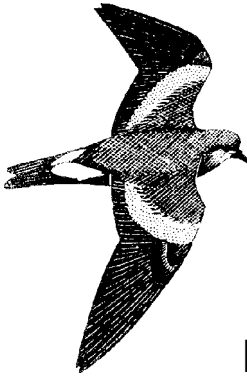


**Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society**

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# **BIRD NEWS**

**Number 57 January 2003**



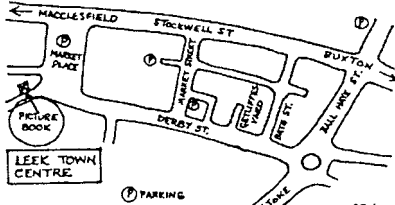
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*Bird News welcomes articles, letters and comments relevant to birdwatching in Cheshire & Wirral. Please either e-mail or post (on disc) your contributions to the Editor at the address shown above.*

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

Front cover: Pied Wagtail by Thelma Sykes

Other illustrations by Phil Jones

# Guest Editorial

It was with a welcome thud that the *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report* 2001 landed on the doormat late last week. Wow! What a change; not only a colour cover, quality photographs, but also great text layout, a readable Systematic List, with distribution maps and superb line drawings; it was an hour before I could be forced to put it down! But what has made this report more significant is that it used data compiled for the first time from a computerised database from electronic record submissions. To say the editors, publication subcommittee, compilers and all involved deserve a standing ovation, barely scratches the surface of the effort and pain that must have gone in to get this report out. Clearly, the computerisation of the record database was not an easy task! Despite the guidelines and information put out by the Society, it has proved an almost unbelievable job to pull some 40,000 bird records into a database; makes "*Ben Hur* look like an epic," as someone once said! In this newsletter, Sheila has commented from the database on common 'errors', which caused the dedicated team sorting the information so many problems, e.g. on the Site ID field there were 20 different permutations for Frodsham No 5 Tank (or is it No. 5 Tank?! So please read Sheila's article and do a rapid sanity check on your 2002 records before you press 'send'!

So has all the computerisation blood, sweat and tears been worth it? Well, if the quality of the 2001 report is only half as a result of this effort, then the answer has to be a resounding 'Yes'. Of course, the facilitation of electronic archiving, record analysis and future compiling will now be a lot easier because of this effort, too. However, will it make or enable more people to submit their local records - I hope so. I know from my own experience that I am now able to easily list all my local, somewhat tedious sightings of say, Robins, or Song Thrush, and send them into the database, something I never did before. There is a comment under 'Membership News' with feedback on the Records/*Bird Report* questionnaire, which clearly shows that we still have many members who do not submit records and are reluctant to do so. In that case, the CAWOS 'organisation' is not doing enough to make that happen, and it should be the challenge and target for us all in 2003 that we facilitate, help, cajole and find ways so that all who want to submit records, but don't currently, are able to do so.

As to the benefits, well, this newsletter contains, amongst others, articles on 'Rookeries in North Cheshire', with records discussed from 1944, an update on 'Stonechats in the East Cheshire Hills', and feedback on the 'Countryside Stewardship Scheme', which makes payments to farmers for managing wildlife habitats on farms. All these show the essential value of record keeping, and submission. Our bird records are our ammunition in the conservation battlefield, and I guess without the information that a database provides, we wouldn't be able to argue for habitat improvements mentioned in the newsletter, like those about to be initiated to Neumann's and Ashton's Flashes.

Also, let's keep the other articles, news, views and letters coming in to *Bird News*. This really is a great little publication and a good read. As ever it's up to us to keep it that way!

**Hugh Pulsford**

**Note: the copy date for the next issue is 7<sup>th</sup> March - *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.

## HOUSE MARTIN SURVEY

Please return 2002's House Martin survey forms as soon as possible to:

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

# 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 period from September to November.*

## First dates for winter visitors

Whooper Swan	Frodsham	Oct 17 <sup>th</sup>
Bewick's Swan	Burton	Oct 10 <sup>th</sup>
Jack Snipe	Sandbach Flashes	Sep 19 <sup>th</sup>
Fieldfare	Sandbach Flashes and Rostherne	Oct 13 <sup>th</sup>
Redwing	Poynton Pool and Rostherne	Oct 6 <sup>th</sup>
Brambling	Hilbre	Oct 9 <sup>th</sup>

## Last dates for selected summer visitors

Garganey	Burton	Sep 12 <sup>th</sup>
Hobby	Tatton	Oct 17 <sup>th</sup>
Little Ringed Plover	Inner Marsh Farm	Sep 14 <sup>th</sup>
Whimbrel	Parkgate	Oct 8 <sup>th</sup>
Common Tern	Inner Marsh Farm	Oct 8 <sup>th</sup>
Swift	Haslington	Sep 10 <sup>th</sup>
Sand Martin	Chelford SQs	Sep 18 <sup>th</sup>
Swallow	Inner Marsh Farm	Nov 4 <sup>th</sup>
House Martin	Inner Marsh Farm	Oct 30 <sup>th</sup>
Tree Pipit	Hilbre	Oct 9 <sup>th</sup>
Redstart	Fiddler's Ferry	Oct 21 <sup>st</sup>
Whinchat	Hoylake Langfields	Oct 28 <sup>th</sup>
Wheatear	Fiddler's Ferry and Parkgate	Oct 6 <sup>th</sup>
Ring Ouzel	Hilbre	Oct 10 <sup>th</sup>
White Wagtail, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Garden Warbler and Pied Flycatcher	Hilbre	all on Sep 14 <sup>th</sup>
Reed Warbler	Rostherne	Oct 10 <sup>th</sup>
Whitethroat	Poynton	Sep 15 <sup>th</sup>
Willow Warbler	Hilbre	Sep 21 <sup>st</sup>
Spotted Flycatcher	Sandbach Flashes	Sep 20 <sup>th</sup>

## SITE REPORTS

### Chelford SQs

c150 Pink-footed Geese flew over on Nov 24<sup>th</sup>. The Ruddy Shelduck was seen occasionally in Sep. Two Pintails arrived on Sep 21<sup>st</sup>. 18 Buzzards on Oct 6<sup>th</sup> was a very high count. The last Hobby sighting was on Sep 24<sup>th</sup>. A Dunlin on Oct 13<sup>th</sup> was the only notable wader. One or two Green Sandpipers were present until Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>. The last Swallow and House Martin sightings were both on Oct 13<sup>th</sup>. Up to three Stonechats appeared from Nov 1<sup>st</sup>. Fieldfares didn't appear until Nov 10<sup>th</sup> but the first Redwings were seen on Oct 12<sup>th</sup>. Two Bramblings flew south on Oct 13<sup>th</sup>. Four Crossbills on Nov 24<sup>th</sup> were the first since 1981.

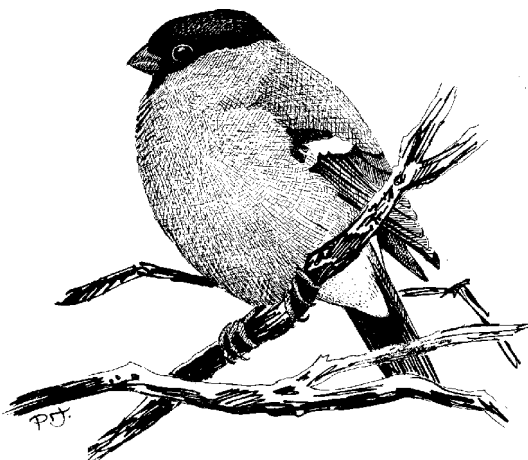
### Dee Estuary

22 Little Egrets were at Burton on Nov 26<sup>th</sup>. Two Whooper Swans were at Parkgate on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> with three at Burton on Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>. 8,600 Shelducks were off Thurstaston on Oct 16<sup>th</sup>. A record 6,500 Wigeon visited Parkgate during high tide on Nov 5<sup>th</sup>. Five newly hatched Mallard chicks were at Gilroy Pond, West Kirby on Nov 10<sup>th</sup>. 6,000 Pintail were at Burton on Nov 7<sup>th</sup>. Four Scaup were at West Kirby ML on Oct 30<sup>th</sup> with two still there next day. Two Long-tailed Ducks flew past Red Rocks and West Kirby ML (Oct 18<sup>th</sup>). Single Marsh Harriers were at Burton (Sep 2<sup>nd</sup>), Heswall (Sep 5<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>) and Parkgate (Nov 5<sup>th</sup>). A late Spotted Crane was flushed by a high tide at Parkgate on Nov

6<sup>th</sup>. 15,000 Oystercatchers were counted between Heswall and West Kirby on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>. Other peak wader counts included 1,000 Knot at Thurstaston on Oct 16<sup>th</sup>, 5,650 Redshanks at Heswall on Oct 6<sup>th</sup> and 55 Greenshanks at Parkgate on Sep 4<sup>th</sup>. Up to three Curlew Sandpipers were at Heswall irregularly between Sep 17<sup>th</sup> and Oct 6<sup>th</sup>. Two Green Sandpipers flew over Ness on Oct 9<sup>th</sup>. Mediterranean Gulls were at Heswall shore (Sep 22<sup>nd</sup>), West Kirby shore (Sep 8<sup>th</sup> and Oct 10<sup>th</sup>) and two at Parkgate (Oct 8<sup>th</sup>). 10 Kittiwakes passed Red Rocks on Sep 5<sup>th</sup>. A late Turtle Dove visited a West Kirby garden (Sep 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>) with this one or another on Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> the latest county record if accepted. Up to six Short-eared Owls were at Parkgate on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and a Swallow flew over West Kirby on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>. Up to three Water Pipits arrived at Neston from Nov 4<sup>th</sup>. The first Bramblings were seven at Burton on Oct 13<sup>th</sup> and two Snow Buntings were at West Kirby shore on Nov 28<sup>th</sup>. On Oct 13<sup>th</sup> a migration watch at Decca Pools produced 1,304 birds including 503 Greenfinches, 294 Chaffinches, 215 Meadow Pipits, 91 Skylarks and a Corn Bunting, whilst on the same day at Denhall Lane, a migration watch there only produced 630 birds including 162 Greenfinches, 148 Chaffinches and 114 Goldfinches.

### Fiddler's Ferry

Two Whooper Swans flew over (Nov 27<sup>th</sup>) and 135 Pink-footed Geese flew north on Nov 24<sup>th</sup>. A White-fronted Goose was with 15 Greylag Geese in Sep. A late Marsh Harrier was seen on Oct 9<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and Nov 5<sup>th</sup>. 10 Buzzards in Sep was a new site record. Three Sanderlings appeared on Oct 4<sup>th</sup> and Nov 4<sup>th</sup> - the first records during those months. A Little Stint was seen (Oct 21<sup>st</sup>). Up to 30 Jack Snipe were seen during Nov. A late Green Sandpiper was seen on Nov 9<sup>th</sup> with a Common Sandpiper on Nov 4<sup>th</sup>. An adult Caspian Gull was reported (Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>). Two Stonechats on Oct 5<sup>th</sup> increased to six next day with six again on Nov 17<sup>th</sup>. Single Wheatears moved through on Oct 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. The first Fieldfares and Redwings were seen on Oct 20<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> respectively. A Willow Tit (Nov 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>) was a good find. 14 Twite arrived on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> and 12 on 17<sup>th</sup>. 11 Bullfinches on Oct 19<sup>th</sup> was a new site record.



### Frodsham

Up to four Little Egrets were present during Sep with three roosting on No.6 tank on several evenings in Oct. The first Whooper Swans arrived on Oct 17<sup>th</sup>. An adult Egyptian Goose added colour to No.6 tank on Sep 27<sup>th</sup>. Up to four Garganey were present until mid-Sep at least. Three Hen Harriers were present on Sep 14<sup>th</sup>. 15 Buzzards was the peak count in Sep. An Avocet was on the Mersey (Sep 20<sup>th</sup>) and the last Little Ringed Plover was seen on Sep 5<sup>th</sup>. Up to 28 Little Stints were recorded daily. Up to 18 Curlew Sandpipers were seen in Sep/Oct. Two Green Sandpipers were seen (Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>) with two Common Sandpipers the previous day. A Mediterranean Gull was seen on Sep 18<sup>th</sup>. A Kittiwake arrived during storms on Oct 27<sup>th</sup>. Several Stonechats were seen during Nov and a wintering Chiffchaff appeared on Nov 10<sup>th</sup>. Passage Spotted and Pied Flycatchers were both recorded during Sep. A Marsh Tit on Sep 29<sup>th</sup> was the first site record.

### Hilbre

A wind blown Storm Petrel appeared on Oct 27<sup>th</sup>. Up to 11 Brent Geese returned from Oct 19<sup>th</sup>. A male Eider on Oct 9<sup>th</sup> was the only record. An Osprey fished offshore on Sep 19<sup>th</sup> and a Hobby flew over on Sep 18<sup>th</sup>. A Pomarine Skua flew past on Sep 5<sup>th</sup>. 100+ Kittiwakes were blown inshore on Oct 27<sup>th</sup> and a Puffin flew past on Sep 24<sup>th</sup>. The last Swallow sighting was on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>. During a large fall on Sep 14<sup>th</sup>, 500 Meadow Pipits, 20 White Wagtails, two Redstarts, two Whinchats, 30 Wheatears, 20 Whitethroats, 20 Garden Warblers and 35 Willow Warblers were recorded. Other migrants included Yellow Wagtail (Sep 1<sup>st</sup>), 21 Grey Wagtails (Sep 20<sup>th</sup>), 12 Wheatears (Sep 20<sup>th</sup>) and Firecrest (Nov 9<sup>th</sup>).

## Inner Marsh Farm

10 Little Egrets roosted on Sep 8<sup>th</sup> and 30 on Oct 28<sup>th</sup> a new county record. The first Bewick's Swans were 22 on Oct 11<sup>th</sup> with five Whooper Swans on Oct 19<sup>th</sup>. A Green-winged Teal was seen on nine dates from Oct 27<sup>th</sup> to Nov 24<sup>th</sup>. The last Garganey sighting was on Sep 4<sup>th</sup>. Single Marsh Harriers appeared (Sep 20<sup>th</sup> and Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>). An Osprey flew over on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> and up to three Spotted Crakes were present during Sep. 650 Knot roosted on Nov 6<sup>th</sup>. Up to three Little Stints were seen regularly from Sep 5<sup>th</sup> to Oct 18<sup>th</sup> with a late bird on Nov 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>. A juv Pectoral Sandpiper was seen on Sep 13<sup>th</sup> and again on Sep 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. Up to five Curlew Sandpipers were seen irregularly from Sep 1<sup>st</sup> to Nov 17<sup>th</sup>. A Long-billed Dowitcher was present for a couple of hours on Nov 10<sup>th</sup>. 2,470 Black-tailed Godwits on Oct 8<sup>th</sup> was a new site record. The last Green Sandpiper sighting was on Oct 5<sup>th</sup>. A Stonechat was seen on Oct 28<sup>th</sup>. A Spotted Flycatcher was seen (Sep 18<sup>th</sup>) with the first Brambling on Oct 17<sup>th</sup>. A Crossbill flew over on Sep 18<sup>th</sup>.

## Macclesfield area

21 Red Grouse at Danebower on Oct 24<sup>th</sup> was a very high count. A Red Kite was seen near Wildboarclough on Sep 20<sup>th</sup> and at Whetstone Ridge on Oct 17<sup>th</sup>; it then spent most of Nov near Wildboarclough. A Goshawk was reported at nearby Macclesfield Forest on Sep 9<sup>th</sup>. A Greenshank at Astbury Mere (Sep 26<sup>th</sup>) was an exceptional site record. A Black Tern visited Redesmere on Sep 2<sup>nd</sup>. A Whinchat visited Handforth Dean on Sep 7<sup>th</sup>. Pairs of Stonechats were at Danebower (Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>), Jenkin Chapel (Oct 28<sup>th</sup>) and the Cat & Fiddle (Nov 28<sup>th</sup>). A Chiffchaff was at Handforth Dean on Oct 7<sup>th</sup>. Willow Warblers visited Lindow Common (Sep 1<sup>st</sup>) and Capesthorpe (Sep 8<sup>th</sup>) and two Spotted Flycatchers were at nearby Redesmere on Sep 1<sup>st</sup>. c30 Goldcrests and c50 Coal Tits were at Macclesfield Forest (Sep 22<sup>nd</sup>). A Great Grey Shrike was reported at Bosley on Nov 16<sup>th</sup>. Five Bramblings were at Jenkin Chapel on Oct 28<sup>th</sup>. 50 Crossbills were at Macclesfield Forest (Nov 30<sup>th</sup>). A Lapland Bunting was reported at Wildboarclough (Oct 26<sup>th</sup>).



