several large whiskies, Starlings could metabolise the intake within two hours.

The explanation is that the enzyme that breaks down alcohol, alcohol dehydrogenase, works 14 times faster in Starlings than in humans. Fruit-eating birds also contain more of the enzyme in their bodies than do seed-eaters, suggesting that the ability to metabolise alcohol rapidly has developed in fruit-eaters and must confer some evolutionary advantage. One can surmise that birds whose senses were dulled would more readily fall prey to predators, and natural selection could quite rapidly favour those in the population which sobered up most quickly.

I leave it to readers of *Bird News* to think of the human analogies.

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\*Copies of my 128-page Hamlyn monograph *The Fieldfare* are available from me at £3.50 each including p&p. The book was published in 1994 at £9.99. I will donate £1 to CAWOS (+ Gift Aid supplement!) for each one sold to *Bird News* readers.

## **ERIC HARDY**

Reading Sheila Blamire's letter in the last issue of *Bird News* about Eric Hardy's death reminded me what a debt North-West birders owe to Eric. In my early days of birding on the Wirral in the 1950s everyone on the local scene used to read Eric's weekly column in the *Daily Post*. This was a habit I continued for the next 30 years or so, even after moving to Macclesfield. I was also a regular listener to his 'Countryside' broadcasts on Radio Merseyside in later years. Eric told us, in the days before pagers and birdlines, what we had missed or occasionally if we were lucky what was still available to see by the time he mentioned it.

He could be vitriolic about people he did not agree with, particularly other people in the world of conservation. He was also a pedantic critic of other people's writing. If a book was published which missed out an obscure record known to Eric he never failed to point this out over the airwaves or in his column or both. Sheila also mentions his position on disclosing the whereabouts of rare breeding birds. I personally never felt comfortable with this although I respected his reasoning.

My strongest personal memory is being taken in a small school party, around 1956, to Hilbre Island by Eric and having a super day with many birds pointed out to me that I would not otherwise have seen. His death is, as Sheila says, the end of an era. He will be sadly missed.

**Alan Booth, Hesketh, 160 Gawsworth Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 8UQ**

## **FRODSHAM MARSH A DIFFERENT VIEW**

Mike Crawley's 'Guest Editorial' (*Bird News* 55) draws attention to the importance of land at Frodsham Marsh. This is indeed one of the best sites for birds in the county, not just for the rarities that Mike mentions. Many species of conservation concern are flourishing there, such as the largest concentrations of breeding Lapwing and Grey Partridge in the CAWOS area and strong populations of many ground-nesting and seed-eating birds. Much of this status is directly because of the activities of those using the land there, and there should surely be no dispute that the whole area is good for birds.

A good place for birds is not necessarily a good place for birders, however. Some birdwatchers, including CAWOS members, appear to have problems with the landowners, farmers and wildfowlers, and Mike Crawley's article gives his view, with uncomplimentary comments about these land users. On the other hand, members of Merseyside Ringing Group have been ringing birds on many parts of Frodsham Marsh for almost 50 years. I myself have been ringing and nest recording there since 1980, with the permission and the active cooperation of the landowners, farmers and wildfowlers. Similarly, the WeBS counters have a very long record of access to the adjacent areas, which have the same landowners, farmers and wildfowlers, to carry out their monthly counts of the important waterfowl in the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar site.

So, readers of *Bird News* should know that things are not as bleak as the 'Guest Editorial' states. They might also like to think why those undertaking ringing and WeBS recording have a history of good relationships and two-way exchange of information with the various owners and occupiers of the land at Frodsham Marsh, while some birders appear to find extreme difficulty with the same people.

I should state that I have no formal connection with any of the people or organisations owning or using the land at Frodsham Marsh, although I have talked a lot to all of them and respect their use of the land. I write as someone who has enjoyed spending a lot of time there for many years and recognises that the work of the owners and tenants, either deliberately or inadvertently, contributes to the magnificence of this site for birds.

