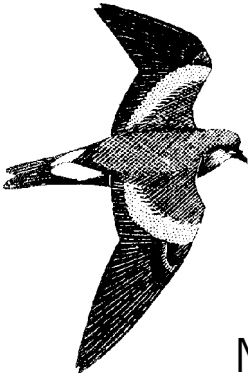


Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society

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BIRD NEWS

Number 80

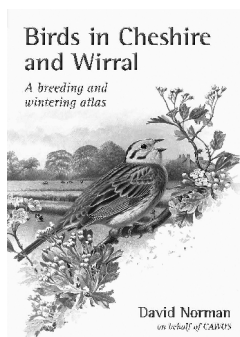
July 2009



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by David Norman on behalf of CAWOS



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Bird News welcomes articles, letters and comments relevant to birdwatching in Cheshire and Wirral. Please either email or post your contributions to the Editor at the address shown above.

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Front cover : Paddyfield Warbler by Ray Scally

Other illustrations : Tom Lowe and Phil Jones

Guest Editorial

It was with great shock that I heard, along with a number of other CAWOS members, that Sheila Blamire had been taken ill while on holiday in Hungary early in May. She was hospitalised, having had a stroke which had affected her speech and ability to communicate. Over the next few days Geoff, Sheila's husband, reported gradual progress, with sufficient improvement being made for them to be able to return home the following week, though this was to be only the start of a period of recuperation and recovery.

Many of you will know Sheila and how much she has given to the Society in her previous roles as Chairman and Programme Secretary and her current roles as Database Manager, Newsletter Editor and Technical Editor of the *Bird Report*, and I am sure that you will want to join me in wishing her a full and speedy recovery.

Holding such a pivotal position in CAWOS activities, it was immediately necessary for Council to consider what short-term measures would be required to continue Sheila's activities, including some of the work in preparation for this Newsletter. Various people rallied round to provide assistance, and we were very pleased to learn that Sheila, with Geoff's support, would be able to continue to work as Newsletter Editor. However, it again highlighted an issue that has concerned Council for some time – that of finding volunteers from within the Society membership to take on roles, or to provide support and backup to their current holders.

As reported in my last Chairman's report, we have been successful in finding successors for the positions of Treasurer, Secretary and Membership Secretary, but are there any more people willing to help? Although we hope that Sheila will long be able to continue to do the excellent job that she currently does, we do need to identify members who would be willing to get involved in the gathering and preparation of records ready for import into the database, and the production of both the *Bird News* and *Bird Report*. The processing of records is a particularly time-consuming task, as, although many members are very good at following the guidelines for electronic submission, there are still a significant number of entries which require quite a degree of transformation to get them into a format suitable for entry into the database. We would be pleased to hear from anyone who has skills in working with data in spreadsheets. Please contact me on 01625 525936 or briandyke@cawos.org if you are interested.

This issue of *Bird News* reports the early death of Peter Williams in an obituary written by his son, Steve. Peter had been active in Cheshire birding for most of his life, but for most people, his name will be associated with Hilbre, where, from being an early member of the Hilbre Bird Observatory group, he eventually became Chairman, leading the group through some of its most exciting developments. Steve conveys some of the enthusiasm and passion that his father had for birds, and in his postscript, Bob Anderson reveals his personal memories of his friendship with Peter.

Bob also provides an introduction for a new feature which aims to illustrate the work of the various ringing groups in the county. There is an article by John Elliott reviewing the ringing activities at the Hilbre Bird Observatory during the first half of 2009. This illustrates the efforts of this dedicated band of ringers, both in the important work of monitoring some of our commoner species, as well as in the excitement of finding a first for Cheshire and Wirral! The issue also has a report from the Cheshire Swan Study Group, showing the results of some of their work this year, and the ringing theme is continued in an article celebrating 40 Years of Nest Recording and Ringing in NE Cheshire by the South Manchester Ringing Group.

In Conservation News, we see how one man can really make a difference. Brian Martin has been monitoring Swift numbers for many years, so when he was made aware of developments in Macclesfield which were affecting a significant breeding colony, he got involved. His actions directly impacted both the immediate success, and future prospects, for the birds – well done, Brian!

Brian Dyke

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 10th October - 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.

County Round-Up

Some of the records may be unauthenticated and therefore will require review by the Society's Rarities Team or the BBRC. This report covers the autumn/winter period from January to April.

SITE REPORTS

Chester area

Little Egrets were noted near Tarvin on Feb 10th with three at Wervin on Mar 12th. A possible Glossy Ibis was one mile W of Chester railway station on Apr 8th. A Jack Snipe was at the Gowy Meadows on Jan 8th, an Iceland Gull on the River Dee at Handbridge on Apr 6th. Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were at Eccleston on Mar 2nd and Chester Zoo on 13th, a Whinchat was at the Gowy Meadows on Apr 28th, two Grasshopper Warblers and two Lesser Whitethroats were at Chester Meadows on Apr 20th with Mealy Redpoll at Duckington on Feb 10th.

Congleton area

A Whooper Swan was at Newsbank Pool on Jan 5th, with male Scaup at Astbury Water Park on Jan 12th and 13th. 14 Buzzards were over Swettenham on Mar 15th with a White-tailed Eagle reported over Congleton on the same day. A Kittiwake was an unusual visitor to the Dane Valley on Feb 22nd. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was in woodland near Withington on Apr 13th, the first Swallow at Astbury Mere on Apr 5th, Yellow Wagtail at Dane Valley on Apr 10th with seven Grey Wagtails at this site on Feb 22nd, a flock of 50+ Waxwings were in Congleton town centre on Jan 27th.

Crewe and Nantwich area

A Whooper Swan was noted over Railway Flash on Jan 11th, 30 Pink-footed Geese were at Bar Mere on Jan 19th, an early Garganey was reported from Sandbach Flashes on Feb 7th and 8th with another on Apr 9th. A Red-crested Pochard was at Doddington Pool on Jan 2nd and Apr 14th with Scaup here on several dates throughout the period, two Red-breasted Mergansers were on the River Weaver at Nantwich on Jan 23rd and a max of 28 Goosanders at Sandbach Flashes on Jan 31st. A Black-necked Grebe was at Doddington Pool on Apr 9th and 14th.

Raptors included Red Kite over Audlem on Jan 19th, Osprey over Elton Hall Flash on Apr 27th and Hobby at Doddington Pool on Apr 30th. Numbers of Little Ringed Plovers at Sandbach peaked at 12 on Mar 21st, also here were Ringed Plovers from Mar 13th to 17th, Grey Plover on Apr 16th and Whimbrel on three dates in Apr with regular Common Sandpiper during Apr. Three Woodcocks were at Fodens Flash on Jan 31st. A Ring-billed Gull was at Elton Hall and Pump House Flashes on several dates, along with up to three Caspian Gulls as well as occasional Iceland and Glaucous Gulls a possible American Herring Gull was at Sandbach Flashes on Apr 9th.

Earliest migrants included Swift on Apr 26th, Sand Martin on Mar 14th, Swallow on Mar 25th all at Sandbach, Yellow Wagtail and Redstart at Maw Green Tip on Apr 11th and Whinchat on Apr 15th, Wheatear at Sandbach on Mar 18th. The first Grasshopper Warbler was at Basford on Apr 15th, Sedge Warbler at Groby Flash on Apr 19th, Reed Warbler at Watch Lane Flash on Apr 11th, Lesser Whitethroat at Elton Hall Flash on Apr 15th, Whitethroat at Fields Farm Flash on Apr 17th. Waxwings were reported at Elton and Warmingham, Mealy Redpoll at Sandbach during Mar with 52 Tree Sparrows at Elton Hall Flash on Mar 27th.

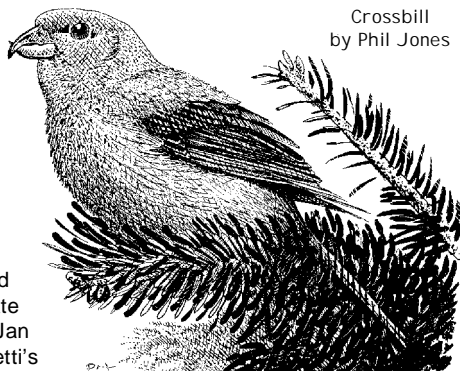
Ellesmere Port and Neston area

Wildfowl included 51 Bewick's Swans and 24 Whooper Swans at Shotwick on Jan 5th, 600 Pink-footed Geese at Parkgate on Feb 11th, a drake Green-winged Teal was at Inner Marsh Farm during Apr with one or two Garganey. A Bittern was along the Dee at Parkgate on several dates during Jan and Feb, a Great White Egret was reported at Denhall Lane on Apr 11th with two Spoonbills in the Burton area during mid-Apr.

Up to eight Hen Harriers roosted at Parkgate on Feb 11th, the highest number for many years, Osprey were noted from Burton on Apr 2nd, Neston on 5th and Inner Marsh Farm on 23rd. Two

Avocets returned to Inner Marsh Farm on Mar 13th increasing to 22 on Apr 9th, the first Little Ringed Plover appeared here on Mar 30th, a Curlew Sandpiper was at Inner Marsh Farm on Apr 29th along with 350 Black-tailed Godwits. Seven Whimbrels were at Parkgate on 27th Apr and nine Spotted Redshanks at Inner Marsh Farm on 17th. A Glaucous Gull was at Parkgate on Jan 11th, Kittiwake at Inner Marsh Farm on Apr 9th and three Common Terns at this site on Apr 25th.

The number of Short-eared Owls at Burton peaked at 27 on Mar 15th, a Richard's Pipit was at Parkgate on Jan 5th, two Water Pipits were at Neston on Jan 20th, Black Redstart at Parkgate on Mar 28th, Cetti's Warbler at Neston from Jan 5th to 17th, Bearded Tit at Burton on Feb 18th and nine Crossbills at Ness Gardens on Apr 22nd. Early migrants included two very early Swifts at Inner Marsh Farm on Apr 8th, two Swallows and two House Martins on Mar 30th, five Whinchats at Neston on Apr 27th, Wheatear at Burton on Mar 14th, two Ring Ouzels at Neston on Apr 2nd and Grasshopper Warbler and Whitethroat at Burton Marsh on Apr 17th.



Crossbill
by Phil Jones

Halton area

A Ruddy Shelduck was on the Mersey at Hale on Mar 4th. Five Little Egrets were at the same site on Mar 21st and again on Apr 5th. A Marsh Harrier was in the Hale area on Apr 21st, a Red Kite over Daresbury on Feb 1st with Merlin at Hale on Jan 26th and Apr 6th. Three Whimbrels were at Hale on Apr 22nd with seven at Pickering's Pasture on 24th, a Spotted Redshank was at Hale on Mar 30th with Little Gull on Apr 24th whilst two Iceland Gulls were at Wigg Island on Apr 21st. The first Yellow Wagtail was at Hale on Apr 6th, 25+ Corn Buntings were noted here on Jan 27th.