## Nantwich/Sandbach area

A Black-necked Grebe visited Bar Mere on Nov 24<sup>th</sup>. A Whooper Swan visited Bar Mere (Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>). Single White-fronted Geese were at Bar Mere (Nov 24<sup>th</sup>) and Deer Park Mere (Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>). 160 Greylag Geese were at the latter site on Nov 30<sup>th</sup> with three Mandarins at Deer Park Mere on Nov 30<sup>th</sup>. Two early Pintails were at Bar Mere (Sep 13<sup>th</sup>) with 125 Shovelers (Oct 28<sup>th</sup>) and two Red-breasted Mergansers (Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>). A Goshawk was reported at Deer Park Mere (Sep 21<sup>st</sup>). Six Buzzards were seen over Sandbach on Sep 24<sup>th</sup>. A Little Ringed Plover was at Hankelow (Sep 3<sup>rd</sup>). Two Greenshanks at Edleston on Nov 15<sup>th</sup> were unusually late. Six Green Sandpipers were at Doddington Pool on Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>. A Little Gull appeared at Hurlleston Resr (Oct 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>) with a Mediterranean Gull there on Nov 22<sup>nd</sup> and an Iceland Gull on Oct 28<sup>th</sup>. The last Swallow flew over Sandbach on Oct 21<sup>st</sup>. Three Stonechats were at Deer Park Mere (Oct 9<sup>th</sup>). Roosts of 30,000 Starlings were at Hurlleston Resr (Oct 31<sup>st</sup>) and Deer Park Mere (Nov 10<sup>th</sup>). 23 Crossbills were at Moss Wood (Sep 13<sup>th</sup>).

## North Wirral Shore

At Leasowe/New Brighton on Oct 27<sup>th</sup>, seven Leach's Petrels, three Sabine's Gulls, Grey Phalarope, Mediterranean Gull and a probable Long-tailed Skua, were recorded, and a Leach's Petrel and a Long-tailed Duck next day. A Black-throated Diver was off Leasowe on Nov 29<sup>th</sup>. Two Whooper Swans were at Hoylake Langfields on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> and five White-fronted Geese were there on Nov

17<sup>th</sup>. An Osprey flew over New Brighton (Sep 13<sup>th</sup>) with another over the M53 at Bidston on Sep 22<sup>nd</sup>. The peak wader counts at Leasowe during Nov included 12,000 Knot on 13<sup>th</sup>, 12,500 Dunlin on 17<sup>th</sup> and 2,100 Bar-tailed Godwits on 13<sup>th</sup>. Two Curlew Sandpipers visited Hoylake (Sep 7<sup>th</sup>) and two Purple Sandpipers were at Leasowe (Nov 21<sup>st</sup>) with 18 at New Brighton in Nov. An adult Mediterranean Gull appeared at Leasowe on Nov 21<sup>st</sup>. An Iceland Gull was seen briefly at Hoylake on Oct 12<sup>th</sup> and a Glaucous Gull was at New Brighton on Oct 18<sup>th</sup>. Six Great Spotted Woodpeckers at Hoylake Langfields on Oct 28<sup>th</sup> was an exceptional count. 17 Yellow Wagtails were there on Sep 4<sup>th</sup>. A Black Redstart was seen near Wallasey coastguard station on Nov 10<sup>th</sup>. Three Stonechats visited Hoylake Langfields on Oct 28<sup>th</sup> with two at Leasowe (Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>). On Sep 14<sup>th</sup>, 30 Wheatears were at Leasowe. Yellow-browed Warblers were seen near Leasowe Lighthouse on Oct 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. 23 Tree Sparrows and 28 Yellowhammers were at Hoylake Langfields on Nov 17<sup>th</sup>. A Lapland Bunting at Leasowe (Nov 21<sup>st</sup>) was followed by two Snow Buntings (Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>) and up to four Snow Buntings were at Wallasey (Nov 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>).

### **Poynton area**

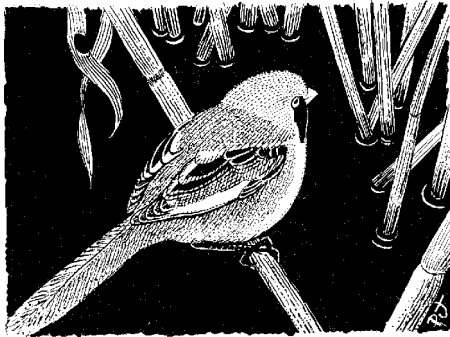
A Little Grebe was at Poynton Pool on Sep 17<sup>th</sup>. A Pink-footed Goose was at Poynton Pool on Oct 9<sup>th</sup> with 100 over on Oct 17<sup>th</sup>. In the best ever month for Buzzards (Sep) singles were at Lostock Hall Farm (20<sup>th</sup>), Poynton Pool (12<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>) and Towers Road Fields (20<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>). An Osprey was reported over Chester Road, Poynton on Sep 1<sup>st</sup>. A Kestrel seen over Poynton Pool on Oct 20<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and Nov 6<sup>th</sup> was only the third recent record. Three Snipe at Adlington Driving Range on Sep 22<sup>nd</sup> were the first ever there. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at Hazelbadge Fields on Sep 20<sup>th</sup> was the first autumn record there. The last Swallows were one over Poynton Pool and two over Towers Road Fields on Oct 16<sup>th</sup>. Two late House Martins flew over Poynton Pool on Oct 25<sup>th</sup>. The first Fieldfare and Redwing sightings at Poynton Pool were on Oct 20<sup>th</sup> (earlier than in recent years) and Oct 6<sup>th</sup> respectively. A Garden Warbler was heard at Poynton Pool on Sep 12<sup>th</sup>. Chiffchaffs were at Adlington Driving Range (Oct 6<sup>th</sup>) and Poynton Pool (Oct 9<sup>th</sup>). A Willow Warbler was at Lostock Hall Farm on Sep 8<sup>th</sup>. Ravens are exceptionally rare in the Poynton area, so singles over Towers Road Fields on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> and Poynton Pool on Nov 29<sup>th</sup> were notable. A pair also flew over Poynton Pool on Nov 11<sup>th</sup>. Up to five Bramblings were at Poynton Pool on nine dates from Oct 20<sup>th</sup> to Nov 29<sup>th</sup>. 16 Linnets over on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> was a high count there.

### **Rostherne Mere and Tatton Park**

A Bittern reappeared at Rostherne on Sep 14<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Two Whooper Swans arrived at Rostherne on Nov 29<sup>th</sup> and on Oct 16<sup>th</sup> c210 Pink-footed Geese flew over. Good numbers of Canada Geese at Rostherne included 639 in Oct – the highest count since Aug 1989. 15 Mandarins visited Tatton (Oct 31<sup>st</sup>) with seven at Rostherne on Nov 17<sup>th</sup>. 48 Wigeon and 362 Teal at Rostherne (both Nov 24<sup>th</sup>) were the highest counts since 1992 and 1990 respectively. Two Pintails at Melchett Mere (Sep 8<sup>th</sup>) were unusual and 52 Shovelers were at Tatton Mere (Oct 31<sup>st</sup>). 16 Scaup at Rostherne on Oct 31<sup>st</sup> is the highest ever October count and four Common Scoters appeared on Nov 10<sup>th</sup>. A Red Kite remained at the Deer Enclosure, Tatton from Sep 19<sup>th</sup> to Nov 28<sup>th</sup> at least and was also seen at Rostherne on Sep 25<sup>th</sup>. 16 Buzzards over Tatton on Sep 15<sup>th</sup> was the peak count with nine at Rostherne on Sep 22<sup>nd</sup>. A Hobby was at Rostherne on Sep 29<sup>th</sup>. A Jack Snipe was at Tatton (Nov 27<sup>th</sup>). Three Green Sandpipers were at Tatton on Oct 20<sup>th</sup> with up to four at Rostherne until Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>. Single Little Gulls were at Rostherne on Sep 14<sup>th</sup>, Oct 10<sup>th</sup> and Nov 10<sup>th</sup> with a good count of 10 on Sep 10<sup>th</sup>. A Short-eared Owl seen at Rostherne on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> was the first there since 1993. A pair of Stonechats were at Melchett Mere from Nov 12<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> at least. The first returning Fieldfares and Redwings at Tatton were seen on Oct 17<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> respectively. At Rostherne the dates were Oct 13<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> respectively. c120 Siskins visited Rostherne in late Oct. Seven Crossbills were at Tatton (Nov 26<sup>th</sup>).

### **Sandbach Flashes**

A Little Egret was briefly at Elton Hall Flash (Sep 16<sup>th</sup>). Pink-footed Geese movements included 71 on Oct 6<sup>th</sup>, 120 on Oct 30<sup>th</sup> and 90 next day. 812 Mallard on Sep 8<sup>th</sup> was a high count. The first Pintails returned on Sep 13<sup>th</sup>. One or two Garganey were seen regularly in the first two weeks of Sep. The peak Buzzard counts were six over on Sep 18<sup>th</sup> and Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>. The last two Little Ringed Plovers lingered to Sep 6<sup>th</sup>. Golden Plovers peaked at a very low 18 on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>. A Knot was found on Sep 14<sup>th</sup> and a Little Stint lingered in late Nov. One or two Curlew Sandpipers were present most of Sep with one again Oct 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. A juv Lesser Yellowlegs dropped into Elton Hall Flash on



Oct 17<sup>th</sup>. This is the second record for the Flashes (the first was Aug 27<sup>th</sup> to Sep 18<sup>th</sup> 1974) and will be the 8th county record, if accepted. A Little Gull was at Watch Lane Flash on Oct 27<sup>th</sup>. Yellow-legged Gulls were regular during Sep with a max of seven on 26<sup>th</sup>. The first returning Fieldfares and Redwings were seen on Oct 13<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> respectively. The last Willow Warbler was seen on Sep 18<sup>th</sup>. The last Spotted Flycatchers were seen at Maw Green Tip (Sep 13<sup>th</sup>) and at Elton Hall Flash a week later. A Bearded Tit was heard calling all day on Oct 19<sup>th</sup>; it will be the first Flashes record, if accepted. A Treecreeper at Watch Lane Flash on Nov 24<sup>th</sup> was a good find.

### Warrington area

Two Little Egrets were at Wigg Island, Runcorn on Sep 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>. 250 Pink-footed Geese flew over Woolston Eyes on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>. Several Jack Snipe and 10 Woodcock were at Woolston Eyes in Nov. 11 Common Terns were off Wigg Island, Runcorn (Sep 11<sup>th</sup>). A Long-eared Owl was seen at Woolston in Sep. A probable Little Swift was briefly at Woolston on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> amongst 5,000 Swallows. If accepted, it will be a county first. At Woolston, a Kingfisher was ringed in Sep and two Swallows on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>. A Yellow-browed Warbler was trapped in a north Cheshire garden on the late date of Nov 9<sup>th</sup>. A Spotted Flycatcher visited Wigg Island, Runcorn (Sep 7<sup>th</sup>). A Treecreeper was ringed at Woolston in Sep and the first Brambling was at No.3 bed on Oct 10<sup>th</sup>. A 1<sup>st</sup> win Pallas's Rosefinch was trapped at Woolston on Nov 9<sup>th</sup>.

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

Thanks/acknowledgements to:- S. & G. Barber, *Birdwatch* and *Birdwatching* Magazines, R. Bonser, A. Booth, J.J. Canovan (Rostherne Mere NNR), L. Cassidy, C. Hull (Nantwich Naturalists), A.W. Martin, K. Massey (Fiddler's Ferry), D. Morris (Tatton Park), B. Perkins (Sandbach Flashes Log), R. Smith ([www.deeestuary.co.uk](http://www.deeestuary.co.uk)) and all observers who passed records on.

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## BIRD REPORTS - BACK COPIES AVAILABLE

The Society wishes to reduce the stock held of past years' *Bird Reports* and so we are making these available to members for the cost of p&p and, if willing, a small donation (we would, however, expect a donation for copies from more recent years). We have continuous copies from 1977, except for 1996 and 1998, and also 1969 and 1972. 1999 and 2000 are still available.

### Numbers of past issues available:

1969	20	1972	25	1977	24	1978	23	1979	16	1980	39
1981	45	1982	49	1983	49	1984	44	1985	44	1986	49
1987	37	1988	25	1989	28	1990	14	1991	84	1992	51
1993	16	1994	8	1995	85	1996	0	1997	28	1998	0

If you know of any groups or organisations who would welcome a number of back copies, please let me know - or ask them to get in contact with me. The last thing we want to do is throw them away! Postage: 80p for the first copy and 50p for subsequent ones. Of course you can always arrange to collect them from an indoor meeting or even from my house.

**Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, WA16 6QG  
Tel: 01565 830168 E-mail: [sheila.blamire@cawos.org](mailto:sheila.blamire@cawos.org)**

## BIRD RECORDING IN NORTH-EAST WALES

The Clwyd Bird Recording Group (CBRG), which covers the former counties of Flintshire and Denbighshire in north-east Wales, would like to receive any records for their area from visiting birders, including those forwarded to a birdline (telephone or Internet site). Please send them to:

**Norman Hallas, Clwyd County Bird Recorder, 63 Park Avenue, Wrexham, LL12 7AW  
Tel: 01978 290522. E-mail: [Normanhallas@aol.com](mailto:Normanhallas@aol.com)**



# County Rarities

## **WATER PIPIT (*Anthus spinoletta*)**

I guess it's that time of year again, when the prospect of some decent high tides at Parkgate can lure one to the Wirral coast to watch the spectacle of gathering waders, swans, geese, ducks and raptors and as part of checking the regular sites there is the inevitable temptation to check out the Neston area for Water Pipits. Just why they seem to be regularly recorded around this favoured 'old quay' area is a bit of a mystery, although perhaps the fresh water stream, open grass edges and occasional rocks remind wintering birds of their upland habitat. However, judging by some of the descriptions the Rarities Team receives, you are far more likely to come across, and end up watching, some of the several hundred Rock Pipits that inhabit this area too!

The problem is that in winter plumage, Water Pipit is very like Rock Pipit. In fact for me, Water Pipit is identical to Rock Pipit, except that various plumage features of Rock Pipit are just emphasised more or less on Water Pipit. Both are darker in colour, with dark legs to eliminate Meadow Pipit, but both have supercilia, pale eye rings, wing bars and varying degrees of streaking against varying degrees of white breast, flanks and belly. But the key is that on Water Pipit these features are more obvious and better balanced. Winter Water Pipits are greyer and appear less streaked than Rock Pipits, underparts are whiter, with streaking mainly confined to the breast, whilst on Rock Pipit, the flanks are often well streaked. The two wing bars and edges of the tertials are whiter on Water Pipit with white outer tail feathers, (buff on Rock Pipit) and these features are often conspicuous in flight. The supercilium is also more obvious on Water Pipits, whereas on Rock, it tends to merge with the general head colour, as does the sub-moustachial. From behind the under-tail coverts are white in Water Pipit, completing a more contrasting look between upper and underparts. Thus Water Pipit appears slimmer, looks longer winged and longer tailed in flight. Also when flushed, Water Pipits tend to fly up and away and pitch down at some distance, whilst I feel Rock Pipits fly off low, and drop quickly into the nearest salt marsh gutter. Just one point to look out for is the leg colour. Although most birds show dark legs, a percentage in both species can show pale orangey-brown legs and feet. It isn't that unusual, plus back-lit birds can show almost translucent legs.

As winter turns to spring, Water Pipits lose the overall streaked look, particularly from the back and breast, and by April can have a peachy tinge to the breast as well. However, you need to beware of the Scandinavian race of Rock pipit, *littoralis* which annoyingly starts to look like Water Pipit in spring, and is generally intermediate between Rock and Water Pipit, but still has the buff outer tail feathers that Rock Pipit routinely shows, along with a dark malar stripe above a pinkish breast. However, I doubt if one will encounter too many of those on the Dee estuary. Pipits and calls go together, but here I have to admit that these two species call very similarly; I guess if you hear Rock Pipits regularly you can differentiate the thinner, sharper "fist" type of note credited to Water Pipits. I can't!