**Professor David Norman, Rowswood Cottage, Ridding Lane, Sutton Weaver, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 6PF. Tel: 01928 711064. E-mail: david.norman@physics.org**

## **NATURE RESERVE GETS A FACE-LIFT**

On Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September, Cheshire Wildlife Trust were at Holcroft Moss in Glazebrook, Warrington with their 1000<sup>th</sup> new member this millennium and representatives from the Environment Agency and English Nature, to complete the final piece of a three-year project to restore one of Cheshire's natural wetlands.

Thanks to the efforts of Cheshire Wildlife Trust, and funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, WREN (Waste Recycling Environment Network) and English Nature, Cheshire's only known area of lowland bog left uncut for peat, is being given a new lifeline. Over the last two years Cheshire Wildlife Trust have been inserting recycled plastic piling around the boundary wall of Holcroft Moss in Glazebrook, near Warrington. The two-metre lengths of interlocking plastic act to maintain water levels by forming a dam, preventing drainage from the site that it surrounds.

Since the start of the Heritage Lottery Fund Capital Works Programme, Holcroft Moss has seen two sides of its boundary banded with recycled plastic piling and the third side was one sheet short of being complete. That is until Peter Jones, the Trust's 1000<sup>th</sup> new member since the turn of the new millennium, hammered in the final 1000<sup>th</sup> metre sheet. Over 900 metres of plastic pilings, (that's 2932 sheets!!) have been hammered 1.5 metres down into the peat.

The purpose of this project, the results of which are being monitored very closely by a number of local, regional and national organisations, is to try and restore Holcroft Moss closer to how it used to be by increasing water retention on what should be a very wet site. The vegetation of this Site of Special Scientific Interest is dominated by purple moor-grass, with abundant heather, cross-leaved heath and cranberry. Six species of sphagnum moss have been recorded.

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# **Indoor Programme**

**~~~ CHANGE TO THE ADVERTISED PROGRAMME ~~~**

## **10th JANUARY 2003 'THE WONDERS OF NORTHERN INDIA' by TIM LOSEBY**

We are very pleased to welcome back to CAWOS Tim Loseby, who is one of the most popular speakers around. His talk tonight starts with a short travelogue of the Uttar Pradesh region taking in the Taj Mahal and the ruined Moghul city of Fatehpur Sikri, culminating in a birding bonanza at the Bharatpur reserve in Rajasthan - arguably one of the best bird reserves in the world. Tim's stunning photography will cover many well-known European species, plus lots of Asian birds. This will be a special evening.

**NB This meeting at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester replaces the advertised lecture.**

Entrance will be £1.50 to CAWOS members and £3.00 to non-members. You may wish to obtain your tickets in advance by sending an sae and cheque (payable to CAWOS) to:

**Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QQ**

# Membership News

## Welcome to the following new members:

DJ and G Dunn, FA Harrison, David Fletcher, Mrs D Dickinson, AJ Orton, D Taylor and M Eddowes. The final membership for 2002 is 370, which is 10 more than our previous best of 360 in 2001.

## A meeting of Council was held on July 11th. The following points emerged:

- The financial state of the Society was satisfactory.
- English Nature would take over the insurance of the Rostherne Observatory; the question of third party and employers' liability was still being discussed.
- Geoff and Sheila Blamire were thanked for the enormous amount of work that they had put into the database, which should be much improved for 2003.
- Members were asked to look for possible sources of advertising (both for the *Bird Report* and *Bird News*).
- Work on the *Bird Report* was well in hand.
- Several local conservation reps had submitted reports, which would be printed in *Bird News*.
- Andy Harmer was carrying out a 'survey of surveys' so that we know exactly what is going on in the county (see page 8 for further information).
- Various suggestions were made to encourage more people to send in their records. These will be looked into and followed up as soon as possible.