Macclesfield area

A Whooper Swan was at Acre Nook SQ on Jan 14th, 1100 Pink-footed Geese were over Higher Poynton on Jan 14th, a Brent Goose was along the Macclesfield Canal at Lyme Green on Jan 15th. Eight Mandarins were at Rostherne on Feb 4th, a Scaup was at Rostherne on Jan 11th, two Common Scoters were at Ridgegate Reservoir on Apr 21st, 11 Goldeneyes were at Redes Mere on Mar 2nd and 33 Goosanders at Chelford on Jan 26th. Two Bitterns were at Rostherne on Feb 6th with Little Egret on three dates and at Redes Mere on Jan 9th and 10th.

Red Kites were noted over Macclesfield on Feb 24th and Mar 14th, with others at Three Shires Head on Mar 5th and Chelford between Apr 4th and 6th. A Little Ringed Plover returned to Chelford on Mar 29th, 21 Snipe were at Rostherne on Feb 15th, Black-tailed Godwit at Acre Nook on Mar 2nd with the first Common Sandpiper at Rostherne on Mar 31st. A Kittiwake was at Radnor Mere on Jan 23rd. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was an unusual visitor to Poynton Pool during Apr, a Dipper was at Wildboardclough on Jan 14th.

Earliest migrants included Sand Martin at Tatton on Mar 12th, Swallow at Rostherne on Mar 21st with House Martin here on Mar 20th, Redstart at Tegg's Nose on Apr 12th, Wheatear at Danebower on Mar 30th with Ring Ouzel here on Mar 21st. The first Grasshopper Warbler was at Higher Poynton on Apr 19th, Garden Warbler at Tegg's Nose on Apr 25th, Wood Warbler at Acre Nook on Apr 5th and Pied Flycatcher at Macclesfield Forest on Apr 24th. Up to 80 Waxwings were in Macclesfield town centre during Jan.

Vale Royal area

A Whooper Swan was at Frodsham Marsh on Feb 14th, Scaup at Marbury CP on Jan 7th and Frodsham on Feb 14th, Red-breasted Merganser at Neumann's Flash on Apr 4th with Goosander on 3rd. A Bittern was at Marbury CP on Jan 23rd and Feb 9th, two Little Egrets at Frodsham Marsh on Feb 7th, a Cattle Egret was at Linnere on Jan 4th with another along the River Weaver at Frodsham from early Mar into Apr with White Stork at Frodsham on Apr 1st. A Red Kite was over Vale Royal Locks on Apr 9th, Osprey at Neumann's Flash on Apr 5th and 12th with another over Winnington on Apr 11th, a Merlin was at Allstock on Jan 29th.

Waders of note included four Little Ringed Plovers at Ashton's Flash on Mar 12th, with Sanderling on Apr 1st, four Little Stints at Frodsham Marsh on Mar 11th, two Bar-tailed Godwits at Neumann's Flash on Apr 25th with 46 Whimbrels on the same day, Common Sandpiper at Neumann's Flash on Apr 6th and a Wood Sandpiper was at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 24th. A Kittiwake was at Budworth Mere on Mar 27th, three Common or Arctic Terns were at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 18th, two Common Terns at Marbury CP on Apr 27th with Black Tern on 25th. A Cuckoo was at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 24th and Dairy House Meadows on Apr 25th, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at Marbury CP throughout the period with another at Vale Royal Cut on Apr 1st.

Migrants included Swift at Ashton's Flash on Apr 28th, Sand Martin at Haydn Pool on Mar 12th, House Martin at Frodsham Marsh on Mar 15th, two Yellow Wagtails at Marbury CP on Apr 6th, Redstart at Marbury CP on Apr 24th, Wheatear at Wallerscote lime beds on Mar 18th, Grasshopper Warbler at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 16th, Lesser Whitethroat at Neumann's Flash on Apr 23rd. A Hawfinch was present at Marbury CP from Jan 1st into early Feb whilst a White-throated Sparrow was reported in a Helsby garden on Mar 1st, having been around since Dec 08.

Warrington area

A Whooper Swan was over Moss Side on Apr 3rd, four Goosanders on the River Bollin at Lymm on Mar 27th. Two Black-necked Grebes were at Houghton Green Pool on Mar 7th, up to three Bitterns were at Moore NR into late Mar along with occasional Little Egret, a Spoonbill was noted on Jan 7th. A Red Kite was over Moore NR on Feb 2nd, an Osprey was at Risley Moss on Mar 31st, a max of nine Buzzards at Woolston Eyes in Mar and two Hobbies at Norton Marsh on Apr 30th.

A Little Ringed Plover was at Lymm on Apr 3rd, with the first Common Sandpiper at Moore NR on Mar 29th. A variety of Ring-billed, Caspian, Iceland and Glaucous Gulls were regularly seen in the Moore/Arpley area throughout the period, whilst a Little Gull and two Arctic Terns were at Woolston on Apr 25th.

A Cuckoo was at Moore NR on Apr 22nd, eight Swifts were at Woolston Eyes on Apr 25th, Sand Martin at Moore NR on Mar 14th, with Swallow on 27th, House Martin at Houghton Green Pool on Mar 30th. Whinchat at Norton Marsh on Apr 27th, Ring Ouzel at Houghton Green Pool on Mar 24th, Grasshopper Warbler was noted at Woolston Eyes on Apr 18th, with Reed Warbler on 10th and Sedge Warbler on 11th, Lesser Whitethroat on 25th and Whitethroat on 11th. 80 Waxwings were at Grappenhall on Feb 24th, a Cetti's Warbler was in the Fiddler's Ferry area from Feb 19th, 100 Tree Sparrows were at Upper Moss Side Farm on Mar 5th, a Serin was trapped and ringed at Woolston Eyes on Jan 31st with Twite at Risley Moss on Mar 7th.

Wirral area

A Whooper Swan was on the Mersey at New Brighton on Jan 6th with 16 at Hilbre on Mar 30th, a White-fronted Goose was at West Kirby on Feb 9th, with a peak count of 208 Brent Geese at Hilbre during Jan. Elsewhere, two Garganey were at Gilroy Road NP on Apr 13th, four Scaup at Leasowe on Apr 27th, Long-tailed Duck at West Kirby on Jan 19th, 500 Common Scoters were off Hilbre on Apr 11th and a Velvet Scoter at Meols on Apr 22nd. 79 Red-throated Divers were off Hilbre on Feb 11th along with a single Black-throated Diver, 100 Gannets off Leasowe on Apr 23rd, 18 Little Egrets were at Heswall on Apr 28th, a Spoonbill was seen in flight over Heswall on Apr 28th.

A Marsh Harrier and up to three Hen Harriers were at Heswall during Feb, a Rough-legged Buzzard was reported over Thurston on Jan 17th, an Osprey was at Meols on Apr 1st and 2nd with others at Hilbre on Apr 5th, and Heswall on Apr 27th. Two Avocets were at Gilroy Road NP on Mar 12th, a Stone Curlew was at Leasowe on Apr 30th, the first Little Ringed Plover

Long-tailed Duck
by Phil Jones



appeared at Hoylake Langfields on Mar 30th, 1820 Black-tailed Godwits at Leasowe on Feb 18th, 55 Whimbrels at Heswall on Apr 22nd. Three Arctic and one Great Skuas were off Leasowe on Apr 28th, 30+ Little Gulls at Hilbre on Apr 11th, 57 Kittiwakes were at New Brighton on Mar 30th. 32 Sandwich Terns were off Hilbre on Apr 24th, 12 Arctic Terns off Hilbre on Apr 26th, 26 Common Terns on Apr 24th. The first Swift was at Leasowe on Apr 24th, a Redstart was here on Apr 4th, Whinchat were at Hilbre on Apr 15th, Ring Ouzel at Leasowe on Apr 1st, Tree Pipit at Hilbre on Mar 19th, Sand Martin at Hilbre and Heswall on Mar 15th, Swallow at Leasowe on Mar 16th with a Red-rumped Swallow at Moreton from Apr 15th to 17th.

Grasshopper Warbler was at Leasowe on Apr 11th, along with Sedge and Reed Warblers, Lesser Whitethroat at Gilroy Road NP on Apr 13th, Whitethroat at Meols on Apr 11th, Garden Warbler at Leasowe on Apr 26th, Wood Warbler at Thurstaston on Apr 24th, Willow Warbler at West Kirby on Mar 31st, Pied Flycatcher at Red Rocks on Apr 25th, Spotted Flycatcher at Gilroy Road NP on Apr 26th. A Rock Pipit was at Heswall on Jan 13th with Water Pipit on Jan 5th, Black Redstart at Red Rocks on Jan 1st with others at Thurstaston on Jan 17th and Meols Mar 21st, Cetti's Warbler at West Kirby on Jan 12th and Red Rocks on Feb 7th. Two Firecrests at West Kirby on Feb 14th, 38 Waxwings at Pensby on Jan 14th, a possible Red-backed Shrike was at Heswall on Apr 1st, up to 13 Twite were in the Thurstaston area for most of Jan, with Mealy Redpoll at Hilbre and Hoylake in late Apr with 50+ Lesser Redpolls on Hilbre on Apr 24th, Snow Bunting at Red Rocks between Jan 1st and 3rd and Hilbre from Feb 21st to 22nd.

**Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 2SG.
Tel: 01925 726986 Email: tonyparker@cawos.org**

Thanks/acknowledgements to: Birdcall, Birdguides, Birdwatching Magazine, Dee Estuary website, Jack Canovan (Rostherne Mere), Moore NR website, Macclesfield RSPB, SECOS, NNHS and everyone else who passed records on.



Monitoring and Surveying

ROOK SURVEY 2009 – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Over 440 reports of active rookeries in spring 2009 have now been received, from just over 220 tetrads – slightly up on the number of tetrads in which breeding was confirmed during the recent Atlas survey. This is a fantastic effort - many thanks to all who have taken part in the survey.

There are evidently a number of duplicate reports of some rookeries and analysis is now under way to compile a definitive list of rookeries in Cheshire and Wirral and determine more precisely the associated population. The preliminary indication is that there may have been a reduction in the population since the last county survey in 1975, as was suggested by the reduced number of occupied tetrads identified during the recent Atlas survey, but it seems that there has not been a major decline.

An interesting preliminary finding is the apparent rate at which some rookeries disappear and new ones become established. We may think of rookeries as being fixed in the longer term and the survey findings support that view to some extent. Many rookeries are still to be found where they were located during the 1975 county survey. However, it has been found that a number of rookeries that were present just a short time ago during the Atlas survey could not be located, whilst new rookeries have been found in previously unoccupied tetrads which compensates for the losses. We will report in more detail on this and other aspects of the survey findings in due course.