**Hugh Pulsford, 6 Buttermere Drive, Great Warford, Alderley Edge, Cheshire, SK9 7WA**

## **WATER PIPITS IN CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL**

As mentioned above, Water Pipits are regular in low numbers on the Dee estuary from about November through to March, occasionally into late April. Elsewhere Water Pipits are real rarities. The only other, occasional, site appears to be Woolston Eyes where the local observers note odd birds during the winter months. Fiddler's Ferry, Hale Decoy and Moore NR have also had records in the past. Spring birds are more likely to turn up away from Neston and Parkgate and being in their bright plumage, are more readily identifiable. However, and I know it's repetitive to mention it, Water Pipits are perhaps the most misidentified species on the county list. I have witnessed birders ticking off Rock Pipits as Waters so many times, that they will stay on the county rarities list for the foreseeable future. I do realise that for the experienced birders, who know the species well, writing descriptions is a chore, but I do appreciate their efforts. Please continue to do so. How about good comparison photos from our photographers?

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

# Projects and Surveys

## SUPPORTING CHESHIRE'S FARMERS FOR SUPPORTING FARMLAND BIRDS

We all know how a range of our widespread farmland birds are struggling, and we probably all have a pretty good idea as to why this is happening. But there is good news out there, for both farmers and Cheshire's farmland birds. Last winter, the RSPB worked with CAWOS to identify some farmland bird hotspots in the county. This was for species such as Tree Sparrow, Corn Bunting and Lapwing. This information was then provided to DEFRA the Government ministry with responsibility for farming, previously known as MAFF. One department within DEFRA is responsible for administering the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), an agri-environmental scheme which makes payments to farmers for managing wildlife habitats on their farm.

It was to this department, known as the Rural Development Service, that we gave the farmland bird hotspot data. Why? Well, in 2002 several new arable-based land management options were available to farmers via the CSS. These are specifically targeted at the species mentioned above, and their introduction into CSS is the result of many years' hard work, including research and lobbying, by the RSPB. The idea is to target these options at areas where declining farmland birds are still hanging on. Giving the hotspot data to DEFRA was therefore vital in allowing them to assess applications and offer agreements to farmers in areas where the new arable options would have the most beneficial effect for the target Tree Sparrow and Lapwing populations.

The results from 2002 look very promising. Via 10-year management agreements under the CSS, DEFRA is proposing to pay farmers for 20ha of wild bird cover for seed-eating species, and for 208ha of protected winter stubbles, again vital as a feeding resource over the winter for seed-eaters like Tree Sparrow. To benefit nesting Lapwing, nearly 80ha of spring-sown crops or fallow plots will be provided. These areas will also benefit breeding Skylark, and will provide insect rich foraging areas for seed-eaters, which feed their chicks on invertebrates. Over 30ha of reduced input 'conservation headlands' will be provided within conventionally managed cereal fields, again providing insect rich foraging areas for a number of species, including Grey Partridge.

Areas benefiting from this management include five sites around Chester and south Wirral, known to be good for Lapwing and Tree Sparrow. Four sites around Nantwich, and another four around Sandbach and Congleton should benefit known Tree Sparrow populations in these areas. A further seven sites in the north of the county, from Frodsham to Northwich and up towards Tatton Hall will benefit more Tree Sparrows and also Corn Bunting. Between all the farmers involved in providing this management, this will be worth £539,500 over 10 years. To some of our Tree Sparrows and Corn Buntings it will mean survival.

It also represents partnership in action. Data from local observers is allowing Government to pay farmers to deliver good wildlife habitats in the right places. **Please keep sending your records of Tree Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Lapwing and Grey Partridge in to CAWOS**, so that this excellent partnership can continue. And thank-you to those farmers who have showed a willingness to make use of the new CSS arable options, in this their first year of being available.

**Andrew Gouldstone, RSPB Conservation Officer, Cheshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire**

## COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

There is news from the Wirral & Ellesmere Port Barn Owl Trust of a pole box that was installed on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2002 in the Willaston area, which was visited only three weeks later by Dave Carvell, and a Barn Owl was seen to fly from it. This is wonderful news and shows what can be done when boxes are installed in the right places. The landowner at this site has recently been informed that his application to join the DEFRA *Countryside Stewardship Scheme*, encouraged by Dave Carvell and assisted by FWAG, has been successful. This is a perfect example of what can be achieved by partnership and is surely the way forward for this and other groups.

## HALE HEAD FARMLAND COMMON BIRD CENSUS

The British Trust for Ornithology has decided to continue the Common Bird Census in 50 lowland farms. Hale Head, a 69 hectare arable farm on the Mersey estuary in Cheshire, has been included in this study.

In July 2002, I completed the 14th year of the Hale Head Census. The number of 'territories' held by each species is shown in the table. (A territory is recorded when the same species - usually a singing male or a pair - is noted at the same site on at least three of the ten visits made during the breeding season.)



**British Trust for Ornithology**

During these 14 years, I have witnessed the disappearance of Tree Sparrow and a fall in the number of Corn Buntings from an average of 17 in the first three years to only three in the last three years. Grey Partridge numbers have also fallen to three each year from an average of seven in the first three years. Two or three pairs of Lapwing had nested at Hale Head each year but none did so in the last two years.

On the other hand, we have success stories. Each year, about 10 pairs of Shelduck nest in rabbit burrows in the sandy cliffs of the Mersey shore. The Skylark remains the most abundant breeding bird at Hale Head with an average of 17 territories in the last three years as compared with 13 in the first three years. Other endangered farmland species such as Yellow Wagtail, Linnet and Reed Bunting continue to breed at Hale. Rape fields provide a food source for Linnet flocks in the latter part of the season and a nesting site for Reed Buntings and Sedge Warblers. In recent years, Sedge Warblers have moved from the reeds into the rape (all four nest sites were there this year) while Reed Warblers have started to nest in the estuarine reeds.

### Number of 'Territories' held at Hale Head in 2002 (in descending order)

17	Skylark	5	Robin, Whitethroat, Reed Bunting
12	Wren	4	Blue Tit, Sedge Warbler, Pheasant
10	Shelduck	3	Grey Partridge, Reed Warbler, Corn Bunting
7	Chaffinch	2	Wood Pigeon, Dunnock, Yellow Wagtail, Blackcap, Great Tit
6	Blackbird, Linnet	1	Jay, Mallard, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Willow Warbler

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

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## FARMLAND BIRDS MONITORING PROJECT

### ***OUR TREE SPARROWS NEED YOU!***

At last we have more details of this scheme. There are 10 farmland birds, all of which are in rapid decline, whose populations are being monitored in an attempt to stop and reverse the decline. Birds concerned are Bullfinch, Corn Bunting, Grey Partridge, House Sparrow, Linnet, Reed Bunting, Skylark, Starling, Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer.

### **Volunteers are required to do fieldwork**

This involves visiting a farm six times per year - twice in Nov - Feb and four times in Mar - Jun. Ideally this would be done for several years. You would walk a transect (a specific line) across the farm noting target species. Every effort would be made to fix you up with a farm near to your home.

A training day will be provided on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March, at Northwich, to include theory and fieldwork; you can still volunteer even if you cannot attend this.

Those who have already volunteered have been sent details; if you are interested please contact **David Cogger** at [memsec@cawos.org](mailto:memsec@cawos.org) or **01606 832517**.

This is an excellent opportunity to put something back - please get in touch.

## SURVEY OF SURVEYS

Just a reminder that CAWOS is undertaking a 'Survey of Surveys' to establish exactly what surveys are or will be taking place within the county and by whom, 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, including developing a long-term strategy (5-year).

If you have any information that would be relevant, particularly from the many societies and groups 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**

## THE UK BAP (BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN): A BRIEF SUMMARY

The UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) is probably the single most important piece of conservation legislation to come into force in the UK since the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act. The 'BAP' arose as a result of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* signed by the UK Government (along with the representatives of 158 other countries) at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. It was the first treaty ever to provide a legal framework for biodiversity conservation and has now become a driving force in the conservation of our own native flora and fauna.

The year after the Earth Summit, the treaty itself came into force and the UK Government began considering how to implement it through our existing legislation. The obligatory consultation process that followed (300 organizations were involved) and subsequent debate bore fruit surprisingly quickly and in 1994, *Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan* was published.

By 1995 the UK Biodiversity Steering Group had been formed and set about implementing the recommendations of the *UK Action Plan* report. To do this, the Group needed to identify those species and habitats in most immediate need of conservation and produce individual action plans for them. They wasted little time in setting about their task and have now published 436 Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) comprising 45 Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and 391 'priority' Species Action Plans (SAPs) of which 26 are for birds. For those of you who might be interested, these action plans can be found at [www.ukbap.org.uk](http://www.ukbap.org.uk).

All of the 26 bird species currently on the UK BAP 'priority species' list\* are also Red List species, but not all Red List species (of which there are 40) are on the UK BAP list (see e.g. *BTO News* No. 242). Most BAP species have had action plans drawn up for them because they have experienced severe population declines in the last 25 years (many of them due to changes in farming practices) whilst others make it onto the list because they are rare breeding birds, like the Bittern and Corncrake, globally threatened species, such as Aquatic Warbler (not really what I'd call a British bird), and our only endemic species, the Scottish Crossbill. At a national level, therefore, I guess these can be regarded as the 'lucky few' - those species on which an especially watchful eye is being kept and towards whom precious funds are being targeted.

Whilst this is clearly a step in the right direction, the main strength of the BAP, in my view, lies not in the setting of national targets for conservation *per se* but in regional involvement through the production of **Local** Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs). So, whereas action plans at the national level deal mostly with things such as policy, legislation, advice and long-term research & monitoring of the 26 'priority species', those at the regional level deal more with the nitty-gritty of bird conservation such as regional surveys, nest box schemes, habitat management, SSSI designations, planning regulations, Countryside Stewardship, etc. It's these local plans that potentially give the BAP its bite and keep the whole process in the real world - nuts and bolts and grass roots - just the ticket. LBAPs are, therefore, very important things! They're usually mediated through the regional Wildlife Trusts, who in consultation with local interest groups (that's us) and regional representatives of, e.g. English Nature, RSPB, BTO, decide on which species to include on their respective regional lists and draw up the necessary action plans. This is not as onerous as it sounds and provides a firm foundation for identifying and conserving those species in most need. So far, Cheshire Wildlife Trust has published LBAPs for the following 13 species; Barn Owl, Black-necked Grebe, Bullfinch, Corn Bunting, Grey Partridge, Lapwing, Linnet, Nightjar, Reed Bunting, Skylark, Song Thrush,

Spotted Flycatcher and Tree Sparrow. There's also a 'General Farmland Birds' BAP that includes many of the above species, plus House Sparrow and Yellowhammer [see [www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk](http://www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk) for details]. I say, "so far", because new species are added to lists in tranches and the final list will no doubt comprise still more species. \*\*Lancashire and North Merseyside have also produced action plans for their respective regions.

Another important aspect of LBAPs is that regionally scarce or declining species can be included in the process should the need arise, i.e. LBAPs do not need to be restricted to the 26 priority species on the national list. This explains why Cheshire has LBAPs for Barn Owl (~90% reduction in breeding pairs in Cheshire during the last 65 years, although things are looking up), Black-necked Grebe (a rare UK breeder and recent coloniser of the region in the early 1980s) and Yellowhammer and House Sparrow, both of which have suffered a greater than 50% reduction in numbers during the last 25 years. What this means is that the BAP provides a potentially excellent mechanism for conserving our wildlife by integrating policy at the national level with hands-on conservation at the local level. The good thing about the local slant of course is that we can all, if we wish, get involved and I know that some CAWOS members already do... BUT (and there's always a but...) I wonder if perhaps we couldn't do more to integrate our day-to-day birding with the needs of our LBAPs? We do after all have a vested interest. Any suggestions?

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

**\*The 26 UK BAP Priority Species are:** Marsh Warbler, Aquatic Warbler, Bullfinch, Linnets, Scottish Crossbill, Woodlark, Skylark, Corn Bunting, Reed Bunting, Cirl Bunting, Tree Sparrow, Spotted Flycatcher, Red-backed Shrike, Turtle Dove, Wryneck, Nightjar, Song Thrush, Black Grouse, Grey Partridge, Capercaillie, Stone Curlew, Bittern, Corncrake, Common Scoter, Roseate Tern and Red-necked Phalarope.

\*\*All LBAPS are available on CD to anyone who's interested. You should be able to get free copies from the respective Wildlife Trusts (whilst stocks last, as they say...).



## APPEAL FOR RECORDS OF COLOUR-RINGED RAVENS

The Shropshire Raven Study Group put colour rings on 781 nestlings from 223 nests in Shropshire, plus 20 young from six Herefordshire nests, in the six years 1994-1999. The BTO provided a grant towards the cost of the fieldwork, and Swarovski Optik has recently sponsored the Group by provision of a telescope to read the rings. By 1999, 13 adult breeding Ravens at Shropshire nest sites had colour rings on, and in 2000 the number increased to 15. Fieldwork in 2001 was severely limited by foot-and-mouth, but two more nesting colour-ringed birds were found. The total found in 2002 grew to 31. Also, four Shropshire bred Ravens have nested in the Peak District (Derbyshire) since 1998. We are thus starting to find out the age at which young birds start breeding, their life span, and how far they move. This is a nationally-important study; with your help we can learn even more. The Raven population is expanding rapidly, so Shropshire's colour ringed birds might turn up anywhere, including Cheshire.

**Ravens are several years old before they begin to breed, so we are expecting a big increase in colour-ringed nesting birds this year.**

If you come across breeding Ravens, please look for a ring. There is a different colour for each year, and two letters, which uniquely identify each bird. It is possible to see the ring through binoculars in good light if the Raven is perched, or feeding on the ground, or flying low directly overhead. A telescope is necessary only to read the letters on the ring. If you don't have one, The Shropshire Raven Study Group can arrange for someone to look at the ring for you if you tell them soon enough. Send any reports of colour-ringed Ravens, as soon as possible after the sighting please, to:

**Leo Smith Tel: 01384 265504 E-mail: [leo@tf125qh.freemove.co.uk](mailto:leo@tf125qh.freemove.co.uk)**

**NB** In addition to the above, please don't forget to send all records of Ravens, whether colour-ringed or not, to CAWOS in the normal way.

## FREE BIRD TAPES TO NEW BBS VOLUNTEERS

BTO are now offering bird song training tapes free of charge to new Breeding Birds Survey (BBS) volunteers. The first tape concentrates on the more difficult to identify typical lowland species. Then for upland areas, new volunteers will receive the lowland tape, together with a shorter supplementary tape containing the calls and songs of predominately upland species. The two tapes are professionally produced by Geoff Sample (producer of the *Collins Guide to Bird Songs and Calls*) and are of the highest quality! They are also on general sale at £5 each.

**Will you become a BBS volunteer?** There are many vacant squares throughout our recording area, but particularly on the Wirral - let's get these covered. There are also vacancies for two **BTO Regional Representatives**, one on the Wirral, the other Cheshire North-East.

To find out more about BBS and potentially becoming a volunteer, or for further information about the role of a BTO Regional Representative contact:

**Mike Raven, BBS National Organiser, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU**  
Tel: 01842 750050 E-mail: [mike.raven@bto.org](mailto:mike.raven@bto.org)



# Computerisation of Records

Our thanks go to all contributors, whether submitting their records via the preferred electronic method or through the traditional paper records route. All records are gratefully received and make for a more comprehensive database and a more valid *Bird Report*.

I have written to all contributors acknowledging their input and made suggestions which would definitely make the lives of the Database Team easier, and may even save the contributors' time as well. I've listed some of the more common suggestions below - please take time to read through them. Your help is appreciated!

### General hints to save you (and us!) time

- Please do not spend time making a computerised 'mock-up' of the record paper form, simply use a basic spreadsheet for your records.
- Records sent in as text, either within an e-mail message, or as a Word document, will need to be transferred into a spreadsheet format, so please do use a basic spreadsheet where possible (Reserve Reports are the obvious exception).
- There is no need to put your name and address or other general heading at the top of the spreadsheet; please put your contact details, along with other relevant information, in the main body of the e-mail or letter accompanying the file or disc.
- Please do not type in all your records in capital letters.
- There is no need to add gridlines (cell borders) to the spreadsheet, but it doesn't matter if you do.
- Generally, we will not be importing any electronic records until year end, but if you find it useful to send in your records more frequently than once a year then please continue to do so (this does not apply to paper records which we would want to receive in batches).

### Layout of the spreadsheet

- If using an Excel Workbook for your records, *do not use more than one sheet* (the other sheets will be lost when saving the file into csv format).
- Put headings at the top of each column, e.g. 'Species', 'Site', 'Date', 'Number', 'Comments', etc.
- Please delete blank or unwanted columns, which may occur when 'Recorder' or other commercial programmes or databases are saved as csv files.
- All entries, e.g. 'Comments', must be typed in *on one line only for each record*; it does not matter how wide the column is.
- Do not leave blank lines between the column headings and the first record, or between different records or species.