## 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.

## Postage

After the last issue of *Bird News* was sent out a member reported to me that he had to pay postage on his copy. We have an arrangement with the Royal Mail that, because we send out large postings several times a year, mail will be franked at the sorting office, so any omission is the fault of the Royal Mail, not ours. If this happens to anyone else you could explain this to the postman *and* let me know - if it happens widely I will take it up with the Royal Mail.

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

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# Computerisation of Records

## DATABASE UPDATE

You know the saying "Nobody said it was going to be easy" when everything around you is going wrong? Well, it has certainly felt like that at times! It seems incredible that it is only a year since we put the special announcement about 'Computerisation of Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Records' into *Bird News*, followed by the special mailing of the *Guidelines for the Submission of Computerised Records* and the *Cheshire and Wirral Gazetteer*. And what a year it has been!

We knew there were bound to be problems along the way. We also knew that ideally we should design and write our own dedicated database, but though we had the expertise in Geoff Blamire, he did not have the spare time to put towards what would have been a major undertaking. Instead



he put his time and energy into writing an import and validation programme to enable the automatic electronic input of computerised records into the database kindly given to us by the Derbyshire Ornithological Society. This has worked with some success, though there never was going to be an exact match between the DOS system and our 'perceived' requirements. The upshot of it all is that Geoff, borne out of a certain amount of frustration, has now written a new, CAWOS-dedicated system that should prove both easier to use and will do what we want it to do - rather than the other way round!

Geoff has taken over the job of Database Manager from Dave Walters for the time being and is importing the 2001 records into this new system in order to test it, smooth out any problems and get it ready for the 2002 submissions! We would like to thank Dave for originally taking on this role; a role that proved more time-consuming and complicated than any of us had thought at the time. Some contributors were great - following our guidelines as best as they could, or seeking help if needed. Others? Well....

Though we had agonised over the guidelines to try to make them not too complicated, but at the same time comprehensive, some contributors did not follow them or seek help to try to follow them. So computerised records were sent to us in a far greater range of formats than we had ever envisaged. Also the variety within the fields was incredible. Dates were presented in every way imaginable. New and little-known sites were used with no back-up information to locate them. Some fields included several pieces of information rather than just one, e.g. the site name, map refs and site ID all 'lumped' together in one column. We also received thousands of individual records of 'common' species for every day of the year; these would be better submitted as monthly maxima, particularly if comparisons to previous years are made. Sorting out all of these took up a great deal of time in order to re-format the records ready for importing. *However enough of my 'gripes'.*

We are very grateful to the record number of contributors who submitted such a tremendous amount of data. We will be voicing our thanks and sending out feedback on an individual basis to all contributors, with suggestions to make submission easier for both parties hopefully! Contributors who are current CAWOS members will be sent this letter with their 2001 *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report*. We apologise for this feedback going out so late, we had intended to have sent it out by now, but events have overtaken us.

We've also had a number of problems with the 'handling' of paper records, starting with a delay in forwarding the records ready for distribution to the volunteer inputters. In the end the paper records were manually inputted by just one person, a mammoth task, which inevitably led to an unacceptable level of errors being made. We have now thoroughly checked every inputted record with the original paper record, a time-consuming exercise, but we are now 'quietly confident' that everything is correct. Our thanks go to everyone who helped with this exercise and to Colin Schofield for his patience in finishing off the Systematic List!

For the 2002 records (and beyond!) we will definitely be taking up the offers of help we had received to input the paper records into an electronic format. *If you offered for this year we will be in touch!* If you would like to offer for next year - please get in touch. We really would appreciate help, however small or conditional! You will not need Access (database) on your computer as inputting into Excel (or a similar spreadsheet programme) is proving just as simple. The other job we will continue to need help with is re-formatting the number of reports we receive from reserves or groups, which are produced in a Word document format. These reports contain vital information that supplements the 'straight' data received.

We will eventually hold a 'post-mortem' on this year's events, to decide what went well and what we could do better (more of the second than the first I feel!) and also make plans for handling the 2002 records. However, next year we will definitely need to implement a new system to track the progress of records from submission, to manual inputting if paper records, through the verification programme, then sorting out errors such as invalid sites or dates, and finally to the successful import into the database.