Rook by Tom Lowe

Mark Eddowes, Chairman

Ringling Groups News

Ringling plays an important part in developing our knowledge of birds. In the past, CAWOS members were kept informed of local ringling activity through David Norman's "Ringer's Notebook" column in *Bird News*, but latterly there has been no regular coverage. We hope to remedy this by introducing this new feature, in which we invite ringling groups (or individual ringlers) active in Cheshire and Wirral to contribute their own accounts of their activities. In general, the idea is that these should provide a means of updating local birders on the groups' work - both by way of information about birds ringled or recovered, and news of other events (or incidents). Of the three contributions received for this issue, two follow this format. The third, describing fifty years of the South Manchester Ringling Group, first appeared in *BTO News* and is reproduced here with permission. Future contributions from other groups and/or individuals will be welcomed; contact for this feature and further information about contributions is Bob Anderson 01270 623044 or email robandjj@dircon.co.uk

SOUTH MANCHESTER RINGLING GROUP

40 YEARS OF NEST RECORDING AND RINGLING IN NE CHESHIRE

This was first published in the BTO News Issue 282, May-June 2009, and is reproduced with their kind permission.

In common with other local groups, South Manchester Ringling Group (SMRG) has enjoyed a rich combination of nest recording and nestling ringling over the 40 years of its existence. The group formed just 15 years after the arrival of 'mist nets' from Japan in the late 1950s, when the days of strapping bamboo carpet poles to bike crossbars and heading off to the local sewage farm was the norm. But from the beginning, SMRG was not just about mist netting; we knew there were nests aplenty to find.

In those halcyon days, Linnet nested barely one mile from the centre of Stockport and Willow Warbler and Redstart were abundant only slightly further afield. Car ownership had ceased to be the prerogative of the rich and anyone could drive into the hills, using their car as a hide to watch birds back to their nests. Once a nest was found, it was simply a case of moving in to record the contents and, if large enough, ring the chicks, before driving on to another territory. A dozen nests per day could be recorded via this method and follow-up visits would ensure that ringling and nest recording data were collected in equal measure. SMRG members have over the years used their vehicles to watch species as diverse as Skylark, Ring Ouzel, Whinchat, Dipper and even Golden Plover. Last year witnessed an emergency stop on the 'tops' to round up three Curlew pulli for ringling, though sadly we failed to locate the nearby Short-eared Owls.

Of the 'open nesters', we've had most success with Meadow Pipit, having ringled over 3700 nestlings from 600 broods. Our combined approach to studying 'Mipit' nests, both recording nest contents and ringling, provides a suite of data that is vital to the BTO's Integrated Population Monitoring work. Ultimately, information on survival (through ringling) is of less value without accompanying data on breeding (through nest recording) and vice versa, which is why we feel it is so important that both schemes are equally supported. After all, finding a nest is half the battle, so why not make the most of the ones we do find?

One of the longest-running SMRG projects is Malcolm Calvert's now-famous Reed Warbler marathon at Rostherne Mere. This project has not only produced a significant proportion of the BTO's Reed Warbler nest record data but also yielded a remarkably constant and complete data set for a single locality, something the BTO is particularly keen to encourage. Above average dedication and the optimism of a Stockport County supporter are essential to keep up such an endeavour, and this is clearly evident in Malcolm: who else would discover a ringled Reed Warbler and two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers in a mist net but go for the Reedy first?!

Nest box monitoring has also been a staple of SMRG, since the first set of Redstart boxes in the Goyt Valley. Reaching the site involved a train ride and not inconsiderable walk and I doubt the

group's founders thought that we'd still be making this journey 40 years later. Redstart and Pied Flycatcher were the target species for many early box schemes, but SMRG has more recently targeted its nest box monitoring towards Red and Amber-listed species, notably Tree Sparrow and Barn Owl. A chance meeting at a ringing demonstration resulted in our latest 'apprentice', 12-year-old Jake Gregory, who now has his own monitoring scheme comprising 50 boxes in a variety of sizes and shapes, from Blue Tit boxes to Tawny Owl chimneys.

It hasn't all been plain sailing though for SMRG, and we have struggled to stay active in the past, but our recent history is not all doom and gloom, far from it. Recent conservation successes have led to increases in local waterbird populations, and this has brought about a new addition to the group's repertoire of projects: Dipper nest monitoring. From a cold start two years ago, we have now collated nearly 100 nest records and ringed 350 birds, many of them also colour-ringed. The wider birding community has been integral to this work and there has been no shortage of enthusiastic volunteers. Amongst their number are two county bird recorders, our BTO Regional Rep and members of the Manchester Birders' website.

So what of the next 40 years? To the veteran ringer or nest recorder, the fascination with nature that is fundamental to so much of what we do appears to be waning amongst younger generations. Schoolboy nest-finders have given way to X-Box gamers and local groups that have long nurtured young ornithologists are now curtailed by red tape. But, perhaps ironically, the computer may be key to future developments in ringing and nest recording. With 90% of ringing records (and 70% of nest records) now submitted to the BTO electronically, who can say what tools will come along next? Already, the entry of coordinates into ringing software puts one a mouse-click away from a Google aerial photograph of the recapture site of one of your birds in Senegal. How long before we can zoom into a digital image of the original nest and contents?

Tony Wilkinson, South Manchester Ringing Group

NB: The ringing group welcome news of roosts and opportunities to ring birds to further our local knowledge and to help get further recoveries. Also colour-ringed birds including Dipper are of particular interest. Contact Clive Richards tel: 01625 524527 or email: clive_richards@cawos.org

CHESHIRE SWAN STUDY GROUP

Having produced the annual report of the Swan Study Group since 1993, I have decided it is time to take a rest. In future, I hope to report on our activities through short notes such as this.

In the first five months of this year Cheshire Swan Study Group has ringed 45 Mute Swans, including 14 retraps, and one Whooper Swan. This was first seen at a private pool near Congleton in November last year, joining a flock of Mutes already there. It was ringed there as a second year female in March using a Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust yellow Darvic N9V. It flew away on 15th April.

The maximum counts of flocks of (Mute) swans seen so far this year are as follows:

Acre Dell Pools, Congleton = 70 on 13th March and 75 on 9th May.

Astbury Mere, Congleton = 15 on 20th March and 10 on 19th May.

Bar Mere = 18 on 23rd April.

Canal at Middlewich = 16 on 1st January.

Coole Pilate fields = 30 on 27th January.

Doddington Mere, Nantwich = 32 on 18th May and 38 on 28th May.

Nantwich Boating Lake = 19 on 23rd April and 15 on 1st May.

New Brighton Boating Lake = 26 on 3rd February.

River Dee, Chester = 12 on 22nd January.

Shakerley Mere, Holmes Chapel = 13 on 24th March.

On 23rd April we started using the last in the sequence of Darvic rings (CY00 to CY99) which use the letter/letter number/number combination. The next new sequence (letter/letter/letter/number) will be CAA0 to CAA9, CAB0 to CAB9 etc, and these will be in use later this year. All sightings/reports are appreciated.

One other item of interest, at a site just outside Crewe a pair of swans started sitting on three eggs in December 2007. The eggs hatched two cygnets which were ringed on 9th June 2008. This is to my knowledge the earliest recorded nesting. The same pair started sitting this year in January but in April they abandoned the nest.

A pair hatched 9 cygnets at Comber Mere in May 2009.

Sightings of all swans should be sent to: David Cookson, 70 Rope Lane, Rope, Crewe CW2 6RD. Tel: 01270 567526. Email: Cheshireswans@aol.com giving details of place (6 fig map ref), colour/character combination of ring and, if with other swans, total number present in flock. All sightings will receive a printout of the history for the relevant bird.

David Cookson, Group Leader. Email: Cheshireswans@aol.com
Website: www.record-lrc.co.uk/Group.aspx?Mod=Article&ArticleID=G0012001

HILBRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

RINGING REVIEW JANUARY TO JUNE 2009

This short review aims to give a flavour of the ringing activity at the Hilbre Bird Observatory (HiBO) without going into lots of detail; the detail can be found in the HIBO Annual Report.

The year's ringing started on a high with a Redwing being caught in January. This was the first Redwing ringed at the observatory during the month of January for 30 years. Things got more interesting when a partial albino Song Thrush was caught and found to have been ringed at Hilbre three years previously. There was no sign of the albinism when it was first ringed. This bird's distinctive markings (becoming affectionately known by Obs regulars as the 'Whitish Thrush!') have allowed us to monitor its stay on the island more closely than previous wintering thrushes as it did not require re-trapping to know which particular Song Thrush it was.

Could things get any better? Well yes. The Pale-bellied Brent Goose flock that the observatory has been monitoring for years has been increasing in size year on year with this year being no different. None of the members have seen the colour-ringed 'XXYY' bird this year, a female Pale-bellied Brent with a history of travel through Ireland, Iceland, Canada, the south of England, Wales and Hilbre. However, this year two more colour-ringed birds joined the flock. One was first ringed in Dublin Bay in October 2007 and the other was first ringed in Iceland May 2007. HiBO is very pleased to be able to help the Irish Brent Goose Research Group with sightings of colour-ringed birds and provide data for the Brent Geese winter surveys.

Night-time warder ringing is a feature of the work at Hilbre. The weather on the island is capricious and many attempts have to be abandoned before they even start. However, we were lucky on the 27th/28th February when Chris Williams managed to catch a Purple Sandpiper by hand (he was probably fed up with the lack of success with the mist nets that night!). This was the first Purple Sandpiper ringed on the island for five years. All of the Obs regulars on the island were delighted, including the Chairman of the Obs and Chris's father, Pete.

A week later disaster struck. Pete was out walking with his wife Doreen, when he collapsed and died. He had been going to Hilbre for more than 50 years, he was well known in local birding circles and had had a major influence and made a huge contribution to the work of the Bird Observatory on Hilbre. Obituaries for him have appeared in many different places but no piece that covers this time in the observatory's year can pass this tragic event without comment. We all miss him.

Then spring arrived. One of our regular Meadow Pipits turned up early, on 9th March, and was re-trapped. The bird was ringed in 2001 and that made it the oldest Meadow Pipit ever recorded in the UK, beating one caught at Spurn by a couple of months.

Good numbers of migrants occurred during April when the numbers of Grasshopper Warblers caught was particularly noteworthy. Finch numbers were better than normal including an unprecedented four Common (or 'Mealy') Redpolls being caught – three were fine males.