- Please use the species or site name, rather than the species or site ID number on its own, as it makes it easier to visually check the records and also there is less room for error when typing in names.
- Make sure you delete non-avian records from your submissions, e.g. peacock (butterfly not bird!).

### Site

- For *garden records* put the town or village as the site name and the actual house address (including postcode) under 'Comments', as we do not want to list each member's address as an 'official' site within the *Gazetteer*.
- The name in the 'Site' column should 'conform' where possible to those listed in the *Gazetteer*. A more precise location can always be included under 'Comments'. The precise map ref (if given) will still be held against that record, rather than the more general site map reference.
- A new site can be added if it cannot readily be included under another site already listed, or if it is an important birding location, which was missed off the original *Gazetteer*. You must draw our attention to this new site and provide the 6-figure map reference and the nearest town or village.
- If including site ID numbers and/or grid references, these must be in a separate column from the 'Site name' column.

### Species

- For common species (particularly garden birds) we would prefer dated (or undated) monthly or weekly maxima rather than daily counts. Comparisons to previous years would be useful to add in under 'Comments'.
- Do not submit duplicate entries for the same species on the same date, e.g. adults and juveniles should be under one record with clarification under 'Comments'.

### Number or count

- Put only a *specific number in the 'Number' column* such as 1 or 1+, or even 0 if a zero count; other information, eg '1 or 2', 'many', sex, or age should go under 'Comments' (or have separate columns for 'Age' or 'Sex').
- Any figure in the 'Number' column should refer to the *actual number of birds recorded*, not to the number of nests or number of pairs.
- Leave the 'Number' column blank if it is more appropriate, e.g. year or breeding summaries where the records have already been entered individually; this will avoid doubling up of numbers.
- If you leave the 'Number' column blank without any other individual records entered, please be aware that your record will not appear in any statistics or distribution maps for that species.

### Date

- Always include a date, *do not leave blank*. If the record is a year summary for that species then simply put 2002 under 'Date'.
- Always submit the date in a conventional format if possible, e.g. 31-12-02 or preferably 31-Dec-02. If you are unable to do this please alert us to this problem so that we do not try to import records with American dates mm-dd-yy (12-31-02) or those which put the year first.
- Seasons (e.g. winter1, spring, etc) or date ranges (e.g. Aug - Sep or Aug to Sep) can be used instead of specific dates. Do not use / to separate ranges e.g. Aug/Sep.
- Create separate records for additional dates if these are particularly relevant for the species concerned. Otherwise put as additional information under 'Comments'.

### Finally....

- **Always give your file a quick check before sending it to us - does it 'look right' to you?**

Please contact David Cogger if you have not received or have mislaid the *Guidelines for the Submission of Records* (or download them from our web site) and/or the *Cheshire and Wirral Gazetteer*, both published December 2001. Do contact us if you have any queries, problems or suggestions - we are here to help.

**Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QG**  
**Tel: 01565 830168. E-mail: help.submissions@cawos.org**

# Species Spotlight

## STONECHATS IN THE EAST CHESHIRE HILLS: AN UPDATE

In *Bird News* No. 22, April 1994, I wrote about the comings and goings of Stonechats in the east Cheshire hills and raised "a few very tentative conclusions - from the limited information available". With the passage of further years and many records I think that it is now possible to see a clearer pattern, though mysteries still remain.

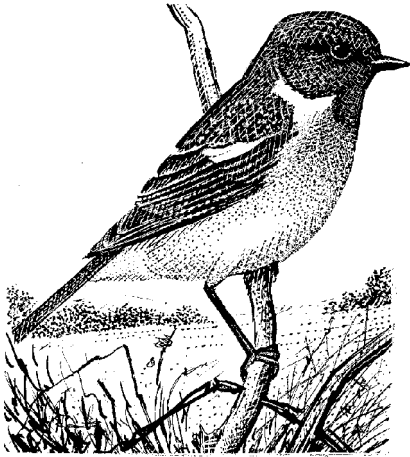
The following is a list of all the Stonechat records I have been able to obtain for these hills, from the beginning of 1990 to autumn 2002:

- 1990 at Allgreave 22/2, pair at Lamaload on 25/11 and 1/12.
- 1991 at Lamaload on 13/10.
- 1992 pair below Cat's Tor Jan and Feb, singing male at Lamaload 1/3, pair at Wildboarclough 8/11, male at Lamaload 29/11, female at Lamaload 5/12, pair at Lamaload 20/12.
- 1993 one at Mow Cop before 22/3, male at Wildboarclough 6/3, pair at Lamaload 29/12 and one there on each of 30/12 and 31/12.
- 1994 at Lamaload one on 2/1, pair 8/1, male on 15/1 and 23/1, pair below Cat's Tor 15/1, male at Allgreave 6/5, one at Lyme Park 6/12, one at Lamaload 18/12 and a male below Cat's Tor on the same date.
- 1995 one/two Lamaload area Jan/Feb, male below Cat's Tor 18/2, one at Mow Cop 19/3, one at Danebower 25/3 and 4/4, pair Three Shires 28/4 and male carrying food there 6/5, one at Mow Cop 10/10, one Lamaload 12/11, pair below Cat's Tor 22/12, one Higher Disley 24/12 and 27/12, and one Bosley Reservoir 28/12.
- 1996 None.
- 1997 None.
- 1998 None.
- 1999 Male at Tegg's Nose 20/1, female Bosley Minn 2/10, 2 at Mow Cop 5/10, male at Midgeley Hill 9/10.
- 2000 Female at Mow Cop 31/10, pair below Cat's Tor 22/12.
- 2001 Male at Danebower 17/1, 3 males and 2 females below the Cat & Fiddle on the west side 17/2, female Midgeley Hill 25/9, male Birchenough Hill 11/10, pair Lamaload 14/11 and 6/12, 4 at Lamaload and pair at Saltersford 12/12, one at Disley Reservoir 20/12.
- 2002 Male at Redmoor 11/7, pair near Danebower Quarry 3/10.

Most Stonechats raise two broods and many three, so that they have a long breeding season. They return to their breeding areas from early March and may still be rearing young at the end of August. Thus, Stonechats may be on passage between wintering and breeding areas from mid-February to early April (spring passage) and from breeding areas to wintering areas from mid-September to the end of October (autumn passage). We have records of 13 birds on spring passage and 10 on autumn, not very many in a period covering 13 years, (pairs counted as two birds). It seems, therefore, that even allowing for under recording only a very few birds pass through the east Cheshire hills, at least without staying into winter.

In my last article I suggested that these birds might be moving between their northern breeding sites and the more hospitable wintering areas in the south. After giving details of ringing recoveries of Stonechats breeding in the north/seen in the south (*Bird News* No. 23 July 1994) Professor David Norman commented, "The route taken between the breeding and wintering sites is not known, but a straight line would have taken all of these birds through Cheshire". Unfortunately the position remains unclear because, so far as I am aware, there are still no records of ringed Stonechats for the Cheshire hills. Certainly none of the birds I have been able to see clearly have borne rings.





Taking the winter period as November to mid-February, there are 49 records of Stonechats in the eastern hills in this period, though some of course will be of the same bird(s) seen on more than one occasion. In relation to the numbers apparently on passage, this is a high number and suggests that some birds winter in the hills. It is not clear whether these come deliberately for the winter or whether they are autumn passage birds lingering on; possibly both. My experience, particularly with Stonechats below Cat's Tor, is that snow is the only element they will not put up with and they leave and do not return. This is supported by observations from Irene Blagdon and Geoff Lightfoot. The former found that a pair at Lamaload in November and December 1990 disappeared and were not seen again after snow. The latter, in observations made in *Bird News* No. 22, after the end of my article, found that Stonechats appeared in Ladybrook valley on several occasions after snow in the hills.

So it appears to be snow only that drives them from the hills. Despite their reputation for being averse to cold winter weather, at least some Stonechats are quite willing and able to cope with most of it. I have found them in the hills in fog, in bitterly cold winds and in heavy frosts, with the ground frozen solid. The male in Danebower 17/1/01 is a good example. He was perched on top of a bush of heather, all the herbage being white with frost, after several nights of temperatures below zero and very cold days. (Surprisingly, he was there though there had been snow at Christmas and this raises the question, had he come there recently from somewhere else? As with so much of bird study, obtaining one bit of information leads to more questions.) In Jan/Feb 1995 *BTO News* John Callion states, "Some adult birds [Stonechats] remain inland during the winter, even in the desperate Cumbrian weather".

In several years I have carefully checked some of the areas favoured by Stonechats on passage or in winter for breeding birds, but without success and Irene Blagdon told me that she kept hoping to find breeding at Lamaload, but was disappointed. Yet I still have the suspicion that an occasional pair does nest undetected in the hills. The summer records in 1995 certainly suggest that breeding took place in the Three Shires area that year. Does the 6<sup>th</sup> May record in 1994 and the 11<sup>th</sup> July record in 2002 point to undetected breeding in those years? Absence of any Stonechat records at all for the three consecutive years 1996, 1997 and 1998 is a puzzle.

The Stonechat in the hills is mostly a different bird from the perky little bird perched conspicuously on top of a gorse bush on coastal heaths and cliffs, drawing attention to itself by 'chatting' at a human intruder. In the hills the bird is usually in the more quiet, undisturbed areas and although there are still many patches of gorse left, not one of my personal 27 Stonechat records for the east Cheshire hills has been of a bird on or near gorse. By far the most favoured area is one of rough herbage, such as grass, *Juncus* or thistles with a nearby stone wall or barbed wire fence on which the bird perches and from which it makes sorties to the ground to pick up food. Sometimes this is a leisurely affair and sometimes birds are constantly on the move. The five I found near to the Cat & Fiddle in 2001 may, in fact, well have been three pairs, but they were so active it took a long time before I could be sure that there were at least three different males and two different females. The key to finding birds is to carefully search, with binoculars, likely looking habitat and to carefully check any small bird seen on wall, fence, perched on dead thistle, etc and not assume that it is just another Meadow Pipit. Having found one it pays to wait awhile, because often the other member of a pair will be out of sight, not too far away and will suddenly appear.

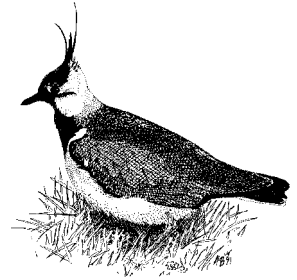
There is still much to learn about this attractive little bird in our hills; one of the few species to be found there in winter.

**J. V. Oxenham, 178 Holmes Chapel Road, Somerford, Cheshire, SW12 4QB**

**Acknowledgements:** My thanks to Irene Blagdon, Richard Blindell, Alan Booth, Geoff Lightfoot and David Norman for their records and for observations, and to all others who have sent their Stonechat records to CAWOS.

# View from the Farmyard

From the smallest to the largest of our native birds, water is of the greatest importance. The most basic requirement is for drinking water but birds also have to bathe to maintain their plumage. Having observed many birds' interactions with water I have no doubt that aside from their basic requirements birds take pleasure from it; maybe this stems from their reptilian ancestry. Swallows, newly arrived from their wintering grounds, repair the lie of their feathers perching on the power cables between the farm buildings in one of those spring downpours. They stretch their wings out and fluff their body feathers to aid the rain's penetration, shaking the water from themselves periodically, then after the rain preen every feather stroking the barbs into place with the upper and lower beak.



Blackbirds are often to be found bathing in the puddles along the farm track that leads down to the moss. Each rapid flurry of wings and flicking of tail is interspersed with a pause to check for predators; Robins, sparrows, Chaffinches and Greenfinches often join in these bathing frenzies. Strangely the bathing feasts often follow heavy rain in which the birds would no doubt have already had a good soaking - probably not the right kind of water.

One Sparrowhawk, which I watched for all of 10 minutes, was flailing about in a most undignified manner in Toft pool. At first my thoughts were that it was drowning, or drowning prey, as I had watched one do to a Starling in my garden pond some years ago. However, this one was so engrossed with its ablutions that I was able to crouch within 20 paces and watch without being spotted. The only time I have seen a Buzzard doing anything approaching taking a bath was on one very hot summer's day some years ago. Perched on the edge of one of the large 200-gallon water troughs the bird ducked its head repeatedly into the water lifting it up and letting the water run down its back.

During one late autumn thunderstorm I took shelter inside the tractor. A lone Hobby had been sitting all afternoon in a pine tree waiting lazily in the warm sunshine for the evening Swallow roost to begin to form. I had spotted it whilst eating my lunch and looked up periodically to see it still sitting there. Apart from preening a time or two and turning to face into the sun it stayed in the same place. As the storm approached it turned round on its branch several times as if excitedly anticipating the refreshing rain. From the dry safety of the cab I observed as it ruffled its feathers and jabbed with its beak at its breast, now sodden and dripping. Stretching out a wing then a leg it shook a cascade of water droplets from its body and took to the wing, still shaking itself whilst flying in wide gliding circles. Much to my amazement the display wasn't over yet; time after time it risked all, spreading its wings and almost belly flopping into the past summer's new growth at the top of a beech tree, dislodging water from the weighed down branchlets. The reckless thrashing of the Hobby and the electrically charged atmosphere, the flashing lightning and the crashing thunder, the water bouncing from everything left a vivid memory with me, the kind I call to mind when things aren't going too well.

Some of my favourite bird observations have taken place whilst sitting eating my lunch. I think the combination of two great pleasures - birds and food, heightens the remembrance of such occasions. One of the old specimen trees in the garden wood is a rather gnarled walnut; having many years ago been blown over at 45 degrees it still retained its grip in the earth enough to continue growing. Where one of its side branches emerges from the trunk a depression has filled with water and is a popular bathing and drinking hole with the smaller birds. Wren, Goldcrest and Long-tailed Tit are amongst those I particularly recall seeing. Awards for most vigorous bathing session go to the Wren, but a special award for artistic content must go to the Long-tailed Tit who, sitting in a pool only three inches across, managed to completely submerge itself and its tail at the same time. This was achieved by backing into the water then rotating down into the water in a forward direction, basically screwing

itself into the hollow, though points must be deducted for a particularly unruly tail that kept trying to escape. Particular mention must be given to the Robin, capable of one minute being the smartest bird on the farm and next of looking like the residue from a plughole. How they ever get back from this pathetic state amazes me, but back they bounce and boy how smart can they be!

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

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# Sites to Watch

## **DUCK DAY AT ROSTHERNE MERE**

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2003 2.00pm 4.30pm**

On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2003 the A W Boyd Observatory and the lakeside Whitley hide will be open to the general public to observe at close hand the many species of waterfowl that winter at Rostherne Mere. The afternoon is aimed at birdwatchers or naturalists of all abilities with experts on hand to help with identification.

- Refreshments will be available throughout the afternoon.
- Binoculars and telescopes will be provided, but bring your own if you wish.
- Wellington boots are advisable for visiting the Whitley hide.
- Admission: adults £3.00, children £1.50, including refreshments.
- **Booking is essential as places are limited.**

The event is hosted by the Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society and English Nature. All proceeds will go to the A W Boyd Observatory fund. Please contact:

**Tim Coleshaw, English Nature, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury, SY4 4TW. Tel: 01743 282014.**

## **NEUMANN'S AND ASHTON'S FLASHES: A FACELIFT**

Cheshire County Council have recently received funding for reclamation work on Neumann's and Ashton's Flashes. Following a lengthy design meeting involving the Witton Area Conservation Group, the County Council's Nature Conservation Officer and the Countryside Management Service, work will start on engineering works to improve the access and nature conservation value of the sites in February this year.

The reclamation works will include the following:

- The bunds around Ashton's Flash will be lowered to improve visibility into and out of the flash and the invasive birch within the grassland will be removed to encourage the floristic diversity of the calcareous grassland.
- A new footpath network around the site will be created.
- The area of reed-beds around Neumann's Flash will be increased.
- Shingle islands and bays will be created in and around Neumann's Flash.
- New hides will be built around Neumann's Flash.

Unfortunately, access during the engineering works, scheduled to last about 18 months, may be restricted because of health and safety issues - the general public and heavy machinery don't tend to go too well together! However, if a good rarity turns up attempts will be made to secure issue.

If anybody wants any further information, they can contact me at home.

**Paul Hill, 1 Clive Cottage, London Road, Allstock, Knutsford, WA16 9LT  
Tel: 01606 722938. E-mail: pmh@biota.co.uk**

# Conservation News

## CHESTER AREA

- a) The Broxton Barn Owl Group has been successful in securing a grant of £500 from the Environment Agency Wales not just for the money but for the dialogue with them about practical conservation measures during their routine 'maintenance' of river banks. A similar dialogue took place with EA North West about the R Gowy. No money on that occasion but a productive discussion anyway.