Though mistakes have been made we should still feel proud of what we have achieved in such a short space of time, relatively speaking. Hindsight is, of course, a wonderful thing; if only..... Still, nobody said it was going to be easy!

**Sheila Blamire, on behalf of the Database Team**

## LOCAL RECORD CENTRES

Access to relevant information on wildlife and natural features is essential to helping us make better decisions about our natural heritage. Decision makers need an integrated view of environmental, economic and socio-cultural information to deliver a sustainable future. Whilst policy can be informed by summaries of the relevant data, decisions on individual programmes and projects require information on specific sites and species. This information needs to be obtained, verified, stored and then made available to local, regional and national users. English Nature believes that the key mechanism for securing access to such information is a network of Local Record Centres.

The environment is the bedrock of sustainability and we need reliable information in order to determine priorities for biodiversity and assess outcomes. In particular, we need up to date information on the status of habitats and species to help us judge the success of Biodiversity Action Plans. Local Record Centres lie at the heart of the National Biodiversity Network and the establishment of a comprehensive network of record centres is a key objective of English Nature. The National Biodiversity Network is a UK initiative that aims to improve access to information on biodiversity. We support the focus on local data, collected and held to common standards, which can be used locally, but is capable of aggregation for use at regional or national scale.

There is a large volume of data about wildlife and natural features and more is being collected all the time. Most is held in a variety of formats and is difficult to access. We need simple ways of storing, managing and providing access to information by entering the data once and using it for many purposes. We need to work with data collectors to encourage well-designed and co-ordinated survey and monitoring programmes that integrate national needs with regional or local requirements. A reliable network of Local Record Centres will help achieve these objectives.

### **The key functions of Local Record Centres are:**

- To provide a focus for data collection, storage and access in a geographical area, with the ability to support other centres such as regional observatories.

- To promote agreed data standards and support volunteers to achieve these.

- To promote and support well-planned and locally relevant survey and monitoring programmes.

- To provide easy access, for all, to relevant data and information.

### **English Nature's role**

As a member of the National Biodiversity Network Trust, English Nature will participate in the establishment of an effective network of Local Record Centres. We believe that this can be achieved through local partnerships to establish centres where none exists, and by reviewing and rationalising existing centres to ensure that they meet the required standards.

Achieving nature conservation objectives in towns, cities and the countryside needs close collaboration between a wide range of interest groups. We recognise the importance of volunteers and charitable societies in collecting biological information and we will work with Local Record Centres and relevant bodies to ensure that this important source of data is recognised and supported. Through the Lifescapes initiative, English Nature is exploring, with partners, integrated approaches that support the delivery of biodiversity. Given the pressures on public bodies, and the need for more efficient approaches, English Nature is exploring the extension of the Local Record Centre concept to accommodate other information needs on the historic and cultural aspects of land. This 'heritage' information is a key influence on development planning and control and may be a more sustainable route to securing support for local data centres from hard-pressed county, regional and national statutory bodies.

### **English Nature will support Local Record Centres to:**

- Manage our biological records, ensuring that relevant past, and future data, is deposited with the centres.

- Develop information products with the Local Record Centres that support easy access to environmental information by the public and statutory users, including local authorities, regional observatories, national Government and agencies.

- Encourage local surveys that focus on the species, habitats and natural features that are of national importance in a local area.

Contribute to stable funding of Local Record Centres through service level agreements that clarify the services provided to us by the centres and what we expect of them in return.

Encourage other funding partners, including Local Authorities and agencies, to consider options for heritage data centres that will include the range of purposes and services we require from Local Record Centres.

Provide access to contextual information on Natural Areas, SSSIs and biodiversity targets that enable Local Record Centres to meet the information needs of users.

Work with the National Biodiversity Network partners to establish appropriate standards and systems of surveillance that meet the biodiversity needs of regional and national Government.



