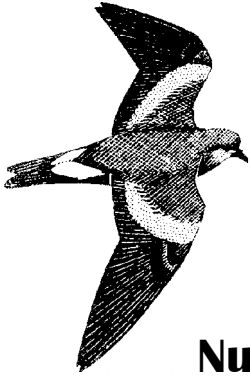


**Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society**

Reg. Charity No. 702484

[www.cawos.org](http://www.cawos.org)



# BIRD NEWS

Number 110

March 2019



**County Rarity: Bean Goose**

**Seabirds Count and Cheshire Buzzard Survey**

**Burton Mere Wetlands - another award!**

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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.*

*The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Society, the Council of the Society, or the Editor. Appearance of advertisements in this publication does not infer any recommendation or approval by the Society for the products and services being promoted.*

**Front cover: Hawfinch by Ray Scally**

**Other illustrations by Tony Broome, Phil Jones and Ron Plummer**

**Note: the copy date for the next issue is 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

# Guest Editorial

Welcome to *Bird News* Number 110 for March 2019.

Sometimes I wonder why I don't just cut myself off from THE NEWS completely. To paraphrase a one-time Tatton Park patcher 'it does my head in'. If it's not the slaughter of raptors on and around grouse moors, then it's the predicted forthcoming insect extinction with potentially devastating effects on the human race. Even the spell of dawn to dusk blue skies this February, with light winds and record-breaking high winter temperatures, apparently has its downside. Comparison with the 'beast from the east' at a similar time of winter last year begs the question as to whether these, apparently contradictory, weather events are signs of things to come due to human-induced ongoing climate change and whether we will be able to effect real change before it's too late.

Then, of course, there's Brexit and, here we are, the best part of three years after the referendum, still with no clarity regarding how (or perhaps even whether) the United Kingdom will leave the European Union [written on 26th February 2019!]. Assuming that we do leave will European Union standards of protection and safeguards for the natural environment and wildlife automatically be transferred into United Kingdom legislation? Apparently this isn't necessarily the case but there have been political statements to the effect that environmental protection in the United Kingdom could in fact be enhanced by a so-called 'Green Brexit'. While one hopes that may indeed be the case, it is hard even in the best of times to place much faith in the statements of politicians and these seem to me to be far from the best times! If Brexit does come to pass one must hope for a strong, independent watchdog to enforce effective environmental laws. The present position, however, appears to be that organisations including Friends of the Earth and RSPB find the proposals for the powers of such a watchdog to be too weak to act as an effective safeguard. It is to be hoped that Government is aware of the large numbers of people in the United Kingdom who are members of conservation organisations and take this into consideration when drawing up any new set of conservation legislation and defining the role and power of the watchdog.

Not everything in the news has been bad. It has been gratifying recently, but not at all surprising, to read of the acknowledged benefits to health, both general and mental, of getting out birding. On a personal level I feel sure that I'm not alone in finding that even on the gloomiest winter's day spirits are lifted by an hour or so of patch birding. Occasionally there's the added boost of seeing birds such as the Little and Great White Egrets perched side by side and a Smew on Redes Mere within two weeks of one another this December. In addition the physical benefits of being out and about must be obvious.

The subject of health brings me to this edition of *Bird News* and in particular to Bob Anderson's 'One Man's Birding', entitled 'With Age and Infirmity'. Bob's article speaks for itself and covers an issue many of us have already, or will encounter. In addition to the usual features readers will also find an article by David Norman appealing for birders to record breeding seabirds for the National Seabirds Census and two very interesting notes on bird (and fish) behaviour from Darren Morris. *Bird News* also includes obituaries of Dave Clarke and Tony Murphy. Both Dave and Tony were well known in Cheshire birding circles but in very different ways, both are sadly missed.

**Steve Barber**

**Note: the copy date for the next issue is 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019 - please be prompt**

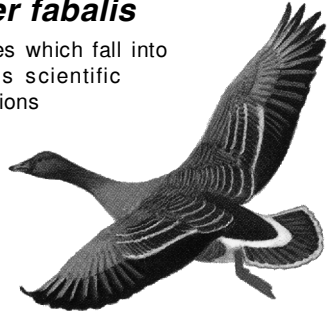
We cannot guarantee that material received after this date will be published in that issue. If you are aware that your material may be delayed, please let the Editor know as soon as possible.

# County Rarities

## TUNDRA AND TAIGA BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis*

Bean Goose has a rather confusing taxonomy, a group of races which fall into tundra-breeding forms or taiga-breeding forms, with various scientific nomenclature and as a species or two, are spread in scattered regions right across northern Europe and across to Asia.