A slight disappointment was that Wheatear numbers were down. However, we continue to colour-ring our Wheatears and are desperate for records of any sightings. We have colour-ringed in

excess of 400 Wheatears in the last 10 years or so and we have had no sightings at all away from Hilbre (which is, of course, interesting in itself). Please keep your eye on Wheatears wherever you are, holidays in the Lake District, Wales, Scotland, Iceland, Greenland, Canada, Wirral, Lancashire; our Wheatears could go anywhere.

All too soon spring was over and the usual quiet, from the ringing point of view, summer period had started. Or so everybody thought. We made a concerted effort again at Hilbre this spring to continue our coverage until well into June and this reaped its reward in the most remarkable fashion.

A lucky ringer was on his own on the island on 5th June, on his fourth or fifth circuit of the Heligoland traps when a warbler he did not recognise jumped off the ground and flew into the catching box. He took the bird out of the box and confirmed that he had never seen one like it before, then went back to the Obs to look through the books and in the finest quiz programme tradition, "phone a friend"! His friend (HiBO Secretary) was very excited by the discussion, so excited that at the end of it he rushed to Hilbre with his brother, even wading through the tide as it went out.

The bird was a Paddyfield Warbler, a first for Hilbre, Cheshire and Wirral. An incredible way to end the spring.

John Elliott, Hilbre Bird Observatory

NB: Latest news from the island <http://www.hilbrebirdobs.blogspot.com/>

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OBITUARY: PETE WILLIAMS 1943-2009

Chairman of Hilbre Bird Observatory 1982-2009

The following obituary first appeared in Birding North West, and is reproduced with permission.

It is with great sadness that we report the death of a truly great ornithological personality from our region. Pete Williams was a much-loved, lively and talkative character, always willing to share his knowledge and always welcoming to visitors to his beloved island, Hilbre. He often gave up his time to show people birds he had caught, or give talks to visiting groups of birders including schoolchildren. He had a natural affinity with the younger generation with whom he shared their constant inquisitiveness and striving for knowledge as well as unending enthusiasm for everything he did.

Pete collapsed and died on 7th March 2009 aged just 65, whilst out walking on one of his favourite walks near the Dungeons, Heswall, Wirral – with his wife of 43 years, Doreen. Not too far from where he saw Wirral's first White-tailed Eagle in over a hundred years in April 2007.

Pete's interest in birds began as a boy when he kept birds with his father in Newton. He first visited Hilbre as a five-year old and would come to visit the island regularly for the next sixty years despite periods working away. His interest in wild birds heightened with the finding of a Nightjar in a Newton village garden and he soon began regular trips to Hilbre and joined the recently formed Hilbre Bird Observatory group in the early 1960s.

With a friend he had constructed his own Heligoland trap in the back garden in Newton and this was soon transported to Hilbre and became the third trap on the island. The site still holds the aptly named "Newton" trap which has caught such birds as Merlin and Melodious Warbler, to name just a couple of the more interesting species it has attracted.

Pete's drive, enthusiasm and passion for birds and all aspects of natural history took him all round the world with family and friends. But he was always drawn back to Hilbre and he became Chairman of the Bird Obs in 1982 and through his leadership the group went from strength to strength. Under his guidance the group built a new seawatching hide in 1988, moved into new premises at the south end of the island in 1989, produced its annual report continuously for over 50 years now and as recently as 2008 achieved official bird observatory status with accreditation from the Bird Observatories Council.

Despite suffering heart failure in 2002 and a stroke in 2007 his passion for birding and Hilbre continued until his death – even overseeing the construction of a new freshwater pond on the

island in 2008 to provide fresh water for the Linnet population and the thriving dragonfly and damselfly populations. He organised and oversaw the celebrations of 50 years for the Bird Obs in 2006/07 including the North West Ringing Conference.

His last spring on the island in 2008 culminated in Pete being the first to shout "Bluethroat!" when last year's first for the island flew right past him displaying its superb tail pattern. His last visit to the island was an overnight ringing session with the regular obs members during which a Purple Sandpiper was caught and colour-ringed – hopefully that bird will be seen on its breeding grounds.

His ornithological finds and achievements are many – but include the finding of the first Hooded Warbler for the Western Palearctic in 1970 on another of his favourite islands, St Agnes, where he also caught Britain's earliest ever Grey-cheeked Thrush (1991). In Hilbre terms his list was unsurpassed with too many highlights to mention here but recent examples included Hilbre's first American Wigeon and second recent Subalpine Warbler.

His ringing achievements are also significant not least because of the number of ringers he trained to become C Permit and A Permit holders and some now themselves trainers. He ringed all round the UK – from Shetland (autumn on Fair Isle and summer seabirds on Foula) to the Scillies on many occasions. He also ringed extensively in Holland during the 1990s whilst working there and finally during a trip to Hong Kong in 2001 he ringed what he had long considered to be a world-wide bogey bird having not seen one in the UK or on any of his previous worldwide travels – Arctic Warbler.

Of course, Pete was not just a birder and ringer, he had a great knowledge of all aspects of natural history from mammals, butterflies, other insects and wild flowers. He was a great photographer and lecturer and an avid film-maker from his early cine days to more latterly video and DVDs. His DVD of Hilbre is a superb piece of photography and includes a vast array of bird species.

It was amazing and somehow fitting that the day after Pete died a flock of ten Waxwings appeared in his garden in Newton. They stayed around for a couple of days being seen by many local birders.

The joy and pleasure he got from birds and the natural environment and living in general transmitted itself to everyone he met. The number of birders from across the region who were present at his funeral, which was simply packed to outside the chapel, was testament to the esteem with which he was held by the birding community.

The north-west has lost one of its true birding characters, as has Wirral and particularly Hilbre where he will forever be intrinsically linked.

He leaves behind his family; his wife of 43 years and best friend, Doreen, his eldest son Chris and wife Judy and his youngest son Steve and wife Clare.

Despite the great sadness at this time, his legacy lives on at Hilbre and in his seven adoring grandchildren.

Steve Williams – March 2009

Bob Anderson adds:

Peter Williams was seven years my junior; that seems a much bigger gap when you are young than it does later in life. What's more, I was a founder member of Hilbre and he didn't join until about 1960. For the best part of fifty years during which I knew him he played on this difference in age and seniority, treating me (and other founder-members) with a mischievously mocking deference and exaggerated respect for experience - even when he had clocked up far more days, more birds and more ringing on the island than I had.

That was typical of Peter - always looking to make things lively, whether by teasing, making jokes or (of course) starting an argument. He would provoke an argument about birds, ringing, football, politics - and if all those were exhausted, anything else you cared to name. (He never did pay up on a bet we had, back in the sixties, about the specifications of some sailing dinghy or other). But, underneath it all, was a deeply kind and caring person: the humour could be penetrating, even provoking, but it was never unkind. Steve's excellent obituary pays tribute to his father as a birder and ringer; this other, entertaining and lovable, aspect of his character will be remembered by all who knew him.

That seven-year difference in age has a new significance now. After all those years in which he played the part of deferential junior to me, it is hard to accept that he has gone before me.

Conservation News

A round-up of news from the CAWOS conservation representatives, who aim to keep an eye on what is going on in their area. If you have any issues or concerns then do contact your local representative (by letter or email preferably). They may be able to help or should know someone who can! The relevant contact information is listed at the end.

A WORD FROM STEVE TURNER

As I am poised over the keypad I can see on our garden feeders two pairs of Greenfinches along with eight chicks. Yesterday a cock Bullfinch was back and to at the feeders all evening and this morning he fetched a hen bird with him. Hopefully, when they fledge the young will come too. The House Sparrows have had a very productive year in Barnton. One young hen coming to the feeders has both wing coverts finely decked out in white feathers and she is very light in colour overall. Between the Greenfinches, House Sparrows and Bullfinches they are eating enough sunflower seeds to plant a field. It would appear that even though Starling numbers are down nationally, the local birds are not up with the current trends. There are immature Starlings on the avenue in vast numbers begging for food. A great sign unless the wife happens to put out a line of washing! We also have a Magpie in the area that has a lot more black plumage than normal.

Good news on Helsby Hill with three Peregrine chicks and Beeston Castle has also reared chicks. The Ravens on Helsby Hill and Beeston Castle have fledged and there are a couple of pairs nesting at Delamere. All in all looks like being a good year.

Feedback from the last edition, from our dedicated team of county bird ringers, on the subject of persons cutting 'feed rides' and 'gardening' to enable nets to be placed – our ringers also use the same tactics. The only difference is they are licensed to carry out this work. Those that are after cage birds are not. If you see any such activity please get in touch. If the activity is lawful the ringers will not mind being checked out.

A resident of Frodsham carrying out a Rookery Survey at Kingsley found dead Rooks by a small rookery at Cattonhall and the nests deserted, along with eggshells on the ground. After a lot of investigation it has come to light that the Rooks were not shot at the rookery but over at Crewood Common, Crowton. They had been targeted to prevent damage to a crop of maize. I have tracked down the pest controller and he has admitted that a number of 'hits' did not result in clean kills. He has been advised. Rooks and Carrion Crows are on the list of birds that can be controlled under General Licence to prevent crop damage. The nests of all birds, however, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, with the exception of certain circumstances where, on the issue of a licence from Defra, eggs may be removed from the nests of certain birds classed as vermin that are destroying crops. This type of licence is few and far between. Both Rooks and Carrion Crows have the uncanny habit of being able to pick up shooting maize kernels at exactly the same spacing as they were sown. I have spoken to the gamekeeper who covers the Cattonhall area and he has confirmed that the eggs at the rookery were predated by Magpies.

Over the last couple of weeks a large collection of eggs has been recovered from the Widnes area and the individual is currently under investigation. A gentleman from Liverpool who has connections in Ellesmere Port is waiting to attend court for the unlawful possession of a Goshawk. One incident that has just come in is that a couple of Buzzards have been found dead at Cuddington/Oakmere. The fact that both birds seem to have no visible gunshot wounds would seem to point to pesticide abuse. If whilst out and about you come across dead raptors or corvids, please do not touch the corpses. Call us out and leave the recovery of bodies to us. Some of these poisons used are very deadly and some gain access to the system via skin absorption. PLEASE REMEMBER DO NOT TOUCH DEAD BIRDS. If possible, cover the body with a bag/box and leave it to us.

Earlier in the year a couple of badger setts were disturbed at Newton by Frodsham and the offender went on to disturb a sett at Preston on the Hill. One of my colleagues attended at the scene and the offender was apprehended. Due to a great deal of hard work on my colleague's part, he has just appeared at court and has been banned from keeping dogs for five years and also given a hefty fine. A good result.