**Neil Friswell, Chester Area Representative**

## HALTON AREA

- a) CAWOS representatives from the Halton area have written a response to New Mersey Crossing plans following a request from the ecological consultants Gifford. CAWOS is opposed to the construction of the new bridge crossing east of the Silver Jubilee Bridge, as this would lead to the destruction of important areas of salt marsh and mudflat feeding areas. CAWOS favours the construction of a new crossing west of the Silver Jubilee Bridge. This would create less damage to valuable wildlife habitats in addition to being a more logical route to relieve traffic congestion. At the same time it would enable the regeneration of the dilapidated industrial areas of West Bank in Widnes, and the parts of the Old Town in Runcorn.
- b) The latest big news is that Forest Enterprise has purchased the greater part of Upper Moss Side Farm. This area is contiguous with Moore Nature Reserve. Forest Enterprise representatives have approached local birders, including CAWOS members to develop a plan for the new acquisition. The intention is to protect the existing fauna which includes large wintering flocks of lowland farmland birds (Yellowhammers 120+, Corn Bunting 19+, Tree Sparrow 20+, Skylark 100+, Grey Partridge 10+, Curlew 120-200, Golden Plover, Lapwing, etc). This is excellent news for bird conservation in Cheshire and helps to secure this flood plain farmland for the foreseeable future and also prevents its destruction at the hands of speculative development for mineral extraction and waste disposal.

**Jeff Clarke, Halton Area Representative**

## VALE ROYAL AREA

- a) Reclamation works on Neumann's and Ashton's Flashes will commence in February with the amphibian mitigation works. This is to be followed by engineering works to stabilise the bunds/lower their visual impact and remove invasive birch off Ashton's. Work on Neumann's will entail creation of shingle bays and reed-bed encouragement/planting. New formal pathways around perimeter and new hides are also included. Access to the site will probably be curtailed for health and safety reasons during construction works it will be considered as a construction site by the HSE (Health and Safety Executive).

**Paul Hill, Vale Royal Area Representative**

## WARRINGTON AREA

- a) As mentioned above under Halton Area, land on the Moss Side area of Moore, under threat with proposals to extend the Arpley tip, has been bought by Forest Enterprises. They intend to plant some trees but will probably leave the remainder of the land as it is.
- b) Warrington Nature Conservation Forum has produced a glossy publication called "Access to Nature Conservation in Warrington" intended to interest members of the public in the best places to see wildlife in Warrington. Copies can be obtained from David Bell, Warrington's Ecologist, at New Town House, Warrington.

**Brian Martin, Warrington Area Representative**

## WIRRAL AREA

- a) Wind Farms: Seascape Energy, the developer of the Burbo Bank wind farm off north Wirral submitted its application for consent to the DTI on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2002 and is awaiting the outcome. The environment impact assessment can be downloaded from the web site [http://www.seascape-energy.co.uk/env\\_statement.html](http://www.seascape-energy.co.uk/env_statement.html). This includes a very interesting study of the birds of Liverpool Bay; click on 'Appendix B: Birds' to download this file. Although the report

allays my fears about bird strikes to some extent I still feel that at certain times of mass movements, e.g. of Manx Shearwaters or Gannets, the number of birds killed could be very high. By its own admission the report is far from complete, in particular the flight paths and heights of waders moving between the Dee and Ribble appear to be unknown and could well be straight through the proposed site.

- b) Cockling: Two beds were opened in September, West Kirby and Salisbury Bank, but toxins in the cockles at West Kirby meant that the bed had to be closed again almost immediately. The West Kirby bed reopened again on 31<sup>st</sup> October. Apparently 700 cocklers have applied for permits so there will be much disturbance of birds. However, the bed is only open two days a week to try and minimise this disturbance.
- c) Mostyn Dock: Although there seems to have been some difference of opinion on the subject, English Nature is not happy with the Environmental Impact Assessments carried out by the Port of Mostyn Docks. Concerns revolve around dredging and dumping of sludge. The initial dredging caused an oily deposit on the sandbanks around the mouth of the estuary. Apparently an investigation has been launched by EC officials into claims of damage to the estuary. There is also concern about erosion of the estuary banks caused by the new giant barges for the new airbus wings, although this only affects the Welsh side. Talks are due to be held between Wirral Environmentalists and managers of Mostyn Dock to find eco-friendly ways of dredging the River Dee. The Dee Estuary Conservation Group, which represents all conservation bodies on the estuary, including CAWOS, is also involved in discussions and the Director of the Port of Mostyn is attending the next DECG meeting.
- d) The Dee Estuary Conservation Group has been (hopefully) revitalised by the appointment of one of our members, Neil Friswell, as Chairman, and John Harrison, the assistant Dee Estuary RSPB Warden, as Secretary. The DECG represents all the conservation societies and groups around the estuary and should be consulted in the initial stages of any planning development, and not, as happened too often in the past, when planning is already at an advanced stage.
- e) Kite Surfers: Kite surfing had hardly been seen on the Dee estuary until this summer when up to 12 turned up whenever there was a breeze and a high tide. Since then they have carried on throughout the winter. Initially there was much disturbance at the high tide roost at West Kirby but after the Dee Estuary Voluntary Wardens started chatting to them they do appear to be making some effort to stay away from the roost. However, there is currently a problem with the birds on Little Eye, which contains a large Oystercatcher roost at high tide, which at times has been completely clear of birds throughout the high tide period because of the disturbance. Because the large kite the kite surfers use is quite a long way up in the air the disturbance radius is much greater than that for a windsurfer.

**Richard Smith, Wirral Area Representative**

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA REPRESENTATIVES**

**Chester** - Neil Friswell, 8 Oaklands Crescent, Tattenhall, Cheshire, CH3 9QT. Tel: 01829 770463. E-mail: Neil@nfriswell.freereserve.co.uk

**Congleton** - Richard Blindell, 5 Bath Vale, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 2HF. Tel: 01260 275084. E-mail richardblindell@hotmail.com

**Crewe and Nantwich** - Colin Lythgoe, 11 Waterloo Road, Haslington, Crewe, CW1 5TF. Tel: 01270 582642. E-mail: colinlythgoe@haslington9.freereserve.co.uk

**Halton** - Jeff Clarke, 90 Simonside, Hough Green, Widnes, WA8 9YN. Tel: 0151 423 4275. E-mail: conservation@cawos.org

**Macclesfield** - Derek Kelly, 5 Avon Road, Heald Green, Stockport, SK8 3LS. Tel: 0161 282 0273. E-mail: derek\_kelly@tiscali.co.uk

**Vale Royal** - Paul Hill, 1 Clive Cottage, London Road, Allstock, Knutsford, WA16 9LT. Tel: 01606 722938. E-mail: pmh@biota.co.uk

**Warrington** - Brian Martin, 45 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2PF. Tel: 01925 264251. E-mail: brianmartin1940@hotmail.com

**Wirral** - Richard Smith, March Wall, King's Drive North, Caldy, Wirral, CH48 1LL. Tel: 0151 625 2320. E-mail: richard@deestuary.co.uk

# 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.

## NO AIRPORT AT CLIFFE

After consulting with those members of Council who were in the country(!) and with local Conservation Representatives, I wrote to the Department of Transport opposing the proposed option of a new airport at Cliffe in North Kent. I also wrote to all 15 MPs for Cheshire and Wirral covering our recording area. In all the letters I mentioned not so much the loss of valuable bird habitat, important as that is, but also the violation of the principle that SSSIs, and sites with special protection under the European Union Birds Directive and the Ramsar Convention would be either damaged or destroyed, which would happen if the proposed option went ahead.

So far (22 December) I have had replies from 10 MPs. Most have been supportive and have agreed to take the matter up with the Department of Transport, though a couple could not see the principle involved and wondered why we were protesting about something in Kent. Some of you may be sceptical about how far public opinion can influence Government thinking, but there is some evidence that Ministers and civil servants do take note of co-ordinated campaigns. Recently the response period, originally due to expire on 30 November, has been extended by several months; if you feel like writing, the address to write to is:

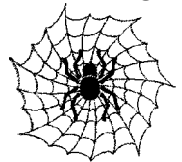
Future Development of Air Transport - South-East and East of England, Department for Transport, Room 1/28c, Freepost LON 17806, London, SW1P 4YS. Or e-mail: [air.consult@df.t.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:air.consult@df.t.gsi.gov.uk).

For help on what to write visit the RSPB web site: [rspb.org.uk](http://rspb.org.uk) and look at the section 'No Airport at Cliffe'. If you do not have access to the Internet and wish to write, please contact me and I can pass on the suggestions made by the RSPB.

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

## EXCERPTS FROM CAWOS DISCUSSION FORUM ([www.kawos.org](http://www.kawos.org))

The Discussion Forum on CAWOS's web site is where people can discuss the Society, local bird sightings, places to see birds, general queries and announcements and other such matters. Here are some topics from the last three months:



## HIDEOUS CONFESSION

You know that moment when you mess up a really good bird? On January 2<sup>nd</sup> I looked out of the bedroom window with bins, sleep still in my eyes and saw three ducks approaching from the east. One was big and bulky and pale underneath with lots of black and white bits, the other two were small and brown/white without wing markings.

Great I thought, two Long-tailed Ducks and an Eider, a nice start for the year list and scuttled downstairs to get the scope (just in case they were Ruddy Ducks). By the time I got set up the birds were well out to the west and I was looking from behind. The Long-tails were lagging behind the Eider and I looked at them hard - two female/immature types. Only then did I look for the Eider. I'd assumed it was an immature male because it had looked a bit black above as it flew towards me. My brain was still half-asleep and I was thinking... hey, this is a bit even and clean for an immature male. Why is it black right across the mantle? Why is the only white on the wings in a patch on the forewing - a bit like a Wigeon?

Ohhhh [expletive removed!] it's most likely a King Eider, now far too far away to claim anything.

It's going to haunt me for a long time! Absolution required!

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

## RAPTOR WATCHING

As a student of bird migration I am trying to get together a bunch of fellow enthusiasts to take part in some raptor migration recording in the North-West Region. I thought one way to do this would be to select a few dates in Sep/Oct and get small teams to man a favoured watchpoint. We could then analyse and compare results. My own observations lead me to believe that it is possible to identify, with a fair degree of certainty, active migrant raptors such as Sparrowhawk and Common Kestrel as they pass through our region.

There are a number of limiting factors, not least the weather, but I believe the rewards would be worth it. If we can get a sufficient number of watchpoints covered on a few selected dates we should get a fair amount of useful data back. There are many places which offer opportunities for a successful 'hawk' watch that spring to mind in Cheshire alone:

Beeston Castle	Bickerton Hill	Helsby Hill	Frodsham Marsh
Red Rocks	Denhall Lane	Thurstaston Common	Risley Moss
Moore Nature Reserve	Fiddler's Ferry	Alderley Edge	Tegg's Nose

plus many sites in Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside and North Wales.

If there is enough enthusiasm for the project I would be willing to co-ordinate the exercise and if people wished I would be happy to offer a training session on some of the tricks to enable you to carry out a successful 'hawk' watch. If anyone is interested please let me know.

**Jeff Clarke, 90 Simonside, Hough Green, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 4YN**  
**Tel: 0151 423 4275 E-mail: conservation@cawos.org**

## ERIC HOSKING

I'm sure we have all met birders (or should I say twitchers) who have seen a rare bird before they've seen the more common species, whether in our own country or abroad, but this story from Eddie Chapman who lives in Voss, Norway brought a smile to my face.

'I'm reminded of the time I took my wife (then girlfriend) to see a White-rumped Sandpiper at Frodsham Marshes/Weaver Bend in Cheshire many years ago. After some time we found the bird with a small flock of Dunlin. While sitting on the bank the legendary Eric Hosking came along and stopped to ask if we had seen the bird, to which my wife pointed "It is the third bird from the left in that small flock of Dunlin". Eric looked very impressed and thanked her, he also sat down beside us. After some time a Coot swam past to which my wife shouted excitedly, "Eddie, what's that black thing?" I will never forget the look on Eric's face!'

Any other stories in a similar vein? Send them in to *Bird News*.

**Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, WA16 6QG**  
**Tel: 01565 830168 E-mail: sheila.blamire@cawos.org**

## KAGU AT TWO O'CLOCK!!!

Am I alone or do you too associate certain birds with people on TV? Puffins always remind me of Johnny Morris (remember him?), Harpy Eagles always remind me of the cross-dressing Corporal Klinger from M.A.S.H., (must be something about noses and beaks) and Mallards always remind me of David Attenborough. Now I'm not for a moment suggesting the great man has an *Anseriforme* 'schnoz', not at all! The reason for this particular association is quite different. It's all because of one very special film sequence that appears in *The Life of Birds*. Perhaps you'll remember it. It begins with a close up of a Mallard in flight. As we follow the bird Sir David begins to narrate in his own inimitable way and then, as the camera pans out we watch as the Mallard splashes down in the middle of a lake, where, standing in a small boat a few metres away is the man himself. The editing is flawless, the impact instantaneous. Once again, his seemingly effortless ability to blend science with theatre is brought home and the result is, in my view, the best wildlife series that is ever likely to appear on our TV screens. Forget *Walking with Dinosaurs* and *The Blue Planet - The Life of Birds* is quite simply as good as it's possible to get!

As some of my colleagues could probably tell you though, I have not always had such a high opinion of the wildlife documentary makers' art. The 'precision' of it all really used to get my goat. For example, in another series, Sir David is walking through a desert and talking about some furry creature that lives underground. He stoops and begins to dig into the sand with his hands. Cut to

shot from inside a burrow as his hands break through and what should he find there but the aforementioned crittur. P-lease! And what about all those generalisations? Picture this typically 'Attenborough-esque' scene. The master is standing on a beach. It's night. The camera pans to his feet and we see hundreds of king crabs. The narration goes something like this. "Here on this one beach on 20<sup>th</sup> May every year 10,000 female crabs come ashore to lay their eggs in the moist sand, as they have done for centuries. Each female excavates a 30cm pit into which she lays 500 eggs etc...". Great. Well, NO actually! The truth is that in some years the females go to a different beach. They may turn up as early as 10<sup>th</sup> or as late as 30<sup>th</sup> May. Some years 8000 turn up and other years 12,000. The pits can vary from 20 to 40 cm deep and as many crabs probably lay 300 eggs as they do 500. OK, maybe I'm being overly pedantic but talk about generalising! Surely somebody must research this stuff?! They do, of course, and thankfully such unbecoming cynicism is now long behind me. At least it WAS...until a recent encounter with a bloke from Channel 5...

I'd taken a friend of mine to one of my regular haunts, Woolston (again!) to have a look at the resident birds when whom should we meet in the hide but the producer of a new wildlife series for Channel 5. He was there to film the Black-necked Grebes. Have you ever noticed the little signs on some reserves (I think there's one in the Swanlink hide at Martin Mere) that warn the public to "Be quiet because birds have ears too"? Well, it's a pity this bloke hadn't! He was excruciatingly LOUD!!! I'm sure he was from the same school of etiquette as a bank teller I once encountered who'd tried to make herself understood to a foreign gentleman by simply repeating what she'd already said, but twice as loudly; "DO YOU HAVE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER?!" As the Channel 5 bloke cranked up the volume another notch (presumably interpreting our bemused looks as simple misunderstanding), I rather foolishly assumed that perhaps the birds wouldn't notice.

And perhaps they wouldn't have, had it not been for the fact that this cameraman was crammed into the tiniest hide you can imagine, right on the edge of the pool 20 feet from us but literally two feet away from the nearest birds. As a Black-necked Grebe popped up right by him the producer practically stuck his head out of the shutters and yelled to the cameraman "THERE'S ONE JUST POPPED UP TO YOUR LEFT!". Suffice it to say the bird didn't hang around long - so much for field craft! Come to think of it, perhaps *THAT'S* how David Attenborough gets such memorable shots? Remember that amazing sequence of a Kagu on New Caledonia comically zig-zagging off through the forest with its crest raised? I can almost picture the cameraman trying to follow his instructions, "KAGU AT TWO O'CLOCK!...TEN O'CLOCK!!!...TWO O'CLOCK!!!!...TEN O'CLOCK!!!!!" Well, it makes you wonder...