# Video Review

## ESCAPE TO TRANQUILITY - MOORE NATURE RESERVE

### Produced by Dream Catcher Films

This video, entitled *Escape to Tranquility*, takes you on a 30 minute tour of Moore Nature Reserve in north Cheshire - 200 acres of wetlands, woodlands, meadows and lakes, sandwiched between the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal.

The first part of the film is a brief introduction about the reserve, whilst the second part leads you through the changing landscapes of the seasons. The sleeve on the video says "You will see wildlife rarely captured on video; you will hear relaxing music and sounds of nature; you will be transported into tranquility." The latter is certainly true - whether you are familiar with the reserve or not. However the video, though classed as a relaxation film, is also educational as a list of all the species with timings of when they appear is provided. These range from dozens of different plants, including three species of orchids, to 14 species of butterflies, eight species of beetles, bees and bugs, 10 species of dragonflies, and of course many different birds, including Tawny Owl, Buzzard, Yellowhammer and Linnet.

Dream Catcher Films, though created in 1999 as an amateur film company, really began to evolve at the beginning of 2001, when they were approached by Estelle Linney, Head Ranger at Moore Nature Reserve, to make a film of the area.

Carl Brandwood has a long history in the film making business and started making films on cine film. He began by recording the nature of the Isle of Man, his country of birth. When he was 23 he moved to South Africa to take up a post at SABC. In 1978 he took a post in NorthWest BBC as a sound editor. Unfortunately made redundant due to the advent of video, Carl took up a post as a manager in one of the first multiplex cinemas. Then in 1999 he co-founded Dream Catcher Films with Peter Axford, who had begun filming as a hobby, fitting it in between his university studies.

Carl's most vivid memories in making *Escape to Tranquility* was filming the woodpeckers feeding their young (acquired with help from the photographer Mike Deane), the baby Moorhen begging for food and a cheeky squirrel! Peter also helped with the film and he recalls the peace and quiet of the reserve and the excitement of filming the rare dragonflies that appear in the film. He is also credited with dreaming up the title.

Filming took place over two and a half years, although I understand that the pace was substantially increased in April - September 2001, as funding had been secured from Moore Nature Reserve that April. Editing took two months.

The video can be bought for £9.99 at Moore Post Office (Moore village about a mile from the reserve), Warrington Information Centre (in Warrington Market) and Warrington Museum. Alternatively people can order by ringing Carl on 01925 231726. The 'low' price can be accredited to the funding received from the reserve, which helped to absorb some of the costs.

We all need to escape once in a while - here you can do that without leaving your armchair!

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

# Diary

## NOVEMBER

- 1 **CAWOS** 'MERLIN' by John Lawton Roberts
- 3 CRSPB Woolston Eyes - contact John & Tracy Langley 01244 678781
- 5 ADNHS SOCIAL EVENING & FIREWORKS - ticket only
- 5 MCOS High Tide at Parkgate - contact Harold Fielding 01606 882529
- 5 **High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 9:30am (HW 11:13, 10.1m)**
- 6 **High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 10:00am (HW 11:56, 10.1m)**
- 7 CADOS 'OUT OF AFRICA' by Steve Holmes
- 8 MCOS 'GOA - 2002 CLUB VISIT' by Alan Garner & Mike Hems
- 8 SECOS 'SPRING IN SPAIN' by Mike Wilkes
- 8 MCOS 'GOA - A BIRDER'S PARADISE' by Alan Garner & Mike Hems
- 10 NCRSPB Ellesmere, meet Ellesmere at 9:30am
- 10 KOS Wigan Flashes, meet Sessions House, Knutsford at 9:00am
- 11 SRSPB 'THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE PENNINES' by Gordon Yates
- 12 MRSPB '25 YEARS' CELEBRATION' by Gordon Yates
- 12 ADNHS 'THE WESTERN ISLE - A Naturalist's View from a Tent!' by Pauline Mellor
- 13 HO 'BIRDS OF THE WETLANDS' by Tony Hamblin
- 15 NCRSPB 'SPOIL TO SPOONBILLS' by Ian Higginson, RSPB Conwy
- 16 MCOS Marshside/Martin Mere - contact Paul Grimmett 01925 268770
- 17 HPRSPB Blithfield Reservoir by car, meet at Memorial Hall car park, Marple, at 8:30am
- 17 HO North Wales coast by coach - ring for details
- 17 MRSPB Old Moor Wetlands Centre - contact Tricia Thompson 01625 526546
- 17 SECOS Southport & Mere Sands Wood by mini-bus - ring for details
- 20 CRSPB 'CZECHOSLOVAKIAN WILDLIFE' by Terry Pickford
- 22 KOS 'COSTA RICA' by Valerie McFarland
- 23 CADOS Park Hall field trip - ring Don Coan 01244 660621 for details
- 24 WGOS Leighton Moss by coach departing at 8am - ring for details
- 25 HPRSPB 'SEABIRD SUMMER' and 'BIRDS OF THE PENNINE FOREST' by Gordon Yates
- 26 ADNHS 'THE 13<sup>th</sup> EARL OF DERBY, KNOWSLEY & ITS MENAGERIE' by Steve Woolfall
- 29 WGOS 'KOOKABURRAS, CURRAWONGS & CROCODILES' by Keith Offord