Taiga Bean Geese *A.f.fabalis* breed in the Taiga zone from Scandinavia across to eastern Asia and historically two small, but regular, flocks winter on marshes in the Yare Valley, Norfolk and the Avon Valley in Scotland. These have diminished from flocks of 150+ to just a handful of birds today. Elsewhere in the country they are very rare indeed. Tundra Bean Geese *A.f.rossicus* breed in the Tundra zone, east of the White Sea to Northern Asia. It occurs in Britain in scattered small flocks, and often accompanies other goose species, i.e. White-fronted Goose and Pink-footed Goose, often on east coast marshes and it is the species most likely to be encountered.



Both species are dark grey geese with paler breasts and pale-edged dark tertials, orange legs and orange and black bills. Separation on plumage features is unreliable and it's generally bare parts that separate them. Telling them apart from Pink-feet, which they resemble plumage-wise is best done on leg colour, orange versus pink, but of course there are always variations, but Tundra Bean will look larger and chunkier than Pink-foot and Taiga even more so, long-necked and bigger billed. Bean Geese tend to appear brown-backed, Pink-foot greyer. The tertials on Bean Geese stand out, dark centred with obvious pale edges, whilst Pink-feet are greyer, with less defined white edging. Jizz of these two species does help separate them, and from other grey geese. They are quite shy and wary, so often seen apart from other geese flocks, necks stretched and alert. Taiga Bean Goose is a large goose, similar in size to Greylag Goose, and much larger than Pink-footed Goose. It is slimmer than Greylag with a longer, thinner neck and a wedge-shaped head and long bill. Tundra Bean Goose is smaller than Taiga Bean, and looks Pink-foot in size, it has a more rounded head and the bill is deep-based and relatively short.

So once you are convinced you are looking at Bean Geese, what next? Both have orange and black bills, with Taiga Bean Goose showing an extensive orange bill with the black restricted to the nail area, the base of the bill and cutting edges, whilst Tundra shows a predominantly black bill with an orange sub-terminal band. I doubt you would get a mixed flock so getting a good view is needed. However, this species does get into crop fields and on farmland so often can be seen quite well.

There are various theories as to why we just are not seeing so many, maybe climate change is enabling them to winter nearer to their breeding and moulting grounds and there isn't the need to cross the North Sea to winter?

**Hugh Pulsford**

## BEAN GOOSE IN CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL

In his *Fauna of Cheshire* (1910) Coward wrote "The Bean Goose had been obtained (shot) occasionally in the Dee Estuary, but it is rare". The last part of his statement remains true today but sightings in the later part of the following 100+ years have been more widespread and, happily, since 1932 none of the birds concerned appear to have been shot.

Coward was aware of singles shot near Burton in January 1872, on the Dee Marshes in 1887 or 1888, and from a gaggle of six there in January 1900. On another occasion four birds were killed with a single shot but the shooter had no note of the date. No details of identification have been published for any of these birds.

15 Bean Geese were identified on stubble at Puddington in January 1908, the observer was able to approach near enough to see orange legs and black-nailed orange bills. Similar plumage details were noted of an "exceptionally small Bean" shot "on the Dee Marsh" in February 1914

and Coward himself got close enough to a bird on Rostherne Mere on 1st October 1916 to get “an excellent view of its plumage and the typical beak pattern of a Bean Goose”.

*British Birds* published a note of a party of 11 flying north over Birkenhead on 15th June 1921, but if the editor was concerned about the date he made no mention of it. Reports followed of a bird shot at Burton in January 1932 and an apparently injured bird there on 17th May 1959. The 1979 *Cheshire Bird Report* includes a bird reported at Cholmondeley on September 22nd among a list of escapes and releases.

Since 1979 there have been sightings in each decade. In the 1980s one remained in the Wheelock Valley area around Elton Hall Flash from 12th to 28th December 1981, a party of eight was on flooded fields by the Weaver Bend on 3rd February 1984 and one was at Doddington on 17th January 1988. The only record in the 1990s was of a bird at Elton Hall Flash from 15th to 21st December 1993 and the ‘noughties’ is represented by a party of nine at Fiddler’s Ferry from 9th April to 1st May 2005. The present decade got off to a good start with a bird at Lapwing Hall Pool from 28th November to 2nd December 2011, up to three at Burton Mere Wetlands and Puddington from 2nd to 19th January 2012 and one at Budworth Mere from 23rd February to 17th March 2012. I am unaware of any later reports.