One that has just come in is a report of three males with lamps at Willington clubbing a badger to death. This matter is still under investigation. It would appear that the latest is to lamp badgers instead of digging them; it is easier and they do not have to bother concealing shovels. If caught the age-old excuse of "just after a rabbit or the dogs ran off" comes into play.

Numerous calls this year of Local Authority workers cutting down hedges and trees that contained nests. This has happened all over the county. Investigations are still ongoing.

As stated many times before, you are our eyes and ears. Please let us know if you see anything untoward no matter how trivial it may seem. It may be the piece of info we have been looking for.

Steve Turner, Conservation Officer

Tel: 01606 781435 Email: conservation@cawos.org

WARRINGTON AREA

Houghton Green Pool: The water level continues to fall as United Utilities abstract water from a nearby aquifer. When I recently visited it had fallen by about a meter. How much it will fall is hard to know but the situation is being monitored closely.

Swifts in Macclesfield: In June 2008 I was contacted by a lady in Macclesfield concerned that her landlords, a Housing Trust, had begun to replace soffits and fascias on a number of properties in her street. Scaffolding had been erected and the large Swift population breeding on many of the properties could not access their nests. At this point I became involved and visited the road in my capacity as the North-West rep of a national organisation called Swift Conservation. I found that a number of houses still had scaffolding in place and others had the new uPVC soffits in place. Up to 50 Swifts were in the air above the road, Brookfield Lane, which was identified in the 1995 Swift Survey as one of the important Swift populations in the county. Clearly what the Housing Trust had done was illegal. I discussed the situation with the RSPB North-West office and then contacted the Housing Trust. Initially, they were somewhat guarded in their response but when the legal position was spelt out they cooperated fully and the remaining scaffolding was removed and all work stopped until the Swifts departed.

Swifts bred successfully on properties that had been left and later in the year the Trust agreed to cut access slits in all the uPVC soffits as near as possible to where the Swifts had been breeding. In all between 20 and 25 slits measuring 55mm by 33mm were cut in the hope that the Swifts would return and continue to breed. This required a fair bit of work which I supervised to ensure that the slits were cut in the right places. In the meantime, I ensured that the Housing Trust (Cheshire Peaks and Plains) received positive publicity for the work they had done and an article duly appeared in the local Macclesfield paper. Following this the Housing Trust was contacted by other residents wanting to have slits cut in their uPVC to allow Swifts to breed! Throughout I found that for the majority of residents of Brookfield Lane the Swifts were important to them.

After a long wait the Swifts duly returned in early May and the good news is that three of the five holes cut on one of the houses were immediately occupied, with the others being prospected. At the time of writing I am not sure of the position of other properties but I hope to visit soon to assess the situation. A good news story!

Brian Martin, Warrington Area Representative

WIRRAL AREA

Proposed Hoylake Golf Resort: Friends of the Upper Birket Valley Group has been formed in response to the threat a proposed Golf Resort has to the wildlife-rich Hoylake Langfields. The group has, as yet, no formal constitution but members have been active in trying to formulate more ecologically friendly uses of this area, and a meeting has been held with Tim Melling of the RSPB. Birds from the Dee Estuary SPA use this area both for feeding and resting, including up to 800 Black-tailed Godwits.

New Dee Estuary Booklet: The go-ahead has been given by the Dee Estuary Conservation Group for a new Dee Estuary Booklet to be published in 2010. The intention is to produce a booklet which will be a flagship for the Dee Estuary. It is to be beautiful and will hopefully teach people to understand and to respect the Dee so that they will care for it and enjoy it.

Richard Smith, Wirral Area Representative

ROSTHERNE WILDLIFE CRIME

Peter Day and John Dawson, possibly others, saw three young men aged approx 25-30 climbing trees that the Cormorants are nesting in on Saturday morning. They ran off to a car parked on Cherry Tree Lane - maroon metallic Honda Civic reg N689HLK. We don't know if they were after eggs or if they were antagonistic fishermen trying to disrupt nesting and frighten the colony off. The incident has been reported to the police and I have told Tim Burgess of Hunter's Moon who is going to spread the word around the local Rural Watch group.

Please spread the word amongst others who visit the Reserve and Observatory so we maximise the number of people keeping their eyes open. Don't try any heroics but if you see the car parked near the reserve tell the police and/or Tim Burgess. Hopefully the people concerned will be caught red-handed if they try it again. If you can get photos of them in action that will also help because disturbing a nesting bird is a crime and that will be evidence. It's also better to have several witnesses to a crime if possible. If you see anything please make a note of any details that could help apprehend these people.

Sarah Warrener, Natural England

The above note was circulated after an incident at Rostherne Mere NNR on 25 April. Ed

CAWOS CONSERVATION OFFICER:

Steve Turner Western Division Wildlife Crime Officer, Cheshire Police.
Tel (home): 01606 781435 Email: conservation@kawos.org

LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA REPRESENTATIVES:

Chester Neil Friswell, 8 Oaklands Crescent, Tattenhall, Cheshire, CH3 9QT.
Tel: 01829 770463 Email: neil.friswell@btinternet.com

Congleton Richard Blindell, 5 Bath Vale, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 2HF.
Tel: 01260 275084 Email: not available

Crewe & Nantwich Colin Lythgoe, 11 Waterloo Road, Haslington, Crewe, CW1 5TF.
Tel: 01270 582642 Email: colin.lythgoe@uwclub.net

Halton Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2SG.
Tel: 01925 726986 Email: tonymarker@kawos.org

Macclesfield **Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role**
Vale Royal Mark O'Sullivan, 13 Bickerton Avenue, Frodsham, Cheshire, WA6 7RE.
Tel: 01928 734679 Email: mosullivan@ic24.net

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

Wirral Richard Smith, March Wall, King's Drive North, Caldy, Wirral, CH48 1LL.
Tel: 0151 625 2320 Email: richard@kawos.org

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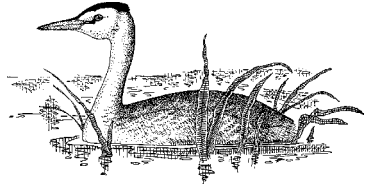
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One Man's Birding

A FUNNY OLD SPRING.....

It's been a funny old spring; in fact, it's hardly been a spring at all. One way and another, I seem to have missed most of it. I'm all too accustomed to being way behind other people in picking up early migrants, and generally seeing my pathetic attempts at a year list go down the plughole once again; I suppose it's a combination of not getting out enough, or to the right places, and simply not being a very good birder. This year, though, has been remarkable even by my standards. The list of summer visitors I hadn't seen by the end of May is really quite impressive.



Take the Whimbrel. I love to hear them calling, and to watch them probing about on an estuary, and in recent years I have associated them very much with spring visits to south Devon, where we go to visit the family. This time, my wife (who, to be fair, is usually pretty considerate about these things) chose to fall ill after a couple of days, so that we spent more time at Derriford Hospital than on the shore (and this in the sort of warm, sunny weather which is just ideal for meeting the first Whimbrel). And, of course, when we returned home I became more involved in being a caring husband and doing my fair share of the gardening than I am used to. (Incidentally, is being a gardener compatible with being a keen birder? I tend to doubt it - because my limited experience of gardening suggests that it demands maximum effort just when we should be out enjoying the spring birds.)

Even at home, the birds didn't behave themselves. This year, a Blackcap sang in the garden for only a day or two, and the Chiffchaffs didn't show up at all - in the past, they have both been regulars all summer. The first Swallows appeared over the house a month later than usual, a few days after the Swifts, and I began to realise that spring had more or less passed me by. Needless to say, I've missed out on the classic threesome of Redstart, Pied Flycatcher and Wood Warbler - birds which, maybe more than any others, I look forward to seeing again every year.

Of course, some of these summer visitors are anyway becoming more difficult to find. Cuckoos have become something of a local rarity, in my part of the county at least, as have Spotted Flycatchers. The BTO's "Out of Africa" appeal literature notes the loss of two-thirds of our Wood Warblers in just fifteen years. One of the more striking passages in the appeal says "In the 1970s, summer motoring was punctuated by stops to clean squashed insects off the windscreen. Where are they now?" That one really hit home, next time I took the car out. It was a reminder of one of the reasons why finding the characteristic birds of spring is not as easy as it once was.

Now, just about the time when I was lugubriously counting up the birds which I had missed there was an interesting query in *The Guardian*. Somebody asked when spring ended and summer began, and there were several replies. One was very precise and formal, talking about equinoxes and solstices. Another appealed to me more - somebody from Warwickshire saying that his personal definition was that spring ended in the couple of days in late May between the may blossom going over and the last ash trees coming into leaf. This started me thinking about how I define spring, and when I reckon we have moved into summer.

Sometime early in March, without fail, somebody will say "We'll soon be seeing the first migrants". Sure enough, by the end of the month there will be a few Wheatears on the coast and Sand Martins over the meres. But that isn't really spring: the first Chiffchaff singing from a leafless birch or willow is always a delight, but it is a promise of spring, not spring itself. We may, as was the case this year, have a blackthorn summer, when the combination of sunshine and blossom makes one impatient and frustrated that there aren't more migrants about. It feels as though spring has arrived - but that's not yet so. Spring isn't here until there are many Chiffchaffs to be heard, and it's harder to see them (or the Blackcaps or Willow Warblers) among the fresh green leaves. Maybe it isn't here until the Swallows are around every farm and the Whitethroats are singing in the hedges; perhaps, even, it is when the Swifts are screaming overhead - or are they a sign that spring is rapidly moving into summer?

It's easier to say when spring has ended. It is when I realise that the first Mallard broods are almost as big as their mothers, and the Mallard drakes have, without my noticing it, stopped being smart and glossy and have suddenly become scaly and rough. The Blue Tits in the garden are looking careworn and ragged too, as they work away frantically feeding young. And, yes, the may blossom is going over - and it's June, and I have somehow managed to miss the spring again.

It seems to happen every year - and with every passing year, the spring season seems to be shorter than ever. It's a wonderful time - but it's brief and you must catch it when you can, or it is lost forever.

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

Rarities Team News

REPORT FROM THE RARITIES TEAM

Keen-eyed observers will have seen a new addition to the revamped CAWOS website. We have added our rarity database detailing each submission, including species, date, finders, and observers that we are currently working on, as a work in progress spreadsheet. I encourage readers to have a look. This is a good opportunity to see where your record is up to, its status and outcome on the county database. We intend to update the database following our reviews of records in circulation at appropriate times as the year progresses.

Several points may however surprise you, one is the actual volume of records we are dealing with, and another is how many are not supported by a description. Often this is due to the source of the record. On-line websites like Birdguides and BTO BirdTrack are useless at extracting a description from someone who posts a sighting. Yet for some reason individuals seem to think that by posting their record on these websites, somehow it will enter the county database. Although both systems will flag that the record is of a county rarity, and that a description is required, they publish them nonetheless without any caveats. If we do get a description, they are often simply one-liners saying a bird of such-and-such species was seen, no actual description of any kind is usually forthcoming. At best these are only of use to us to support dates of a rarity seen by someone who did bother to submit a description.