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

## **ROOKERIES IN NORTH CHESHIRE**

When I was a medical student in 1944, I was asked by James Fisher (A W Boyd's nephew) to take part in a census of rookeries organised from the Edward Grey Institute in Oxford. At that time, it was estimated that there had been a 20% increase in Rook numbers and there was concern about the impact of this increase on wartime agriculture. I was allotted a rectangular area of north Cheshire bounded on the east by a line drawn south from Warburton to High Legh and on the west by a line drawn south from Norton to Dutton.

In the spring of this year (2002), I discovered at the bottom of a drawer the detailed results of my rookery census nearly 60 years ago. Within the area allotted to me, I had counted 940 nests in 19 separate rookeries. 12 of these rookeries contained less than 30 nests and the remaining seven more than 60 nests:

Daresbury Hall	220	Appleton Dingle	149	Danebank, Lymm	112
Massey Hall, Thelwall	76	Dutton viaduct	68	Moore	66
Preston Brook	62				

On April 8<sup>th</sup> 2002, I revisited the sites of these seven rookeries and found that only two remained: Daresbury Hall (c 110 nests) and Dutton viaduct (44 nests). The remainder had disappeared, probably as a result of housing, industrial or road developments. (There is now a rookery in the Moore Nature Reserve but none in Moore south of the Manchester Ship Canal as in 1944.)

It seems likely that the number and/or size of rookeries in north Cheshire have fallen in the past half century but I would be interested to hear if any reader knows of existing rookeries within the area I surveyed in 1944.

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



## BIRD CORPSES

A press release by BOURC (British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee) on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2002 aimed to draw attention to the value of corpses of birds (and bits of birds!), which have a usefulness that is often insufficiently appreciated by those who find them. Specimens that survive can continue to provide new information for tens, or hundreds, of years.

BOURC stated: "Although the finders of some rarities are keen to retain them in their possession, the plumage may fade very quickly (due to light exposure) lessening their scientific value. Such specimens are also prone to damage or total destruction by insect pests such as moths or beetles, or they may rot away as the fat in the skin decomposes. In any case, personally held specimens are not accessible to other researchers. Characteristically, few such specimens survive longer than a couple of decades and ultimately they are lost to science. Fresh corpses should preferably be passed to a museum where the specimen will be preserved. Research use is likely to go beyond identification. Depending on circumstances, other material may also be preserved, e.g. whole or part carcass, tissue or blood samples, external and internal parasites, stomach contents and skeleton. It is usually possible to salvage parts with valid research potential even if the specimen is fragmentary - perhaps only a wing or a few feathers - or is partially decayed. In some cases, single feathers may be significant."

BOURC strongly encourages finders of rare bird corpses, and also of birds in less well-known plumages or with plumage aberrations, to deposit them with a collection where they will be preserved and made available for research. Skin collections at national museums are generally recognised as the most suitable depositories for rarities, and we are lucky to have one of four listed on our doorstep:

**National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EN**  
**Tel: 0151 207 0001 E-mail: clem.fisher@nmgm.org**

But don't forget good specimens of commoner birds. Liverpool Museum, along with other museums in the area with renowned natural history sections e.g. Grosvenor Museum, Chester, is also keen to receive these, so please contact the museum for specific instructions and advice for the transmission of specimens. For interim storage, fresh corpses should be wrapped in absorbent paper (e.g. kitchen roll), labelled with date and locality of collection (and fresh weight if possible), packed in a polythene bag and frozen. I kept corpses of a juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker and a House Martin in our deep freeze for a considerable period of time, before I got round to taking them to Chester. Fortunately there had been little deterioration in their condition, though there had been some deterioration in household harmony! If you have a specimen at the moment and no longer need it, please consider passing it on to a museum now.

**Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, WA16 6QG**  
**Tel: 01565 830168 E-mail: sheila.blamire@cawos.org**

## WANTED - LESSER OCTOPUS RECORDS - DEAD OR ALIVE!

**Jane Turner** had an interesting story to tell recently on rECOrd's discussion forum:

"Tonight (10<sup>th</sup> December 2002) there is a Lesser Octopus corpse on my front lawn in Hoylake! I've not seen one on the shore here before, despite 30 years of beach-walking. I assume a gull dropped it. Oh and last week we had to remove a Great Crested Grebe corpse from the same lawn!"

According to BBC Radio Merseyside *Weekly Nature Watch News* it has been an amazing autumn/early winter for dead or stranded Lesser Octopus (*Eledone cirrhosa*) with reports of nine or ten occurrences of Lesser Octopus, including three at Hoylake, one at West Kirby and a live one at Hilbre; many times more than are normally seen.

Ian Wallace adds, "Why - no-one knows but there are several theories. I imagine gulls pick them up and carry them off to eat. They may be switched on to the idea that you drop every 'molluscy' thing on to a hard surface to burst it, as they do with cockles, and I have noticed a disembowelled one at a cockle dropping point on the Meols promenade recently". Steve McWilliam, Manager of rECOrd would appreciate any further records (tel: 01928 573697 or e-mail: steve.mcwilliam@record-lrc.co.uk).

# Ringers' Notebook

Birds that are ringed as chicks can be especially valuable in helping us to learn more about the species. Some cannot be ringed as chicks in natural sites, however, because it is impossible to reach the chicks without a risk of breaking the nest. Sand Martin is one such species, of which over one million have been ringed in the UK but only a few thousand of them as nestlings, because their normal sandbank or riverside nests are liable to collapse. Now, several enthusiasts have built artificial banks with Sand Martin nest cavities that are safe to access and so the chicks can be ringed. Whilst mist netting the colony at Town Farm Quarry, Cookson Green on 7 July I caught a bird that had been ringed as a nestling, one of a brood of four, in such an artificial nest near Lockerbie, Dumfries & Galloway on 30 May 2002. This bird had already moved 213 kilometres in its first month since fledging, and was the earliest long-distance juvenile movement that I have had in 22 years of ringing at the mid-Cheshire sand quarries. Sand Martin is another of the species that is breeding earlier, presumably as a consequence of climate change. A detailed analysis published by Ted Cowley from studying colonies in Nottinghamshire from 1969 to 1991 showed that juvenile Sand Martins fledged in June were twice as likely to survive and return the following year as those fledging in August, and as much as ten times more likely than those that fledged in September. The first part of the breeding season is thus of most importance to the conservation of the species; any later broods are a possible bonus, and not a substitute for successful early breeding.

Another recently received record of a bird ringed as a chick was a Blue Tit, one of a brood of 12 in a nest box in Grizedale Forest, Cumbria in 1996, caught on 24 February 2001 at a feeding station at Woolston Eyes, 111 km south. From over 2.7 million Blue Tits ever ringed in Britain and Ireland, only 154 have ever been known to move more than 100 km, an average of one or two a year.

The final example in this 'Ringers' Notebook' of a bird ringed as a chick is one that I personally enjoyed most. I ringed a Ringed Plover nestling on Frodsham Marsh in June 1999 and was very pleasantly surprised to find it present in a catch that I cannon netted with Morecambe Bay Wader Group on Walney Island, Cumbria, on 12 August this year. If only we could know what it had done in between those dates, especially where it had chosen as its breeding area!

Two nice examples of the movements of the different races of Dunlin come from night-time mist netting on the north Wirral shore. One caught on 30 July 2000 had been ringed in Charente-Maritime on the west coast of France on 10 May 1988 and the other, caught here on 14 November 2001 wore a Swedish ring and had been ringed there on 22 July 1992. The first of these was probably of the *schinzii* race that breeds in Iceland and south-east Greenland, with small populations in Britain and Ireland and southern Norway. They pass rapidly through Britain, mostly on the west coast, on their way to and from wintering quarters in Africa. Birds from the small population of *arctica*, breeding in north-east Greenland and numbering only about 15,000 individuals, accompany them on similar routes. The second bird caught at Hoylake was of the nominate *Calidris alpina alpina* that come here from breeding grounds in Fenno-Scandia and Russia to moult and spend the winter on our relatively warm estuaries. Both of these birds were on classic dates for their race. The *alpina* birds are bigger, with longer wings and bills, and in summer plumage have a more rufous tone to the edges of their contour feathers, with a more extensive black patch on the belly; with practice, almost all of them can be distinguished in the hand when in summer plumage, although they are more tricky at other times of year. Note that the *schinzii* bird was quite old, having hatched in 1986 or earlier, and was on at least its 15th journey from the Arctic to Africa. Even so, it was some way short of the British record for Dunlin of 18 years, 8 months between ringing and final recording.

The movements of Siskins through ringers' gardens are now well documented. Rather like Dunlin, we are at a crossroads between two different groups of birds. Two caught in a Wilmslow garden on 24 February 2002 and ringed with successive ring numbers were caught together at Breakachy in the Highland Region of Scotland on 8 August this year, 482 km north. Another ringed the same day, however, was caught again on 28 March in Suffolk, 282 km away and almost certainly returning to Continental breeding grounds. Unlike the Dunlin, the Continental and British-breeding Siskins have not yet diverged in size or plumage colouration, and there is as yet no known way of distinguishing between them. Most of the Scottish Siskins found in Cheshire & Wirral seem to move north along the west coast, such as the one ringed at Bidston, Wirral on 2 April that was

found dead in Dumfries & Galloway a month later, but one from my own Sutton Weaver garden (9 March) was more unusual in crossing the Pennines to be caught by a ringer in Northumberland, west of Newcastle, on 13 April.

Anyone wanting to know more about the details of migration will find many hours of interesting reading in the *BTO Migration Atlas*, recently published at £55 for a 900-page tome.

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

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# Membership News

**Welcome to the following new members:** D and C West, R and A Knisely-Marpole, P and J Smith, R Johnson, P Renshaw, D and J Johnson, Dr C Baker, J Irons and D Pike. LH Clark, D Cassidy, TA Bacon have resigned and D and M Tanner have moved to northern Scotland.

**Meetings of Council** were held on September 19<sup>th</sup> and November 7<sup>th</sup>. The following points emerged:

- the financial state of the Society was satisfactory.
- David Jones, BTO Representative, was welcomed as a new co-opted member of Council (please see page 27).
- priorities for next year were fixed as the 'Survey of Surveys' and work on better recording. A decision as to whether to hold a Recording Forum next year would be made in January.
- work on the *Bird Report* was well in hand.
- several local conservation reps had submitted reports which would be printed in *Bird News*.

**An Extraordinary General Meeting** of the Society was held on Friday October 4<sup>th</sup>. It passed the following resolution amending the Constitution:

"The number of those attending Council meetings and comprising a quorum shall be reduced from six to five. Two of those five members must be officials of the Society (i.e. Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Recorder)."

**Gift Aid:** A reminder to members that they do not have to fill in a new form each year. Once you have filled one in we will claim until you leave or let us know otherwise. Last year Gift Aid brought us nearly £500 and with an increase in subscriptions this figure should increase. If you have not already joined the scheme you can do so either by obtaining a form from me and returning it or, more simply, by writing a letter to me stating that *you want CAWOS to treat all subscriptions made since a specific date (which you specify) as Gift Aid donations, and that you pay an amount of Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax at least equivalent to the amount claimed back.*

## **Contributions to the Records/Bird Report Questionnaire**

Thanks to all those who replied. Two things are obvious from your answers: that we have a very wide range of members from the very experienced to the relatively inexperienced, and that there are many of you who are keen to record but for various reasons are reluctant to do so. Help that can be given to these people will be discussed at Council and be the subject of articles in subsequent issues of *Bird News*.

## **Distribution of Paper Record and Rarity Forms**

When analysing your replies to the questionnaire on recording it became obvious that it would be pointless sending paper records to those who do not send in records or who send them in electronically. Consequently, when I sent out forms with the *Bird Report* I was more selective and sent them out only to those whom I thought might need them. Doing this task was not an exact science, so my apologies if you expected forms but did not receive them. If you require any you can download them from [www.cawos.org](http://www.cawos.org) or, if you contact me, I will send them out. Please forgive me for repeating this but.... please send in records electronically if at all possible - see the section on this elsewhere in this issue of *Bird News*.

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

## TOMORROW'S WORLD FOR LOCAL WILDLIFE 2002 CONFERENCE

This, the second biennial Countdown Conference for the Cheshire region, was held on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2002, at Daresbury Laboratory, Warrington. It was hosted by the Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership and was attended by over 100 'wildlife conservationists, academics, businesses and local volunteers'. The overall aim was to discuss ways in which feedback from the **World Summit on Sustainable Development** could be used to benefit the wildlife on our doorstep, through Biodiversity Action Planning, and also generally provide an opportunity to network, disseminate information and share best practice.

I attended on behalf of CAWOS, and was able to put up a display stand as part of the '**Tomorrow's World Exhibition Centre**' involving over 20 organisations, including volunteer groups and local authorities. This was well attended and gave CAWOS the opportunity to promote the role and work of the Society, talk to a number of influential people, and to make some useful contacts for the future (including the Ecology Consultant who supplied the photograph for the front cover of the 2001 *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report!*). I found out as well that English Nature are currently producing a Regional Gardens and Allotments BAP\* (recognising the importance of gardens and allotments as a key habitat) and that we would be contacted in the future about this BAP for our input from a more local perspective.

**Professor David Norman**, ex-Acting Chairman of English Nature and Chairman of Cheshire Wildlife Trust's Conservation Committee opened the conference and in his welcome speech humorously raised the topic of Biodiversity by saying that the test for its world-wide acceptance would be when Bill Gates includes the word 'Biodiversity' in his *Microsoft dictionary!* **Chris Mahon**, current Chair of the Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership and Director of Cheshire Wildlife Trust, then reported on his participation in the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, which had received rather negative coverage in the press at the time.

There then followed presentations from guest speakers including **Alison Barnes**, England Local Biodiversity Action Coordinator, DEFRA\*, who addressed delegates on the Government's new 'England Biodiversity Strategy', which was due to be published at the end of October 2002. This was followed by 'LBAPS\*', the England Scene - Setting Cheshire in Context' by **Charlotte Gault**, England Local Biodiversity Action Facilitator, Wildlife Trusts.

The BAP for the Cheshire region, called **Countdown '97**, was first produced in 1997 and has been updated annually since (it is the longest running and most active BAP in the country apparently). The sixth edition of Countdown, **Countdown 2002**, was launched at the Conference and was available on CD ROM (financial support for the production of the Countdown CD was provided by Cheshire County Council). The Cheshire BAP includes targets and actions for increasing wildlife in the region for the benefit of individual species and communities of people and animals as a whole. The message is that by working together we can achieve a brighter future for our wildlife. To illustrate this ongoing work, case studies were presented by local groups talking about their action on the ground to save species, such as harvest mouse, brown hare and the bluebell, where BAPs have been written for these and many other species and habitats which are endangered or threatened with extinction in Cheshire. Of particular interest to us was a presentation by **Roy Leigh** on the Farmland Birds BAP, which was still in the 'concept' stage, but which he stressed they were working on in partnership with CAWOS.

In the afternoon **workshops** were held to discuss, and decide action, on issues such as funding for BAPs, and methods of education which make conservation relevant to people. All attendees were each allocated two, out of a selection of seven, different workshops. The workshops I attended were:

### 1. '**BASC\* - Engaging New Sectors**', facilitated by Ian Danby, Biodiversity Officer, BASC

The aim of the workshop was to come up with ideas on involving 'new' groups of people to help with surveys, gathering data, administration work, etc. This followed a survey that BASC had sent out to their membership asking them where they shoot in Cheshire (they were surprised to learn that the 40% who replied actually shoot over 30% of the county!) and also asking about the presence or absence of different habitats and species. BASC members could now become involved in targeted project surveys in the future, whether HAPs\*, e.g. hedgerows or SAPs\*, e.g. farmland birds. Ian said that there were over 120 projects starting this autumn!

After a warning from one participant to be wary of the expertise of new groups in identifying species/habitats, ideas for new people/groups who could get involved included canal users, tree surgeons and landscape gardeners. Apparently some WI members have already been trained and are helping to survey hedgerows! BASC will be following up these ideas.

**2. 'Funding Opportunities'**, facilitated by Neil Smith, Corporate Membership Manager, CWT

Neil went through many of the various grants available for wildlife and conservation purposes, including Charitable Trusts, Landfill Tax, Corporate Funding, and Local Heritage Initiatives, stressing the criteria to be met and tips on applying. However, many of those he mentioned do stress the importance of involving, and being for the benefit of, local people. There is a CD available, costing about £90, which includes about 4000 grant-making Trusts and he is willing to demonstrate this CD to anyone who wishes to see it.