Omitting the Birkenhead and Cholmondeley birds, there have been records in every month from October to May. January was certainly the favoured month in Coward’s day (he died in 1933) and other than his own Rostherne sighting all the birds were seen in the area of the Dee Marshes. Subsequently most sightings have been more evenly spread in time and space from November to March and across Cheshire and Wirral. Several of the sightings from 1981 onwards have involved long-staying birds, while only the birds seen in 2011 and 2012 were identified to race in *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Reports* - they were all Tundra Bean Geese. However, *The Birds of Sandbach Flashes 1935-1999* (Goodwin & Lythgoe, 2000) ascribes both the Elton Hall birds to the nominate *Anser fabalis fabalis* - Taiga Bean Goose.

**Steve Barber**

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# Book of the Year

## THE BB/BTO BEST BIRD BOOK OF THE YEAR 2018

All books reviewed in *British Birds*, *BTO News* and on the BTO website during the year 2018 were eligible for consideration for this award.

**Winner: Handbook of Western Palearctic Birds: Passerines**

**2nd: Rare and Scarce Birds of Cheshire & Wirral**

By Allan Conlin and Eddie Williams; privately published, 2017; reviewed by *BB* by Andy Stoddard (*British Birds* 111: 56-57).

This is a book that four of the six judges gave points to in the final reckoning, and it was highly regarded for being a particularly attractive example of the genre. The ‘finders accounts’ add so much to the systematic list of birds and really bring to life the enjoyment of finding and seeing rare and scarce species. The figures are presented in an easily digestible format, again turning what could have been a rather dry systematic list into something pleasurable and compelling. Its layout and artwork in particular contribute to a beautifully produced little book that will be well thumbed by local birders and visitors to the birding county of Cheshire & Wirral for many years to come. It sets a high standard for a book of this kind.

***British Birds* 112, January 2019, 40-43 [www.britishbirds.co.uk](http://www.britishbirds.co.uk)**

Congratulations to Allan Conlin and Eddie Williams for achieving 2nd place in a closely-fought competition, and to Ray Scally for his terrific artwork (artist for the front covers of *Bird News*). The original book review was published in *Bird News* 107, March 2018. Eds.

# Sites to Watch

## BURTON MERE WETLANDS AND DEE MARSHES

As I write this in late February, 48 Avocets are back at Burton Mere Wetlands, with birds already pairing up and mating. Lapwings have been on territory for a few weeks now, with several pairs watched nest scraping and mating this morning. An extension of the anti-predator fence over the winter, around the pools and wet grassland area in front of the visitor centre (known as IMF 2), ensures that this important area for breeding waders is now enclosed all year round, hopefully helping to maintain the high density of breeding waders on site.

Our Bearded Tits continue to please visiting birders, with at least 5 still around the reedbed at BMW, along with regular reports continuing to come from Neston Reedbed. Fingers remain well and truly crossed that we have at least one breeding pair this year. Similarly, the pair of Cattle Egrets remains in the area, and a hoped for repeat of 2017's successful nesting is eagerly awaited. This year the RSPB celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> year on the Dee, with Gayton Sands (now known as Parkgate Marsh) purchased back in 1979. So a few star breeders would be particularly fitting.

For those of you who have not visited BMW for a while, we now have a roof on our bunker hide, to provide full shelter from the elements for birders to watch the scrape without having to look through the glass windows of the visitor centre. Plans are also coming together for a complete renovation of the Inner Marsh Farm area of the reserve, with a new bigger hide in a more strategic position, renovated footpaths and new boardwalks. Watch this space for further updates.

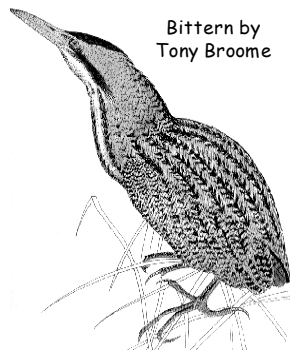
This winter we have been walking regular transects to determine the number of wintering Water Pipits on the wet grassland at BMW, and along the stream and rush-beds at the Old Quay - the two main hotspots for this species on the Dee. A peak count of 9 on the wet grassland at BMW was recorded on 15<sup>th</sup> January, with 4 at the Old Quay in the same week. Jack Snipes are counted at the same time and a count of 12 in January on the BMW wet grassland was the best.