Perhaps more worryingly, is the lack of descriptions from sightings published by CAWOS's affiliated county societies and other local birding groups. Surely there is no excuse for not submitting something to the team to review; why should the scarce bird records suffer when members of these societies add so much value to the common bird database with their surveys, local patch work and migration counts? Maybe making these records visible will shame someone into submitting a description; it's never too late! Also, if you see a record on here where you have further information, i.e. an earlier or later date, or notice an error, then please get in contact with Jane Turner, Secretary of the Rarities Team.

In terms of an update on national rarities, apart from the Iberian Chiffchaff record outstanding from April/May 2004 with BBRC, nearly all the records from 2007 and 2008 have been commented on. The exceptions are the potential Blyth's Reed Warbler at Red Rocks from October 2007, which is still in circulation, and the White-throated Sparrow from Runcorn from December 2008 to April 2009, which has just been submitted. We also responded to BBRC's call for submission of species that are usually deemed potential escapes, and in this case we have two records of Wood Duck in circulation.

This year we have again been working through a number of problematic species which always cause identification issues, Mealy (Common) Redpoll being a case in point, but we have been pleased to see observers really taking time to describe this species' key features, but on the downside, we continue to get inadequately documented records for Water Pipit in particular. However, many records are now enhanced by photographic evidence, which is a great help in supporting the written descriptions, and in some cases is sufficient for acceptance alone.

A Hugh Pulsford, County Recorder

Society Profile

This new series of articles offers affiliated organisations an opportunity to describe who they are and what they do. We hope this will strengthen existing links between CAWOS and other societies, provide a platform for them to publicise their activities, and perhaps encourage CAWOS members to consider joining their local groups. If you would like to see your group or society featured here, send in all relevant information, preferably by email, to Bob Anderson, 102 Crewe Road, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 6JD. Email: robandjj@dircon.co.uk

MID-CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY



The Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society (MCOS) is one of the oldest societies in Cheshire. Our logo (shown right) is the Kingfisher, the bird we sponsored in the recent CAWOS Atlas. The Society was founded in 1963 by Peter Schofield, W Ashley, G Pass and R Thomason, with the inaugural meeting held on 9 March 1964 at Winnington Hall Club, Northwich. The well-known local naturalist, T Hedley Bell gave a talk on 'Birds of Cheshire'.

Membership soon exceeded the capacity at Winnington and in 1968 the Society meetings moved to the Railway Hotel (now the Hazel Pear) at Acton Bridge, where the Society stayed for the next 14 years. The final move was to our current meeting place, Hartford Village Hall. In 1988 we celebrated our 25th anniversary with a dinner, at which Peter Schofield returned as our guest speaker. We now look forward to our 50th Anniversary, due in 2013.

From October to April we hold indoor meetings on the second Friday in the month. Our membership is around 80 people and we often have 50 or more at our meetings, a reflection on the excellent speakers involved. Meetings start at 7.45pm and entrance is free to members. Visitors are welcome at £2.00 per adult and £1.00 for children. Family membership is £12.00 with Single membership at £8.00.

From September to June we hold field trips at weekends (usually Sunday) with longer weekends several times during the year, our most recent being a visit to Speyside in May. Each month there is also a midweek trip, usually on Tuesday aimed mainly at retired members. These are especially friendly social occasions and have proved very popular, with up to 20 members involved.

Throughout its history, the Society has had a recorder who collects and compiles listings for submission to the *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report*. Members have also been involved in supporting local conservation issues and several members offer talks to other organisations, including local Cub and Scout groups.

The Society has its own reserve in the Weaver Valley below Kingsley. The reserve, Hatton's Hey, is situated on the SE bank of the river on the site of old sludge beds and is licensed to the Society by British Waterways under an agreement signed in September 1986. We pay an annual rent to British Waterways for the use of the reserve, which covers 29 acres and includes a strip of woodland, dry scrub and extensive reed beds. A hide overlooks an open water lagoon. We have a very active nest box programme both on the reserve and in the adjacent Well Wood and Warburton's Wood, the CWT reserve just downriver. Over 50 nest boxes are regularly monitored and an annual report is available to members and a copy is submitted to CAWOS for county records. To date, over 90 species have been seen on or around the reserve.

During the winter months a shooting syndicate shoots over the reserve and we have agreed to avoid visiting the area on shooting dates. Shooting takes place on some Wednesdays and Saturdays from October to January. Dates can be confirmed by contacting the author.

Last year CAWOS helped with a donation towards the reserve rent. We hope this gesture, together with this profile, will encourage more people to visit the reserve.

The Society has an active website, run by Mike Hems, who also assists with the CAWOS site. The site www.midcheshireos.co.uk has further details of the Society, its programme and on Hatton's Hey, including the most recent report and detailed directions.

If you live in our area, why not join us or visit our reserve. You will be most welcome.

Harold Fielding, Chairman tel: 01606 882529 email: h.fielding@tiscali.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.

A W BOYD

In Gill Barber's recent Guest Editorial she asked for any anecdotes from members who had met A W Boyd.

I met Major Boyd as he was introduced to me at Red Rocks in 1956 or 1957. I was a teenage birdwatcher, as we called ourselves in those days. I can remember now very little of the meeting apart from the fact he was very friendly and interested in my sightings that day. To me he seemed very old and he wore a monocle and, I think, a cap. I was told he was a famous person in the birdwatching world but at that time I was not aware of the reasons for his fame. I have since read both of his excellent books *Country Diary of a Cheshire Man* and *A Country Parish*.

Alan Booth, 160 Gawsorth Road, Macclesfield, SK11 8UQ

BLACKBIRDS CATCHING TADPOLES

A non-birding but observant relative living in Neston has a small but deep water feature in his garden, which supports a substantial frog population. In summer, the surface is completely covered with emergent vegetation. He has, on several occasions, watched Blackbirds hopping across the plants on the surface to reach tadpoles swimming among them. The birds then return to the bank, and carefully wipe the tadpoles on the grass before eating them.

I had not heard previously of Blackbirds eating tadpoles, though I gather there are other records: Sheila Blamire tells me she has watched the birds catching tadpoles from the bank of her garden pond. The Lily-trotter behaviour seems unusual, however - and I wonder if it accounts for a Blackbird found drowned in my own garden pond (covered with a mat of duckweed) a few years ago.

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

RSPCA STAPELEY GRANGE – CASES OF INTEREST

Several hundred swans are admitted to Stapeley Grange Wildlife Centre every year but there are always one or two which stand out as significant admissions. Here is one such case from December 2008.

On 21st December 2008 a swan was admitted from Nantwich Boating Lake having been attacked by a dog. The swan had received significant injuries from the bite wounds, some of which were very close to the left eye. However, following treatment including pain relief and a course of antibiotics the swan made an excellent recovery and was successfully released back after just over a month in care. Thanks to the fact that the swan had BTO and Darvic rings we are able to know a little bit about its history. The swan, a female, was originally ringed as a juvenile at the Three Sisters Pool, Wigan in August 1994 making her 15 years old. After ringing the next sighting was over six years later at Woolston, Warrington when she was found injured and brought to Stapeley (for the first time!) for treatment. On release in February 2001 she was relocated to Nantwich Boating Lake, since when she has been frequently seen at a number of different sites in the local area, and for a period of years she had been one half of a successful breeding pair.

David Cookson

PEREGRINES AT BEESTON CASTLE

After the theft of the chicks last year the watch, which had been discontinued for several years, began again in April 2009. Numerous volunteers maintained a well-organised surveillance of the nest site and were rewarded when, late in June, three chicks fledged safely and were seen taking prey in mid-air from their parents. A fuller account will appear in the next edition of *Bird News*.

David Cogger

CAWOS News

Welcome to the following new members: Miss Chris Revett, Mr & Mrs B Stow, Mr M T I Gunby, Mr & Mrs J P Day, Miss P Brown, Mr D Thomas and Mr Jason Mossman.

David Cogger stepped down as Secretary at the AGM after 13 years of valiant service and as the incumbent I have discovered just how much time and effort he has put in over the years. David was presented with a hide clamp as a small token of our appreciation, and his experience will not be lost from Council as he will continue as a Council member.

Many members may not know but Sheila Blamire, a very active member of Council producing *Bird News* and actively involved in producing the annual *Bird Report*, had a stroke while on a birding holiday in Hungary. Sheila is recovering and is physically well but has lost the power of speech and is currently having speech therapy. Despite this Sheila has put together this issue of *Bird News* and the Society is indebted to her and her husband Geoff for undertaking this at such a stressful time for them both.

At Council meetings held on 16th April and 4th June 2009 the following points were agreed or discussed:

- Charles Hull (BTO) and Richard Smith (*Bird Report* Editor) were co-opted onto Council for 2009-10.
- Our meeting venue will remain at Knutsford Civic Hall. The main reasons were car parking availability and the size of the room which allows for displays and for people to circulate.
- A grant was made to Nantwich Natural History Society for bird tables and nest boxes for Acton Primary School to help children develop an interest in birds.
- Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society received a grant towards the annual rent of Hatton's Hey Reserve (see article in this issue on the reserve).
- Repairs to the roof at Rostherne Observatory have been completed.
- To seek representation from Chester/Wirral area to join Council and the Monitoring and Survey Committee.
- The second phase of the Atlas project to deliver educational activities for children in key stages 1 & 2 run by Cheshire Wildlife Trust will be starting in the autumn.
- Council is currently conducting an advertising campaign with affiliated Societies to try and attract more members.

Ted Lock, Secretary

CAWOS WEBSITE UPDATE

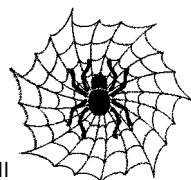
Web address: www.cawos.org

The website status has now been changed from a 'work in progress' to fully operational. All elements of the site have been updated and new sections added.

The Rook Survey being undertaken by CAWOS has been included with all relevant instructions, forms and contacts. It has been added to the Recording section of the site. The survey completion deadline has now been reached and it is hoped to include the survey results as they become available. Watch this space.

The County Sites section has been reorganised to provide map references to the sites listed and web addresses where available. The Rostherne Mere site entry has been totally updated and a new, readable map introduced. The only outstanding update is for Woolston Eyes, which hopefully will be available soon.

A new entry is the Rarities Database, which can be found under the Recording section. This is a list of submissions to the Rarities Team and their progress through the approval process. The



database is provided as an Excel spreadsheet and will be kept up to date so if you want to know what has been submitted or the progress of your submission then look it up on the website. To search the data filter the information using the drop-down options at the header of each column of the spreadsheet.