**Other workshops held were:**

**3. 'Future Thinking - Implementing a vision for local wildlife in the Cheshire region'**, facilitated by Chris Mahon, Director of CWT

**4. 'LBAP Action Groups - Getting Started'** facilitated by Fiona Gardner, Countdown Biodiversity Coordinator, Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership

**5. 'Making LBAPs relevant to People'** facilitated by Dee ap Simon, Education Officer, CWT

**6. 'rECord - Making the Connection'** facilitated by Steve McWilliam, Manager of rECord

**7. 'On Target - setting targets for LBAPs'** facilitated by Robert Duff, Conservation Officer, English Nature

After feedback from all the workshop facilitators, Chris Mahon thanked the attendees for their participation, and then closed what had been an interesting and worthwhile conference. Of course, the success of any conference or meeting should be judged on the follow-up actions taken. Watch this space!

I would like to end this report with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi that was put up on the screen:

**"You must be part of the change that you want to see in the world."** Eloquent words.

**Sheila Blamire, Chairman CAWOS**

**Glossary:**

BAP\* Biodiversity Action Plan  
 LBAP\* Local Biodiversity Action Plan  
 HAP\* Habitat Action Plan  
 SAP\* Species Action Plan  
 DEFRA\* Department of Environment,  
 Fisheries and Rural Affairs  
 BASC\* The British Association for  
 Shooting and Conservation

.....  
 • The language of English is cluttered •  
 • With acronyms made to be uttered, •  
 • Now we all talk of BAPs, •  
 • Which are vital perhaps, •  
 • But I like mine toasted and buttered. •  
 • **Hazel J Raw** •  
 •.....

**WIRRAL & ELLESMERE PORT BARN OWL TRUST**

The Wirral & Ellesmere Port Barn Owl Trust, featured under 'Society Spotlight' in the last issue of *Bird News*, is now a registered charity and they have changed their name to a 'Trust' rather than a 'Group'. They also have developed their own web site: [www.wirralbarnowltrust.org](http://www.wirralbarnowltrust.org). For those without Internet access further information can be obtained from:

**Steve Harris, Honorary Secretary, Wirral & Ellesmere Port Barn Owl Trust, P.O. Box 114, Hoylake, Wirral, CH48 8BX. Tel: 0151 625 4881**

**DAVID JONES:** It is with great sadness that we have just learnt of the sudden death of David Jones, who will be known to many people as the BTO Regional Representative for Cheshire North-East. Following on from the Recording Forum held in February 2002, at which he expressed a great interest in surveys and recording within the county, he agreed to be co-opted on to CAWOS Council. Unfortunately he was able to attend only one Council meeting at the end of last year, during which he made a valuable contribution to the discussions, particularly on the importance of the 'Survey of Surveys'. We would like to have had the opportunity to get to know him better.

## OBITUARY - FRANK LINLEY

Frank Linley died on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2002 after a year-long battle with cancer. Frank will not have been known to many CAWOS members, but as Sheila Blamire indicates below his contribution to the Society during the past year was considerable. Frank also played a pivotal role in the Woolston Eyes Conservation Group (WECG) for over ten years and his computer skills, in particular, became legendary.

I first met Frank in the late 1980s and soon after he became a Committee member of the WECG, contributing much wisdom and sound practical advice over the next eleven years. It was his knowledge of all things computer, however, that was his greatest contribution, as is apparent from the sheer quality of the Woolston Annual Reports from 1990 onwards. This was largely the result of his presentational skills. From an early stage he moved the WECG from cumbersome paper record sheets to computerised data, making life so much easier for the WECG compilers, and also for CAWOS. In addition, Frank provided considerable help to the Woolston ringers by designing programmes to meet BTO requirements. People would often contact Frank for advice, which he always gave with typical generosity – unless one was foolish enough to interrupt his viewing of *Countdown!*

By profession Frank was a chemical engineer, and had travelled widely. He used his practical skills to great effect, making numerous traps for the ringers (notably for wildfowl and Water Rails) and also a nesting platform for Black-necked Grebes. The latter resulted from Internet discussions between Frank and a world expert on Black-necked Grebes in the USA. Some years ago he made several large feeders for No.3 bed at Woolston, and these are still used by considerable numbers of birds.

The rapid increase in permit holders at Woolston in recent years was a potential bureaucratic nightmare for the Group, but Frank took it all in his stride and set up a database which was efficient and smooth running. He spent hours producing accurate maps of Woolston so that visitors could easily find their way around this large reserve. The annual Warbler Census also benefits greatly from the detailed maps he made. In short, Frank Linley was the ultimate 'behind the scenes' man, without whom most organisations would struggle to function. He responded to challenges and during the final year, when his cruel illness left him housebound, Frank continued to work on his computer until a few days before he died. He answered requests for help in the *Daily Telegraph* from people who required databases to help them run their organisations more efficiently. In one case he devised an ingenious programme for a musician wanting to keep details of session players whom he employed from time to time; he also helped a model yacht club. Typically, there was never any question of payment for all his hard work.

Many who have visited Woolston during the past year will have seen the new tower hide on No.3 bed. This was funded through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. Only a fraction of the applications submitted to this scheme succeed and the fact that this one did was, I know, largely due to the professional presentation by Frank. Sadly, Frank never saw the hide (except in photographs) for when it was completed he was too ill to visit the Eyes. It seems wholly appropriate that the Committee of WECG has decided to name it 'The Frank Linley Hide' in recognition of his major contribution to the development of Woolston Eyes.

Apart from birds, Frank had other interests. He was widely read, with a good knowledge of history. He was also particularly keen on classical music, and for many years held the position of Treasurer of a local music society.

When working closely with someone over many years you get to know them well and Frank Linley was not just a helpful colleague but he and his wife, Hazel became close friends. He was a kind and generous man, for whom nothing was too much trouble. His passing is a great loss to Cheshire ornithology and I, and all of his friends, shall miss him very much.

**Brian Martin, on behalf of the Woolston Eyes Conservation Group**

## RESERVE PAYS A LASTING TRIBUTE TO NATURE CAMPAIGNER WHO LOST CANCER FIGHT

'A nature reserve in Woolston has paid tribute to one of its most popular and hardworking members with the naming of the Frank Linley Memorial Hide. Mr Linley, who lost his year-long battle with lung cancer at the age of 70 in October, played a huge role in renewing the popularity of the Woolston Eyes nature reserve. The former chemical engineer built the birdwatchers' web site and also dealt with all of their financial records, purely for his love of, and fascination with, the hobby. All of the popular twitcher's work was voluntary and he even assisted other people's pastimes, such as a jazz band and a model yachting club, by building web sites for them, free of charge.

But observing nature was the real love of Mr Linley and his wife Hazel, who would take two trips a year to birdwatching hotspots in Norfolk and Suffolk as well as an annual trip to Northumberland. Hazel Linley believes the hide built in her husband's memory is a fitting tribute to a popular man. "He just loved the place," she said, "and everybody loved him. He was laid back and someone everyone could talk to." Mrs Linley now plans to return to the reserve she and her husband visited two or three times a week, after being made an honorary life member.'

**Excerpt from the *Warrington Guardian* 26 December 2002**

## **FRANK LINLEY - A TRIBUTE ON BEHALF OF CAWOS**

I can't fully remember *how* Frank first became involved with the Society. Was it through the recommendations of Brian Martin and his involvement with Woolston Eyes? However, I can certainly remember the occasion. I bravely (some have said stupidly!) stated at the Recording Forum held in February 2001 that a small group would hold a follow-up meeting to discuss the computerisation of county records and to have a system in operation in readiness for the production of the 2001 *Bird Report*. A working party (I thought this title sounded less threatening to those people I 'encouraged' to join - not that I fooled anybody at the time apparently!) was set up to fulfil this ambitious deadline and Frank, who was not even a member of CAWOS then, rang me and volunteered to help all he could. And help he certainly did. Without his support and computer skills, to back up that of the other members of the working party, we may have floundered. We certainly wouldn't be in the strong situation we are in today.

Frank became the official 'Trainer and Troubleshooter', helping to test the system and offer training and ongoing support to both computerised contributors and data-inputters. Though in his phone calls and e-mails he usually referred to himself as the 'Troublemaker', with additional comments such as: "Hope cat not too much among pigeons", and "If I am not careful, I will be accused and quite rightly, of putting yet another hump on the camel! If Geoff throws a wobbly - back off quick!" His humour often won us through some rather frustrating times trying to adapt an existing system (Derbyshire's) into what we saw were the requirements of CAWOS.

After a number of modifications had been carried out, a trial was conducted using four volunteers to input data direct into the CAWOS database from paper records. Frank took sole responsibility for organising this. Many problems were encountered, some easy to solve others much more difficult. Frank's report on this trial period ran to several pages!

A great deal of time was spent by the working party on developing new record forms, writing guidelines and operating instructions, and generally trying to keep all interested parties abreast of progress (not least Council and the Finance Subcommittee!). Frank took on the lion's share of these tasks at times. Because he was not a competent birder (his words not mine! - how amused Frank would have been to see himself referred to as a 'twitcher' in the *Warrington Guardian* tribute!) he seemed able to put guidelines and instructions into simpler layman's terms, which were more readily understood.

He loved to 'fiddle' as he put it, trying to simplify or modify the database entry screens, for example. In one e-mail he said: "If you decide that it is worthwhile for me to go ahead fiddling with the 'Newcawos' database it may be less wasteful of Geoff's time to wait until I get out of my depth, then he can add on all the clever bits, smooth off the rough edges and do the final polishing." Though CAWOS gained greatly through his expertise and the amount of time he was willing to put into the project, Frank saw it as a two-way thing and was pleased and amazed at how much he learnt in the process. Often Frank would send a message: "Could do with another of Geoff's intensive training sessions!" As his illness progressed, and particularly as he became housebound, I like to think that he was thankful for the challenges that the computerisation project and the CAWOS database presented. Not that we had to 'find' problems for him to solve - there were those aplenty! His wife, Hazel would sometimes have a quiet word with me to say "don't be afraid of loading work on to Frank" - he needed to keep occupied with something he enjoyed and which he found worthwhile.

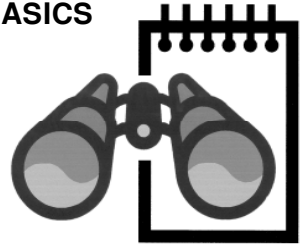
When the guidelines were eventually published Frank told me that I had better leave his name off the contact list, as he didn't know how long he would be around for. The matter-of-fact way he dealt with his illness amazed me, but it only reflected his strength of character. Working (and laughing!) with Frank over the past year has been a pleasure. As Brian Martin says, "His passing is a great loss and we will miss him very much". His help with the computerisation project and his involvement with CAWOS will not be forgotten. Frank - a heart-felt belated thank you to you!

**Sheila Blamire, Chairman of the Database Team**

# Records & Recording

## WRITING DESCRIPTIONS - START WITH THE BASICS

There are many occasions when people send me a description of a rare bird during the year and there is not enough useful information to support a correct identification or, they phone me up because the RSPB help desk has told them that I'm the best person to tell when there's a rare bird in their garden. Either way, it usually ends up with me making a tentative identification based on very basic plumage features. Whilst discussing the subject with people at the beginning of their birding life, or even with those people who are reasonably experienced and who are faced with a rarity, perhaps in their own garden, there is often one common question. 'How do I describe the bird properly on paper?' How do you begin to write a description? Let's have a look at the basics of how to acquire enough knowledge.



To an experienced birder with years of experience both at home and abroad, bird identification can be a simple, almost intuitive exercise. They have carried out the process of elimination in their heads many thousands of times. In the early days they made plenty of mistakes, but as the image of a species is repeated over and over again, the brain takes over and if coupled with a memory of call or song, the correct identification becomes automatic, at least with common species. The above process does have its pitfalls and if the observer is not wary, a rarity resembling the common alternative is missed or, much worse, the observer's automated identification process is flawed and every common species become a BBR – a British Birds Rarity. Some people see them all the time, really believing that they are watching a first for the county. It's not a case of blatantly 'stringing' (making a bird up), but one of self-delusion.

So, how do you become 'good' at identification? How then do you write a description good enough to convince a rarities panel? The two are one and the same. When I started birding, I had a pair of Boots 8x30 binoculars my mother bought me for my birthday. I don't know why I started, nobody in the family had ever shown any interest in anything feathered unless it was about to be plucked and eaten. I had this strange fascination that made me want to watch birds and learn all about them. It was a slow process. I had no one to help or instruct me and had an *I-Spy Birds* and the *Observer's Book* to help me at first before I managed to possess my first real identification guide, the *Heinzel Fitter*, a revelation. That was over forty years ago...

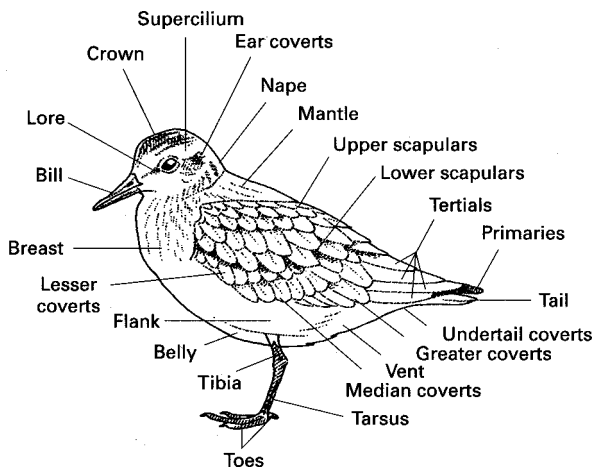
I started off by watching the birds in the garden, even erecting a hide about three feet from the bird table and getting some dodgy black and white photographs of Greenfinches. I did an annual report on my garden, much like one of the patch ones that we receive today. The garden in Hazel Grove had some good birds in and over, probably more than I realised, but only the 'definite ones' went in the little notebook that went everywhere with me. My first Quails were exciting... in the fields in Happy Valley in January! Yes, that's right, I made mistakes (and like everyone else, still do, but not as frequently), but learnt from them. They were, of course Redwings as my notes later confirmed, but you can see a passing resemblance.. can't you? Later on an RSPB local leader took me to far away places like Southport and a close friend introduced me to the really wild places and exciting birds in the Highlands of Scotland.

Do you notice anything in the above? Local fields (at first), common birds, notebooks ... and notes, and eventually, descriptions. Walk before you run is good advice. You must *want* to be able to describe and identify a bird and practice at every opportunity, before it becomes second nature. The beauty about birding is that it lends itself to being governed by work and domestic restrictions. To be good takes a long time and countless hours in the field. To reach a respectable level of competence, to be able to recognise the common birds in your garden, takes much less time. It is about enthusiasm and a realisation of your own limitations and the fact that 99.9% of what you see will be in the 'common' section of the *Observer's Book of Birds*. So, how is it done?

Well, to begin with, get a good book on common British birds. The *Garden Bird Book* by Mark Golley and Stephen Moss with illustrations by David Daly is an excellent little book. There is nothing



rare in it, but it has lots of pictures of birds in natural poses instead of stiff, side-on views. Forget those that deal with Europe and the rest of the world. Have a decent pair of binoculars at hand all the time and a notebook at the ready. Now, with a little patience and a well-stocked bird table, try writing some short notes on the birds in front of you. Why is it a Coal Tit and not a Great Tit? A Song Thrush and not a Mistle Thrush? A Starling and not a Blackbird? It helps if you have an illustration of a bird's 'topography' in front of you, i.e. the parts of the bird that have names. Bill, crown, tail, wings.... those dreaded lesser coverts that some birders refer to, the malar stripe, tertials.... Don't they sound



terribly confusing and perhaps frightening? They're not actually and over a period of weeks, they'll trip off your tongue as though you'd learnt them at school. Before you can begin to describe a bird, you must know *what* it is that you are describing. There are about thirty-five 'bits' to learn.

Let me use an example to illustrate the above. A charming lady rang me up recently to tell me she had several Lesser Grey Shrikes in her garden, which the RSPB had indicated were fairly common (but who thought that I'd like to know!). She described how they had been in several times, fed on her peanuts and how small they were. On looking in the book, there in full colour, was an illustration of a Lesser Grey Shrike and that was what was in front of her. But she was confused by the fact that the book said that the species was a summer visitor and a very rare species in the UK. We discussed them and as the plumage features unfolded, I became more convinced that they were in fact Long-tailed Tits. Think about it. Black mask, pinky unders, black tail with white outers, grey back at a distance. The characters could fit either species, couldn't they? I always remember reading the episode in Bill Oddie's *Little Black Book* that dealt with a similar dilemma. There was a description of a brown streaky bird in grass. You could identify it equally well on the plumage features as both a Pectoral Sandpiper and a Skylark. Remember, when you are starting out, Redwings look like Quails! The finer details such as time of year, size and status don't come into it. The lady had done the right thing, she'd taken notes on the plumage, had an attempt at identifying the birds and even then, wasn't totally happy with her own identification. She phoned people who she thought could help and learnt enough to identify Long-tailed Tits correctly (hopefully). If she had known what all of the parts of a bird were called, she would have found it easier and gone straight to the right page in the book.