Last week's high tides have seen wildfowl numbers increase markedly, particularly at BMW, with an outstanding count of 258 Shovelers this morning - a record count for the Dee. Pink-footed Goose numbers have continued their upward trend this winter too, with Colin Wells reporting in his last Dee Estuary WeBS update, an estimated 15,000—20,000 in the wider Dee area in January. A small group of Bewick's Swans have been present in the latter half of the winter period with possibly up to 7 birds, including a family party.

6-7 Hen Harriers have wintered this year, including at least 2 fine, grey males. Short-eared Owls have been particularly showy at the Old Baths this winter, with up to 9 on some nights. At least 1 Bittern continues to roost nightly at Neston Reedbed, with the second bird picked up on high tides, but no longer roosting at Neston.

Rarities have been a bit thin on the ground this winter, apart from Barry Barnacal's drake American Wigeon at Denhall Quay on 12<sup>th</sup> January. However, with the birding spectacle as good as it has been, no one has complained unduly, and we wait to see what goodies spring may have in store for us. I'm guessing a Willet to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary is possibly asking a bit much.

**Graham Jones, Site Manager at RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve**



Bittern by  
Tony Broome

## WIRRAL NATURE RESERVE RECEIVES VISITENGLAND WELCOME ACCOLADE

Staff, volunteers and visitors are celebrating at RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands, the popular nature reserve near Neston, following news that the site has been awarded the prestigious Welcome accolade from VisitEngland - one of just six attractions in the North West to receive an award this year.

Attractions across England are awarded VisitEngland accolades in appreciation of the outstanding experiences they provide, with other categories including story-telling, food and drink, hidden gem status and an overall Gold award. The attractions have achieved these awards based on the score they obtained following their annual assessment by VisitEngland, with Burton Mere Wetlands' Welcome accolade a result of its 100% score on the staff component of the assessment. Burton Mere Wetlands, the heart of the RSPB Dee Estuary reserve, is increasingly popular with nature enthusiasts of all ages, with thousands of visitors flocking to the site each year to explore its unique visitor centre, extensive trails, breath-taking wildlife spectacles, wild play area and impressive views.

**Graham Jones, Site Manager at RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve, said:**

"This is fantastic news for the reserve and we're sure that our visitors will be as thrilled as we are. To achieve a Welcome accolade is such an honour. This award reflects the ongoing hard work by everyone here at the Dee Estuary to deliver an outstanding visitor experience for the many families and individuals who enjoy our wonderful reserve each year.

A huge thank you goes to our staff and volunteers for working so hard to deliver the highest level of visitor experience at Burton Mere Wetlands. To receive this award in the reserve's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year is a fitting recognition of the sensitive development the RSPB has delivered on the Dee Estuary, since our beginnings at Parkgate in 1979."

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## Looking back.....

### **On 24th February 1994 Britain's first American Herring Gull discovered at Ashton's Flash, Cheshire.**

*First published in British Birds 102, June 2009, 342-347*

#### **AMERICAN HERRING GULL IN CHESHIRE & WIRRAL: NEW TO BRITAIN**

**ABSTRACT:** The discovery of a first-winter American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* in Cheshire & Wirral, in late [24<sup>th</sup>] February 1994, is described. At that time, American Herring Gull was treated as the North American race of Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, while the accepted Irish record formed part of the joint British & Irish List. As a consequence, the significance of this record in a British context was not fully appreciated, and full details of the occurrence have not been published. With the subsequent separation of the British and Irish Lists, and the recent decision by the BOURC to treat *smithsonianus* as a full species, this now becomes the first British record.

**David Quinn, 24 Regent Street, Moulton, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 8NY**

**EDITORIAL COMMENT:** Bob McGowan, Chairman of BOURC, commented: "Following the first record of American Herring Gull in Ireland, in Co. Cork in November-December 1986 (as a race of *Larus argentatus*), it was really just a matter of time before the Nearctic breeder would be noticed in Britain, and David Quinn's persistence in scrutinising the flocks of gulls around the flashes and landfill at Northwich paid off.

The submitted description was of a high standard and fully met the criteria for *smithsonianus*. As there was no escape issues or other doubts on provenance, BOURC unanimously accepted the sight record as the first British occurrence (BOU 1996) as later accepted the Taxonomic Subcommittee's recommendation to treat American Herring Gull as a separate, polytypic taxon (BOU 2008). As identification characters have become better understood, there has been an increase in the frequency of records in Britain, and American Herring Gull appears to be a fairly regular vagrant - one that, like other Nearctic gulls, is prone to influx years."