We are still looking for ideas for the Latest Sightings section of the site. Originally it was intended to provide an up-to-date list of recent sightings in our area but this is proving difficult to set up. We are also looking at perhaps using this section (renamed) to provide a list of what birds might be seen in the area on a month-by-month basis. Please contact me at the address at the end of this report if you have any ideas.

We have tried to provide links to the local societies affiliated to CAWOS. Have a look at the Links>Local Societies section of the website. As you will see this list is rather small. A number of societies do not have websites so it has not been possible to include them in the list. However, if the missing societies have a contact email address then please let me know. We are able to code the link so that it is immune to 'web crawlers' and therefore it should not create any spam mail.

The aim of the website is to provide CAWOS members and non-members with information about the Society's activities and what is going on in the area as well as introducing visitors from outside our area to what Cheshire and Wirral has to offer to birders. So please let me know if you have any comments about the site or any ideas for change or inclusion. Any suggestion will be considered although we cannot promise to do everything that is raised. I can be contacted at the email address below.

Mike Hems email: mikehems@cawos.org

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 6th MARCH 2009

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008

November 10th must have been the highlight of the year for many CAWOS members. It saw the launch of the eagerly-awaited *Birds in Cheshire and Wirral: A breeding and wintering atlas* at a reception held at Ness Gardens. From the start of fieldwork in April 2004, it had taken just four-and-a-half years to collect and analyse the data, to prepare the text and maps, to assemble the illustrations and photographs, and to publish the book – and what a stunning publication it is! The looks of disbelief of those attending at the quality of the *Atlas* were, I am sure, echoed in many homes a few days later as the volume was delivered to the door. It was a huge collaborative effort, and in his presentation (later printed in *Bird News*), David Norman acknowledged the efforts of those who had made it possible. There isn't time to repeat those here (in the *Atlas* the full list of acknowledgements stretches to no less than three pages!), but I would like to put on record the sincere thanks of the Society to David as author and leader of the project, to the members of the Atlas Steering Group who worked tirelessly to organise their different areas, to the Heritage Lottery Fund and our other sponsors, and to the fieldworkers, without whose efforts the whole enterprise wouldn't have been possible.

David concluded his presentation by saying he hoped that some of the questions raised by the results would lead CAWOS to organise more detailed surveys to cover some of the gaps in our knowledge, so that the birds could benefit from it. It was disappointing that we were unable to start work on Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) recording, due to factors beyond our control, but the newly formed Monitoring and Surveys Subcommittee was able to announce the organisation of a Rookery Survey for 2009, which I hope many members will participate in. This will run alongside the continuation of the BTO National Atlas survey which is now well into its second year.

The programme of indoor meetings started with two questions – “What's that Raptor?” and “What's in a Name?” by Keith Offord and Tim Melling respectively. Both are excellent speakers and there was plenty to be learnt from their first-rate presentations. This was followed by a further insight into Cheshire's birds given by David Norman, who was able to draw on the data obtained from the *Atlas* survey to present “The Ups and Downs of Cheshire Bird Life”, a preview of just a small sample of what was to be published in the *Atlas* later in the year. The autumn meetings kicked off with Tim Loseby's “Fair Isle and its Birds”, followed by “100 Years of *British Birds* and British Birdwatching” by Bob Scott, both nationally renowned speakers who lived up to their reputations. The year finished with a talk by Stuart Meredith on “Shorebirds – the Wonder of Waders”, and we

must again congratulate our Programme Secretary on putting together such an interesting and varied programme.

A major concern, expressed at this time last year, was the finding of a replacement for David Cogger, who had signalled his intention to resign from the roles of Secretary and Membership Secretary at this AGM. I am pleased to report that Ted Lock will take over as Secretary from today, and that David has already started to hand over the role of Membership Secretary to Susan Canovan, and I am grateful to them both and wish them well as they take on these responsibilities. It is with regret that I have to announce the recent sudden and tragic loss of Peter Mathews, who had only taken over as distributor of the *Bird Report* in the past year. Peter was one of the people who volunteered when I made a plea for help some eighteen months ago. Our sympathy is extended to his wife Anne and family.

We were finally able, during the year, to relaunch the Society website, which is something that we had wished to do for some time but had been unable to resource. Websites are increasingly important as a means of publicising the work of organisations and in helping to attract new members, so thanks are due to those who have allowed this to happen. It is very much a work-in-progress, and will be added to as more material is made available, but I would encourage you to have a look. We attended the 'Barn Owl Extravaganza' in Northwich, and Macclesfield RSPB's 'WOW' held at Marton, in both cases manning our stand of promotional items.

The Society has, in recent years, set aside a small amount each year for grants to be given to deserving projects which are consistent with our aims. This year a grant was awarded to Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society towards the maintenance of Hatton's Hey Reserve. We are always happy to consider requests for financial assistance for suitable undertakings.

A number of the Society's activities continue from year to year, and it isn't always possible to include detailed reference to them all in this brief report. This year, this includes the continually excellent *Bird Report*, the Society's newsletter *Bird News*, and the work done by the Records, Database and Conservation Teams. Lack of significant mention here in no way detracts from the excellent work that is done in these areas, and the appreciation that is shown for all their efforts. More will be included on these in the much fuller Chairman's Report that is included in the *Bird Report*.

As usual I conclude my report by thanking all those who have given their time to the Society, in whatever way they have been able to help. My thanks go particularly to our Treasurer, Ray Anslow, for so ably managing the accounts during his first year in post, but my special thanks, given on behalf of the whole Society, go to David Cogger who, as I referred to earlier, is this year retiring from his roles as Secretary and Membership Secretary. David has been a tower of strength, having been our Secretary for over 13 years and Membership Secretary for over 16 years, not to mention the work that he has contributed in other areas of Society activity such as the *Atlas*, the *Bird Report* and the running of our indoor meetings. There can be scarcely any part of the organisation which David hasn't touched, and whenever he volunteered to do something, you knew that it would always be done, and done extremely well. Fortunately, although relinquishing the two key roles, he will still be involved in a number of activities going forward. We cannot let such a major contribution pass without marking the event, so it is with great pleasure that I ask him to accept this small gift in recognition of the outstanding service that he has given to the Society over virtually the whole of its existence.

Brian Dyke, Chairman

SECRETARY'S REPORT 2008

For the last few years my report has concentrated on the *breeding and wintering Atlas* which, as you all know, was brought to a triumphant conclusion and launched successfully last November. In the text of the *Atlas*, David Norman made several references to it as a starting point from which future fieldwork and research could follow, and we are glad to announce that we are making a start on this.

A new Monitoring and Surveys Subcommittee has been set up, ably led by Mark Eddowes, and has initiated a survey of Rooks throughout Cheshire and Wirral in the spring of this year. Although still a common species, Rooks have declined in numbers and we are intending to count the birds in as many rookeries as possible to measure their true population. We have deliberately chosen to start with a species which is reasonably widespread and is also not too difficult to observe, and

it is good that over 80 fieldworkers have come forward to help. Many more, of course, are participating in the ongoing BTO Breeding and Wintering Atlas. Our new subcommittee will be actively considering other topics for fieldwork once the Rookery survey has been completed.

We had hoped to begin ornithological recording in Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) in conjunction with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust once the *Atlas* was finished. Problems with staffing at the Trust delayed this in 2007 and changes in management there further delayed us in 2008, leading us to agree with the Acting Manager of the Trust to postpone the project until the time was better. However, I am glad to report that a meeting between representatives from CAWOS and the Trust will take place shortly with a view to seeing how we can best work together.

The normal programme of indoor meetings for 2009-10 will take place. The programme is still in the course of construction but we hope to hear about Hen Harriers and South America as well as the intriguing talk on the 'Wisdom of Birds' which had to be cancelled in February because of bad weather. Attendance at indoor meetings, which gave us concern a couple of years ago, has once again been reasonable.

Again there has been a slight fall in membership, down to 342 from 366 in 2007; later in the year several of our affiliated societies have agreed to send out flyers on our behalf in the hope of attracting more members. In return, we are prepared to help them. A flyer will also appear later this year in an edition of *The Grebe*.

Finally, as you will be aware, I am retiring at this meeting from my positions as Membership Secretary, which I have held since late 1992, and Secretary, a job I took on a few years later. I would like to thank all those colleagues, particularly on Council, with whom I have worked and also all of you as members for paying your subscriptions on time (more or less!). During that time I have learnt much about birds, computers and also about other really interesting matters such as planning applications. I know that you will work well with Susan Canovan, the new Membership Secretary, and with Ted Lock as Secretary, and I wish them every success; I shall still be involved in various ways and will keep attending indoor meetings but I won't miss too much paying in all those cheques!

David Cogger, Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT 2008

I have pleasure in submitting the first Annual Audited Accounts following my appointment as Treasurer last year.

To begin with I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Clive Richards, who was Treasurer for many years and who continued the original CAWOS system which I have also adopted. I would also like to thank our Auditor Norman Scott who patiently led me through the final accounts procedure, and whom I am pleased to say is willing to undertake the same role next year.

To comment on a few items, it is obvious that the Society's income has decreased, particularly in the areas of subscriptions and income from the two publications *Bird Report* and *Bird News*. With regards to the former it is not intended to increase subscriptions this year, or propose any amendment to those for 2010, although this cannot be ruled out in the future. The income from the *Bird Reports* and *Bird News* comes mainly from advertising, but we are still receiving a steady income from that source despite the general cutback in company expenditure.

However, I must mention the excellent financial support given to the Society in the fees obtained from information provided to third parties by the CAWOS Database Team.

The Society has strictly controlled its expenditure in the light of decreased income so that our expenditure for the year was less than last year, whilst still providing the same services to the ornithological community and our partners.

However, the greatest outgoing was in the publication of the *Atlas* which led to expenditure of £29,000+. This completes the first part of the *Atlas* initiative funded in part by the Heritage Lottery Fund (from whom we have now received the second tranche for development and educational purposes), as well as the generous support of donors and sponsorship from members.

The facts and figures have been provided for you, and I ask for your approval and acceptance of the Society's Accounts for 2008.

Ray Anslow, Treasurer

SITUATIONS VACANT

DISTRIBUTION OF BIRD REPORT

Following the sudden death of Peter Mathews early this year, we are looking for someone to take over distribution of the *Bird Report*. Details of what is involved are given below and any queries can be answered by **David Cogger (01606 832517)**, who has taken over the job on a temporary basis.