## DECEMBER

- 5 CADOS 'WHAT'S THAT RAPTOR?' by Keith Offord
- 6 **CAWOS** 'BIRDS OF SOUTHERN TEXAS' by Mike Wilkes
- 7 NCRSPB Wigan Flashes, meet Pennington Flash (Pay & Display) at 9:00am
- 8 HPRSPB Martin Mere by car, meet at Memorial Hall car park, Marple, at 8:30am
- 8 CADOS Marshside field trip - ring Peter Hale 01244 341074 for details
- 8 KOS Marshside/Martin Mere, meet Sessions House, Knutsford at 9:00am
- 8 CRSPB Dee Estuary - contact John Wild 01244 336403
- 9 SRSPB 'BIRD BEHAVIOUR' by Valerie McFarland
- 10 ADNHS 'TREK TO UZBEKISTAN' by Lynette Fairclough
- 10 MRSPB 'THE ART OF BIRD MISIDENTIFICATION' by Tim Melling
- 10 MCOS Moore Nature Reserve/Christmas lunch - contact Harold Fielding 01606 882529
- 11 HO 'ISLAY MAGIC' by Gordon Yates
- 11 CRSPB MEMBERS' EVENING
- 13 KOS CHRISTMAS PARTY
- 13 WGOS 'TALK' by Brian Dyke and a social evening
- 13 MCOS 'ISLAY, JEWEL OF THE HEBRIDES' by Gordon Yates
- 13 SECOS 'NIGHT OF BIRDSONG' by David Tolliday
- 14 ADNHS Pre-Christmas walk and pub lunch - ring for details

- 15 SECOS Connah's Quay by mini-bus - ring for details
- 15 MCOS Shropshire Meres - contact Les Goulding 01925 265578
- 16 HPRSPB CHRISTMAS PARTY
- 21 Banks Road Birdwatch, Lower Heswall - 9:00am (HW 12:06, 9.00m)**
- 26 HPRSPB Boxing Day walk at 10am, to be confirmed