If you want to be good, then it's a slow process. Practice and more practice. Look at a bird, take notes, *then* look in a book and repeat the process. If you are enthusiastic it doesn't take long. If you have less opportunity, then it'll take longer. Either way, it's a constant learning curve that never ends. No matter how experienced you think you are, there's always a bird out there that will bring you down to earth with a bump. Quite humbling when it happens ....

Don't pay too much attention to the rarities section in the popular birding press but concentrate on the excellent identification articles that appear each month. They emphasise which plumage features to look for, features that might not be adequately covered in the limited space of a field guide. Often, people jump in at the deep end and ignore the common species, preferring to dash off to see rarities. Nothing wrong in that if you can put the birds you see into context, and you won't be able to do that unless you know how rare they are relative to the common species. The number of people I meet who boast about their fifth Pallas's Warbler of the autumn but who have never seen a Goldcrest, and what's more couldn't adequately describe one either, is unfortunately too regular an occurrence.

I don't intend to sound critical. They enjoy their own way of birding and that's great, but we're talking about being able to write a description here and most importantly, to be able to say why the bird that you are watching in front of you, is what you think it is. Learn the parts of a bird. What kind of bill does it have, does it hop or run? How large is it in comparison to a species you are familiar

with? *Write* what you see down on paper and show them to a knowledgeable friend. Try the local RSPB field trips where you can ask as many questions as you like. Phone me up (why not? The RSPB advises everybody else to! I don't mind really, only joking...). Don't be afraid to make mistakes, we all do it. It's just that some people are so pompous and arrogant that they forget the first time they saw a Blue Tit.

Moving on to less common birds, a gentleman and his wife sent me a good description of what was almost certainly a Bonelli's Warbler in their garden last August. The description was quite adequate to be '*almost certain*'. The notes say why it was a *phylloscopus* warbler (Willow Warbler family) rather than any other warbler, by describing the overall impression and actions of the bird (general shape, slender pointed bill and the fact that it was actively hunting insects on the lawn and in surrounding bushes and trees, moving restlessly amongst branches and leaves). The size was 4.5 to 5.0 inches but gave the impression of being bigger than Willow Warbler or Chiffchaff (comparison with two common species the observers knew well), reminiscent of a small, brownish wagtail, (again, a comparison) darting about with constantly twitching tail. The upperparts were brownish-green, rather than the greyish-green as in Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff. (I know what they mean, but both those species can be brownish-green). The rump was distinctly yellow-green, with the same colour showing less distinctly on the folded wings (both excellent points for Bonelli's) and all the undersides were white from chest to undertail coverts, showing no 'yellow' as in Chiffchaff or Willow Warbler (again, good points for Bonelli's). The tail was darker than the back with lighter edgings to the feathers and it was strongly notched when at rest. The head was undistinguished with supercilium and eyestripe both present but 'smudgy' and weakly coloured. Legs were closer to flesh coloured than anything else. No calls were heard. Both observers were familiar with Bonelli's Warbler and had seen them previously along the Egyptian Red Sea coast.

This kind of description would be absolutely brilliant to enable the observers to identify most common birds. There's a good understanding of the parts of a bird and they've been used correctly. Unfortunately, with a bird of this rarity, the description of the plumage features should have been a lot more complete. There was no mention of the forehead, crown, any coverts, secondaries, tertiaries (a feature), chin, throat, eye and bill colour (which are both crucial), or the shape of the head as opposed to Willow Warbler. A lot of Bonelli's are much greyer also, but this can depend on lighting (there was no mention of weather or lighting conditions in the notes). The black eye that Bonelli's have is usually a good feature, looking beady and prominent in a bland face. Getting down to even finer points, the primary extension hadn't been noted (exceptionally difficult to describe unless you are used to looking for it) and the call wasn't heard (double glazing!).

My feeling is that it was indeed a Bonelli's Warbler from the Continent, but the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) would need enough information to rule out something like a Booted Warbler, which, although a different genus, can look very similar. (The rump was noted as yellowish however, and would rule that out.) To make matters worse, Bonelli's Warbler has also been 'split' into two separate species recently and so there are now Western Bonelli's and Eastern Bonelli's. They can be impossible to tell apart in the field and without the call being heard, which may have helped, it will have to be one of those that got away.

So there you have it, from beginner to experienced birding traveller. Writing descriptions is relatively easy. Writing them properly is, however, an art. All there is between the two is time ...oh, and a notebook of course!

**Tony Broome, 4 Larchwood Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 2NU. Tel: 01625 540434**

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# Members' Noticeboard

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

For sale: *British Birds* magazines 48 volumes from 1948 to 1996. Reasonable offer accepted. Contact Geoff Lightfoot on 0161 486 0784

# Diary

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT - FRIDAY 7th MARCH 2003

### ‘TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS OF A WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER’

Following the AGM there will be an illustrated talk by Andy Harmer, who will try to convince us that being a wildlife photographer is not all glamour and rich reward! Knowing Andy, his stunning photography will be liberally laced with humour to make the post-AGM blues disappear in a flash!

#### FEBRUARY

- 7 **CAWOS** ‘MILLENNIUM WILDLIFE’ by Paul Hobson
- 9 KOS Cromford Canal/Ogston Resr, meet Sessions House, Knutsford at 9:00am
- 9 CRSPB Pennington Flash - contact David Wright 01829 751662
- 9 HPRSPB Blacktoft Sands & Fairburn Ings, meet at Marple at 8:30am - ring for details
- 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 minibus - ring for details
- 16 MCOS Porthmadog - contact Paul Kenyon 01606 77960
- 16 LOG Leighton Moss by coach - ring for details
- 17 HPRSPB ‘WILDLIFE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC’ by Terry Pickford
- 18 MCOS Point of Ayr day trip - contact Harold Fielding 01606 882529
- 19 CRSPB ‘MIGRATION TO THE MASAI’ by Keith Offord
- 19 **High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 11:15am (HW 12:58, 9.9m)**
- 20 **High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 12:00noon (HW 13:39, 9.8m)**
- 20-23 MCOS Norfolk weekend - contact Mike Hems 01606 888525
- 21 NCRSPB ‘POLAND’ by Valerie McFarland
- 22 **Shorebirds at Shorefields, New Ferry - 12:00noon - 2:00pm. Tel: 0151 327 1007**
- 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
- 25 CRSPB ‘POSTCARDS FROM PARADISE’ by Chris Packham - Town Hall, Chester (ticket £6)
- 28 KOS ‘THIS BLESSED PLOT’ by Andy Harmer
- 28 WGOS ‘TRINIDAD & TOBAGO’ by Valerie McFarland
- 28 HPRSPB Holy Island Weekend to 2<sup>nd</sup> March - ring for details
- 28 LOG AGM & MEMBERS’ EVENING
- tbw WGOS Martin Mere & Southport/Marshside by coach departing at 8:00am - ring for details

#### MARCH

- 2 **Birdwatch, Banks Road car park, Lower Heswall - 8:30am (HW 11:03, 9.2m)**
- 6 CADOS AGM + MEMBERS’ EVENING
- 7 **CAWOS AGM followed by ‘TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS OF A WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER’ by Andy Harmer**
- 7-9 SECOS East Fife weekend - ring for details

- 8 KOS Derwent Valley, meet Sessions House, Knutsford at 9:00am
- 9 CRSPB Flint Castle - contact Brian Roberts 01352 714758
- 10 SRSPB 'TANZANIAN SPECTACLE' by Mike Wilkes
- 11 ADNHS 'A FLORIDA LANE' by Mike Lane
- 11 MRSPB 'THE COMPLETE OWL' by Michael Leach
- 12 HO 'SKY DANCERS' by Keith Offord
- 14 MCOS 'WILDLIFE OF THE GALAPAGOS AND THE CLOUD FOREST' by Mike Wilkes
- 14 SECOS 'THE GALAPAGOS' by D & S Tollerton
- 16 WGOS Tregaron by coach departing at 7:30am - ring for details
- 16 HO Shropshire by coach departing at 8:00am - ring for details
- 16 MRSPB Chasewater Reservoir, nr Cannock, meet Duke Street car park at 8:00am
- 16 LOG Marshside (may be 23<sup>rd</sup> March depending on tides) - ring for details
- 16 HPRSPB Sandwell Valley, meet at Marple at 9:00am - ring for details
- 17 HPRSPB 'MOMENTS IN TIME' by Andy Harmer
- 18 MCOS Brereton Country Park day trip - contact Harold Fielding 01606 882529
- 19 CRSPB 'IN SEARCH OF THE ROADRUNNER' by Susan and Allan Parker
- 19 High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 10:15am (HW 11:56, 10.1m)**
- 20 High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 11:00am (HW 12:37, 10.2m)**
- 21 High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 11:30am (HW 13:18, 10.1m)**
- 21 NCRSPB QUIZ & HOT POT SUPPER
- 22 CADOS Pennington/Marbury field trip - ring Peter Hale 01244 341074 for details
- 23 SECOS North Wales coast by minibus - ring for details
- 25 ADNHS 'WHITE MAGIC' by Mike Pettipher
- 28 KOS 'UNIQUE MADAGASCAR' by Sheila Blamire
- 28 WGOS 'THE RIVER' by Paul Hobson
- 28 LOG 'ICE, ISLANDS & ISOLATION' by Fred Ledden
- 29 Migration Watch at Red Rocks, meet Stanley Rd, off King's Gap, Hoylake at 7:00am**
- 29 NCRSPB Witton Country Park & Sunny Hurst - ring for details
- 30 Shorebirds at Shorefields, New Ferry - 8:30am - 10:30am. Tel: 0151 327 1007**

## APRIL

- 8 MRSPB 'BIRDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC' by Terry Pickford
- 9 HO 'APACHE WINTER' by Gordon Langsbury
- 9 ADNHS AGM followed by a short talk
- 11 SECOS AGM & MEMBERS' EVENING
- 11 MCOS AGM & MEMBERS' SLIDES
- 11 NCRSPB 'BIRD MIGRATION IN NORTH AMERICA' by Mike McKavett
- 11-13MRSPB Norfolk weekend based at Hunstanton - contact Ian Taylor 01260 275248
- 12-13KOS Anglesey - optional B/B Saturday night - ring for details
- 13 HO Mid-Wales by coach departing at 8:00am - ring for details
- 13 CRSPB Fairburn Ings & Blacktoft by coach - contact Roger Nutter 01829 782237
- 13 SECOS Potteric Carr by minibus - ring for details
- 13 MCOS Dunsop Valley - contact Ray Evans 01829 752494
- 13 HPRSPB Potteric Carr, meet at Marple at 9:00am - ring for details
- 14 SRSPB 'HABITUALLY BIRDS' by John Power
- 15 MCOS Dane Valley day trip - contact Harold Fielding 01606 882529
- 16 CRSPB AGM followed by 'MIGRATION' by Keith Clarkson
- 18 High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 11:30am (HW 13:15, 10.3m)**
- 19 High Tide Birdwatch, Old Baths car park, Parkgate - 12:15pm (HW 13:57, 10.1m)**
- 20 Dawn Migrants on Hilbre - £1 charge. To book ring: 0151 648 4371/3884**
- 21 SRSPB Tatton Park meet Mallard Close, Knutsford at 7:15pm
- 22 ADNHS 'NEW ZEALAND' by Margaret Ledger
- 23 CRSPB Farndon evening walk - contact Rob Adams 01829 270654
- 23 MRSPB Bollin Valley with the Bollin Valley Ranger Service - contact Peter Kirk 01625 829119
- 25 KOS AGM + MEMBERS' SLIDES
- 25 LOG 'HONG KONG REVISITED' by Norman Catchpole
- 27 Guided Walk at Dawpool NR - 7:00am - 10:00am. To book: 0151 648 4371/3884**

- 27 NCRSPB Carsington & Ogston Reservoirs - ring for details  
 28 HPRSPB 'LOOK NORTH' by Rev. Hugh Linn  
 tbc WGOS Blacktoft Sands & Potteric Carr by coach departing at 7:30am - ring for details

## MAY

- 1-15 HPRSPB Lesbos holiday - ring for details  
 2 WGOS AGM followed by 'BIRDS ON THE RUSSIAN TUNDRA' by Charles Liggett  
 4 **The Lost Lagoon, Halton - 7:00am - To book ring: Jeff Clarke 01928 583905**  
 7 NCRSPB Queen Charlotte's Wood evening trip - ring for details  
 9 NCRSPB 'BLACKTOFT SANDS RISING TIDE OF CHANGE ON THE HUMBER' by Ian Higginson  
 10 MCOS Coombes Valley/Churnet Valley - contact Les Goulding 01925 265578  
 11 MCOS AGM & MEMBERS' SLIDES EVENING  
 11 CRSPB Leighton Moss by coach - contact Marjorie Dixon 01244 324268  
 12 SRSPB Pennington Flash meet at the Golf Club off A572 at Golbourne at 7:15pm  
 13 ADNHS 'THE PEMBROKE COASTAL PATH' by John Hill-Wilson  
 13 MRSPB AGM followed by MEMBERS' SLIDES  
 13 MCOS Loggerheads day trip - contact Harold Fielding 01606 882529  
 14 HO 'BIRD MIGRATION, GREAT EASTERN FLYWAY' by Mike McKavett  
 15-18KOS Suffolk weekend based in Leiston - ring for details  
 15-18NCRSPB Anglesey Weekend - ring for details  
 16-18LOG Anglesey Weekend by coach - ring for details  
 17 ADNHS Marshside & Rufford Old Hall for cream tea! - contact 0161 928 7896  
 18 **Bird Ringing at Oxmoor LNR - 7:00am - 9:00am. To book: 01928 583905**  
 18 SRSPB Hodbarrow RSPB by coach departing at 7:30am - ring for details  
 18 MRSPB Top Hill Low Reservoir by coach - contact Ian Taylor 01260 275248  
 18 SECOS Ynys Hir by minibus - ring for details  
 19 HPRSPB 'WORKING TOGETHER FOR BIRDS' by Keith Clarkson  
 22 MRSPB Coombes Valley RSPB Reserve, meet at the reserve at 6:45pm  
 25 HPRSPB Walney Island meet at Marple at 8:00am - ring for details  
 28 MRSPB Lindow Common walk with ranger Paul Hughes - contact Peter Kirk 01625 829119  
 30 LOG 'BIRDS OF MOORE & FIDDLER'S FERRY' by Mike Roberts

## 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 Stanley House, Bexton Road 7.45pm, contact Roy Bircumshaw 01565 634193  
 LOG Lymm Ornithological Group, mtgs Lymm Village Hall 8.00pm, Prog. Sec. Hilary Unsworth 01925 860155  
 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

**For further information on all Outdoor Events contact Jeff Clarke 01928 583905 (work) or 0151 423 4275 (home) or e-mail: [conservation@cawos.org](mailto:conservation@cawos.org) OR see the complete 2003 BIRDWATCHER'S DIARY at: [www.deeestuary.freeserve.co.uk/highbird.htm](http://www.deeestuary.freeserve.co.uk/highbird.htm)**

**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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- Bird Art--- ✓
- Part Ex--- ✓

### DIRECTIONS

Marbury House Farm, Bentleys Farm Lane, Higher Whitley, Cheshire, WA4 4QW.

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

M56 jct 10, take A559 towards Northwich for 1 mile. When you reach the Birch & Bottle (public house) turn right into Bentleys Farm Lane.

We are on the left after 1/2 mile, through the Marbury House Farm gates.

*Opening times 9.30am - 4.00pm Mon - Sat  
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# Index

Page 1	Guest Editorial	Page 18-19	Conservation News
Page 2-6	Recent Reports	Page 20-23	Notes and Letters
Page 7	County Rarities	Page 24-25	Ringers' Notebook
Page 8-12	Projects and Surveys	Page 25-27	Membership News
Page 12-13	Computerisation of Records	Page 28-29	Obituary - Frank Linley
Page 14 -15	Species Spotlight	Page 30-32	Records & Recording
Page 16-17	View from the Farmyard	Page 32	Members' Noticeboard
Page 17	Sites to Watch	Page 33-35	Diary and Events

*Imminent dates for your diary:*

Tues 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 'Postcards from Paradise' by Chris Packham (Chester RSPB)

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