- September: contact outlets (currently seven, chiefly reserves) who have taken copies to find out how many they have sold and the number of the next BR that they would require. Send out invoices for the numbers sold.
- November: send letters to previous BR buyers (who are not members of CAWOS) giving price and details of BR. Maintain list of those wanting the next BR.
- January: help the Membership Secretary with the packaging and distribution of the new BR; take or send copies to outlets; keep records of the numbers received and taken.
- be the main person who sends out the latest BR to anyone who requires one (currently about 12 per year) and try to find more outlets.
- Throughout the year try to find more outlets.

CAWOS Programme

2nd Oct 2009

THE WISDOM OF BIRDS

Tim Birkhead

Enjoyment of watching and identifying birds is enhanced by knowing something about their biology. A Swallow's migration to South Africa, or the Aquatic Warbler being the most promiscuous bird in the world, changes our appreciation of them. Human knowledge of birds is astounding, but where did our knowledge come from? Tim aims to address such statements as - birds can change sex, birds can hibernate; and also explains just how many times some birds copulate to achieve a single clutch of eggs! How do we know all this about birds? The illustrated talk will explore how our understanding has evolved from the earliest records. See <http://wisdomofbirds.co.uk/>

6th Nov 2009

DISPERSAL OF THE HEN HARRIER IN N. ENGLAND

Stephen Murphy

Based on his research with Natural England on a 5-year project Stephen's study aims to increase knowledge of the raptor's ecology by monitoring the only viable breeding population in England. When and where do the young birds go in their first and most demanding year? Why is there high productivity yet declining population? Dispersal remains one of the least understood factors in conservation biology yet is a critical process in the spatial dynamics of populations. Could we help if we record tagged birds "straying" into Cheshire, or more likely Wirral, in winter?

4th Dec 2009

THE ULTIMATE PELAGIC

Tom Lawson

A five-week sail from New Zealand to Japan sets the scene to this talk which not only looks at a host of seabirds but also endemics on some of the islands in the Western Pacific. We should learn something of Beck's Petrel, Japanese Murrelet and Short-tailed Albatross, to name just a few of the interesting birds. We can be assured of some stunning photography by Tom from his journey.

Diary

AUGUST

- 20 NNHS Deer Park, Cholmondeley evening walk, ring Kevin Wild ring 01270 569162 for details
- 22 NCRSPB Point of Ayr, meet in car park at 10:00am
- 22 CADOS Migration watch, ring Nick French 01829 271945 for details

SEPTEMBER

- 6 KOS Hilbre, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 8:15am or West Kirby at 9:15am
- 7 HPRSPB AGM followed by Pennine Edge Barn Owl Trust
- 8 MRSPB 'SNOWY OWL, KING OF THE ARCTIC' by Gordon Yates
- 9 HO AGM
- 13 HPRSPB Flamborough Head, Bempton Cliffs and Filey, ring for details
- 14 SRSPB AGM and MEMBERS' EVENING
- 17 NNHS Halmer End Nature Reserve, 6:00pm, ring Ged Barlow 01782 722979 for details
- 18 NCRSPB 'WILDLIFE AROUND BRITAIN'S COASTS' by David Tolliday
- 19 CADOS North Wirral, ring Roger Wilkinson 01244 318343 for details
- 20 NCRSPB South Wirral, meet Inner Marsh Farm car park at 9:30am
- 21 HPRSPB 'POLES APART' by Mike Leach
- 22 ADNHS 'THE ART OF BIRD MISIDENTIFICATION' by Tim Melling
- 25 KOS 'ARCTIC AND HEBRIDEAN ODYSSEY' by Gordon Yates
- 27 SRSPB Blacktoft Sands by coach, ring Jayne Skelhorn 0161 282 8758 for details
- 27 HO Blacktoft Sands by coach, ring for details

OCTOBER

- 1 CADOS 'WHERE WILD BIRDS DRAW ME' by John Power
- 2 **CAWOS 'THE WISDOM OF BIRDS' by Tim Birkhead**
- 3 CADOS Migrant mystery tour, ring Don Pawlett 01244 677477 for details
- 9 MCOS 'THE CORNER OF AN ISLAND' by Hugh Linn
- 11 KOS Mystery destination field trip, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 8:30pm
- 11 HPRSPB Yorkshire lngs, ring for details
- 12 SRSPB 'SKYDANCERS' by Keith Offord
- 13 MRSPB 'WILD WINGS AND WANDERINGS' by Cliff Heyes
- 13 ADNHS 'A LENS FOR ALL SEASONS' by John Langley
- 14 NCRSPB Anderton Nature Park, meet in car park (SJ649753) at 10:00am
- 16 NCRSPB AGM and 'UPDATES ON THE DEE ESTUARY' by Colin Wells
- 16 NNHS tba
- 19 HPRSPB 'BISCAY AND THE PICOS' by Jeff Clarke
- 22-26 NCRSPB Islay weekend, contact Dave Hughes 01925 726242
- 23 KOS 'BISCAY AND THE PICOS' by Jeff Clarke
- 27 ADNHS 'NGORONGORO – WILDLIFE OF A CRATER' by Mike Hems

NOVEMBER

- 5 CADOS 'AN ABC OF IMF' by David King
- 6 **CAWOS 'DISPERSAL OF THE HEN HARRIER IN N. ENGLAND' by Stephen Murphy**
- 8 HPRSPB Carsington Water, ring for details
- 9 SRSPB 'LAST TASTE OF ISLAY' by Gordon Yates
- 10 MRSPB 'THE HEBRIDES FOR BIRDS' by Charles Brown
- 10 ADNHS 'MOORE NATURE RESERVE' by Mike Roberts
- 13 MCOS 'BISCAY AND THE PICOS' by Jeff Clarke
- 14 KOS Pennington Flash, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 9:00am
- 16 HPRSPB 'COSTA RICA – GEM OF CENTRAL AMERICA' by John Mather
- 20 NCRSPB 'EXTREMADURA' by Mike Roberts

- 22 NCRSPB Marton Mere/Rossall Point, meet Lawson Road (SD333352) at 9:30am
- 22 SRSPB Old Moor RSPB Reserve by coach, ring Jayne Skelhorn 0161 282 8758 for details
- 24 ADNHS 'SNOWY OWL – KING OF THE ARCTIC' by Gordon Yates
- 27 KOS 'THE RSPB DEE ESTUARY RESERVE' by Colin Wells

DECEMBER

- 3 CADOS 'A TEAR IN THE LIFE OF A CHESHIRE BIRDER' by Phil Woollen
- 4 **CAWOS 'THE ULTIMATE PELAGIC' by Tom Lawson**
- 6 HPRSPB Marshside and Martin Mere, ring for details
- 6 KOS Marshside/Martin Mere, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 9:00am
- 8 MRSPB 'ISLES OF SCILLY – WILDLIFE PARADISE' by Tim Melling
- 8 ADNHS 'NORTHUMBRIA – ENGLAND'S BORDER COUNTRY' by Gillian Pierce
- 11 KOS CHRISTMAS PARTY
- 11 MCOS 'THE EYES HAVE IT' by Paul Rogers
- 12 NCRSPB Wigan Flashes, meet Pennington Flash car park at 9:30am
- 12 ADNHS Annual Christmas Walk & Pub Lunch, ring for details
- 14 HPRSPB Christmas Party
- 14 SRSPB 'MEXICO'S WILDLIFE SPECTACLES' by Tim Melling

JANUARY 2010

- 7 CADOS 'WITHIN THREE MILES OF MY DOOR' by Nick French
- 8 **CAWOS 'GATEWAY TO SAHARA' by Keith Offord**
- 8 MCOS 'NORTH-WEST YEAR' by Chris Galvin
- 9 CADOS North Wales coast ring Roger Wilkinson 01244 318343 for details
- 11 SRSPB 'IMAGES FROM NATURE' by Charles Owen
- 12 ADNHS 'DUNHAM AND ITS PEOPLE' by Mike Gitsam
- 16 KOS Marton Mere / Fleetwood meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 9:00am
- 22 KOS 'DERBYSHIRE AND PEAK DISTRICT WILDLIFE' by Paul Hobson
- 26 ADNHS 'BRITAIN'S SPECTACULAR MARINE LIFE' by Ian Russell

FEBRUARY 2010

- 6 **CAWOS 'BENEATH THE DARK CANOPY' by Michael Leach**

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

- ADNHS Altrincham & Dist. Natural History Soc, mtgs Hale Methodist Church Hall 7:30pm, contact Prog. Sec. Anne Mason 0161 980 8645
- CADOS Chester & Dist. Ornithological Soc, mtgs Caldy Valley Community Centre 7:30pm, contact Prog. Sec. Nick French 01978 856522
- CAWOS Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Soc, mtgs Knutsford Civic Centre 7:45pm, contact Clive Richards 01625 524527
- CRSPB Chester RSPB Group, mtgs St Mary's Centre, Chester 7:30pm, contact Chris Kay and Peter Stevenson 01352 716886
- HO Hale Ornithologists, mtgs St Peter's Assembly Rooms 7:45pm, contact Prog. Sec. John Knight 0161 486 0106
- HPRSPB High Peak RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Senior Citizens' Hall, Marple 7:30pm, contact Peter Griffiths 0161 427 5325
- KOS Knutsford Ornithological Soc, mtgs Jubilee Hall, Stanley Road 8:00pm, contact Tony Usher 01565 873508
- LOG Lymm Ornithological Group, mtgs Lymm Village Hall 8:00pm, contact Prog. Sec. Hilary Unsworth 01925 860155
- MCOS Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Soc, mtgs Hartford Village Hall 7:45pm, contact John Drake 01928 561133
- MRSPB Macclesfield RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Senior Citizens' Hall 7:45pm, contact Ray Evans 01625 432635
- NCRSPB North Cheshire RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Appleton Parish Hall, Appleton 7:45pm, contact Olive Giles 01928 733405
- NNHS Nantwich Natural History Soc, mtgs RSPCA, Stapeley Grange at 7:30pm, contact Sec. Dr Paul Griffiths 01270 780626
- SECOS South-East Cheshire Ornithological Soc, mtgs St Peter's Church Hall, Elworth 7:30pm, contact Sec. Colin Lythgoe 01270 582642
- SRSPB Stockport RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Stockport College of Technology, Lect Theatre B 7:30pm, contact Peter Hugo 0161 485 4024
- WGBG Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group, mtgs Wilmslow Guild HQ 7:45pm, contact Indoor Prog. Sec. Judith Rees 0161 980 5034

Will **affiliated societies**, who wish to advertise meetings of relevance to CAWOS, please send their programme to:- **Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QG** or, *preferably please, by email: sheilablamire@cawos.org*

For further information on Outdoor Events within the county see the Birdwatcher's Diary at: www.deestuary.co.uk



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NEXT CAWOS INDOOR MEETING

FRIDAY 2nd OCTOBER 2009

'THE WISDOM OF BIRDS' by Tim Birkjead

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