## JANUARY 2003

- 4 CADOS North Wales coast field trip - ring Dave King 0151 327 7212 for details
- 8 HO 'BIRDS OF MOORE' by Michael Deane
- 9 CADOS 'GALAPAGOS' by Dave & Singrun Tollerton
- 10 CAWOS 'THE WONDERS OF NORTHERN INDIA: BHARATPUR, TAJ MAHAL AND MORE....'  
by Tim Loseby, Grosvenor Museum, Chester - this replaces the advertised talk**
- 10 MCOS 'THE FARNE ISLANDS' by Martyn Jamieson
- 10 SECOS 'FROM THREE SISTERS TO SEVEN SISTERS' by Charles Owen
- 11 KOS Old Moor Wetland Centre, nr Barnsley, meet Sessions House, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 11 MCOS Gigrin Farm - contact Mike Allsopp 0151 348 4500
- 12 CRSPB Point of Ayr - contact Peter Stevenson 01352 716886
- 13 SRSPB 'WHAT'S THAT RAPTOR' by Keith Offord
- 14 ADNHS 'BOLTON'S WILDLIFE' by Patrick Waring
- 14 MRSPB 'PEAK DISTRICT WILDLIFE' by Paul Hobson
- 14 MCOS Mere Sands/Martin Mere day trip - contact Harold Fielding 01606 882529
- 15 CRSPB 'NATURAL HISTORY OF NORTHWICH' by Paul Hill
- 17 NCRSPB MEMBERS' EVENING & QUIZ
- 18 NCRSPB Llanfairfechan & Penmon Point - ring for details
- 19 WGOS Sandbach and Chelford by car departing at 8:30am - ring for details
- 19 MRSPB Tatton Park morning visit, meet Duke Street car park at 9:00am
- 19 SECOS Draycote Water by mini-bus - ring for details
- 23 MRSPB Bollin Valley with the Bollin Valley Ranger Service - contact Peter Kirk 01625 829119
- 24 KOS 'BIRD MIGRATION: THE GREAT EASTERN FLYWAY' by Mike McKavett
- 26 HO Marshside & Mere Sands Wood by coach departing at 8am - ring for details
- 28 ADNHS 'URBAN FOXES' by Paul Chapman
- 31 WGOS 'NATURAL HERITAGE OF THE PENNINES' by Gordon Yates

## FEBRUARY

- 1 MRSPB Jodrell Bank morning walk, meet at Jodrell Bank at 10:00am
- 1-2 CADOS Norfolk weekend - ring Alun Harley 01925 269430 for details
- 6 CADOS 'BIRDS OF THE WHITE PEAK' by John Power
- 7 CAWOS 'MILLENNIUM WILDLIFE' by Paul Hobson**
- 9 KOS Cromford Canal/Ogston Resr, Derbyshire, meet Sessions House, Knutsford at 9:00am
- 9 CRSPB Pennington Flash - contact David Wright 01829 751662
- 10 SRSPB 'BIRDS & WILDLIFE OF THE GALAPAGOS' by Phil Palmer
- 11 ADNHS 'BATS' by Mike Freeman
- 11 MRSPB 'FUTURE DIRECTIONS' by Keith Clarkson
- 12 HO 'THE RIVER' by Paul Hobson
- 14 MCOS 'HABITUALLY BIRDS' by John Powers
- 14 SECOS 'PILGRIMAGE TO CAPE MAY' by Jeff Clarke
- 15 ADNHS Mere Sands Wood & Martin Mere - contact 0161 928 7896
- 16 MRSPB Marbury Country Park morning visit, meet Duke Street car park at 9:00am
- 16 NCRSPB Rossall & Marton Mere - ring for details
- 16 SECOS Derwent Ings by mini-bus - ring for details
- 16 MCOS Porthmadog - contact Paul Kenyon 01606 77960
- 18 MCOS Point of Ayr day trip - contact Harold Fielding 01606 882529
- 19 CRSPB 'MIGRATION TO THE MASA!' by Keith Offord
- 20-23 MCOS Norfolk weekend - contact Mike Hems 01606 888525
- 21 NCRSPB 'POLAND' by Valerie McFarland
- 23 CADOS Tregaron field trip - ring Don Pawlett 01244 677477 for details

- 23 SRSPB Caerlaverock/Southernness Point by coach departing 7:00am - ring for details  
 25 ADNHS 'THIS BLESSED PLOT' by Andy Harmer  
 28 KOS 'THIS BLESSED PLOT' by Andy Harmer  
 28 WGOS 'TRINIDAD & TOBAGO' by Valerie McFarland  
 tbc WGOS Martin Mere & Southport/Marshside by coach departing at 8am - ring for details

## MARCH

- 6 CADOS AGM + MEMBERS' EVENING  
 7 CAWOS AGM + ILLUSTRATED LECTURE (tbc)

## AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

- ADNHS Altrincham & Dist. Natural History Society, mtgs Hale Methodist Church Hall 7.30pm, Sec. Anne Mason 0161 980 8645  
 CADOS Chester & Dist. Ornithological Soc, mtgs Caldy Valley Community Centre 7.30pm, Prog. Sec. Nick French 01978 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 Peter Griffiths 0161 427 5325 or Pat O'Mara 0161 449 8299 (Outings Sec.)  
 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 St Matthew's Primary Sch, Stretton 7.45pm, Sec. Carol Davidson 01925 635967  
 NNHS Nantwich Natural History Society, mtgs The Gables at 7:30pm, Sec. Mike Holmes 01270 611577, mike@uimprove.com  
 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

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**  
 or, preferably please, by e-mail: [info@cawos.org](mailto:info@cawos.org)



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Televid, 32x + Case £699

Televid, 20-60x Zoom + Case £750

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ATS65 HD, 30x + Case £1049

ATS65 HD, 20-60x Zoom + Case £1099

AT/ST80 HD, 30x + Case £999

AT/ST80 HD, Zoom + Case £1059

### **Zeiss**

#### **Binoculars**

8x40 £719 10x40 £739 7x42 BGAT £599

#### **Telescopes**

65mm T\*FL\* + 23x £834

85mm T\*FL\* + 30x £1134

(add £35 for Zoom e/p)

### **Kahles**

8x32 £449 8x42 £479 10x42 £499

### **Kowa**

#### **Telescopes**

TSN-821/2M, 32x + Case £557

TSN-823/4M, 32x + Case £867

(add £70 for 20-60x Zoom with 820M)

TSN-661/2, 30x + Case £459

TSN-663/4, 30x + Case £678

(£20 less for 20-40x zoom with 660 series)

### **Opticron**

#### **Binoculars**

8x42 DBA £549 8x42 BGA Imagic £299

8x32 BGA Imagic £249 8x42 PCAG-N £349

#### **Telescopes**

ES80 (Ang), 32xHDF + Case £499

HR66, 28xWWHDF + Case £399

MM2 + 15-40x Zoom £209

### **Optolyth**

#### **Telescopes**

TBG/S 80, 30x + Case £538

TBG/S 80 HD, 30x + Case £788

(add £50 for 20-60x Zoom e/p)

### **Avian**

8x32 £259 8x42 £279 10x50 £329

**Birdnet - Premier Paging Service - Rarity News Services.**

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**Imminent dates for your diary:**

Friday 1st November 'The Merlin' by John Lawton Roberts

**FREE  
DELIVERY**  
*certain areas only  
ring for details*



**FREE PRICE  
LIST**

WILD BIRD FOOD	2.5kg	.99		25kg	£ 7.99
BLACK SUNFLOWER SEED	2.5kg	£ 1.99		12.5kg	£ 7.75
SUNFLOWER HEARTS ~ NEW ~	Ring to order			25kg	£25.99
PEANUTS GRADE ONE	2.5kg	£ 2.35		25kg	£16.99
PEANUTS IN NET	each	.45			
WILD BIRD FAT DUMPLINGS	each	.30		per 4	.99
FORTRESS SEED FEEDER ( <i>squirrel proof</i> )		£ 7.75			
FORTRESS PEANUT FEEDER ( <i>squirrel proof</i> )		£ 7.75			
WIRE PEANUT HOLDER SINGLE PERCH		£ 1.55			
WIRE PEANUT HOLDER THREE PERCH		£ 2.35			
RED PLASTIC PEANUT HOLDER		£ 1.15			

Other seed loved by wild birds also available, e.g. canary and foreign finch.  
Also bird nest boxes and houses available. Please ring for details.



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