# County Round-Up

*Some of the records may be unauthenticated and therefore will require review by the Society's Rarities Panel or the BBRC. This report covers the period from September to December 2018.*

## SITE REPORTS

### Chester area

Two Cattle Egrets were in the Puddington area from early Nov to early Dec, seven Waxwings were at Chester on Dec 13<sup>th</sup>.



Cattle Egret  
by Phil Jones

### Congleton area

A Common Scoter was at Astbury Mere on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> and also there were 12 Goosanders on Dec 30<sup>th</sup>, Mediterranean Gull on Oct 5<sup>th</sup> and Black Tern on Sep 8<sup>th</sup>. A Hobby was at Congleton Park on Sep 11<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and Astbury Mere on 15<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

### Crewe and Nantwich area

Six Whooper Swans were at Railway Flash on Nov 30<sup>th</sup> and again in early Dec, 29 Mandarin present at Lawton Lake on Oct 7<sup>th</sup> and 13 Goosanders at Elton Hall Flash on Dec 13<sup>th</sup>. Single Great White Egrets were at Doddington Pool, Elton Hall Flash, Groby Flash and Railway Flash on various dates throughout the period. An Osprey was over Doddington on Sep 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> whilst a Red Kite was over Shavington on Sep 17<sup>th</sup>.

An Iceland Gull was at Railway Flash on Nov 30<sup>th</sup> and Dec 6<sup>th</sup>, Common Tern at Doddington on Sep 18<sup>th</sup>, Arctic Tern at Sandbach on Sep 17<sup>th</sup> and Black Tern at Elton Hall Flash on Sep 13<sup>th</sup>. Up to three Long-eared Owls were in the Sandbach area during Dec, three Hobbies at Nantwich on Sep 4<sup>th</sup>. 16 Ravens were at Railway Flash on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup>, Waxwing at Sandbach on Dec 16<sup>th</sup>, six Yellow Wagtails at Scholar Green on Oct 8<sup>th</sup> and 400+ Linnets at Green Lane set-aside on Dec 18<sup>th</sup>.

### Ellesmere Port and Neston area

Wildfowl included: 5000 Pink-footed Geese at BMW on Oct 9<sup>th</sup>, White-fronted Goose at BMW on Dec 9<sup>th</sup>, four Bewick's Swans at Burton Marsh on Dec 27<sup>th</sup>, and 22 Whooper Swans at Shotwick on Dec 30<sup>th</sup>. Nine Mandarins were at BMW on Sep 27<sup>th</sup>, Garganeys were at BMW and Burton Marsh during Sep, a good count of 310 Shovelers were at BMW on Sep 27<sup>th</sup> and 400 Wigeons on Nov 28<sup>th</sup>. A Glossy Ibis was at BMW on Oct 9<sup>th</sup>, four Spoonbills there on Sep 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>, two Bitterns in the Neston/Parkgate area on various dates, three Cattle Egrets were at BMW on Dec 1<sup>st</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> and a Great White Egret there on Dec 21<sup>st</sup>.

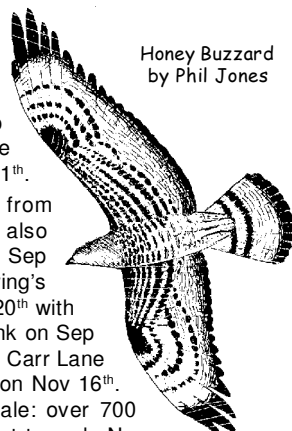
An Osprey was at BMW on Sep 1<sup>st</sup>, 16 Marsh Harriers at BMW on Nov 25<sup>th</sup> with up to six Hen Harriers in the area, and a Pallid Harrier from Sep 4<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>, and a Red Kite over Decca Pools on Oct 21<sup>st</sup>. A single Spotted Crake was at BMW from Sep 11<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>. Two Avocets at BMW on Nov 24<sup>th</sup>, also there were seven Curlew Sandpipers on Oct 6<sup>th</sup>, Little Stint on Oct 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>, Red-necked Phalarope on Sep 16<sup>th</sup>, four Green Sandpipers on Sep 14<sup>th</sup>, Wood Sandpiper on Sep 16<sup>th</sup>, six Spotted Redshanks on Sep 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, and 16 Greenshanks in the Burton/Parkgate area on Sep 11<sup>th</sup>. Six Short-eared Owls were at Neston on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>, a late Swift at BMW on Oct 14<sup>th</sup> whilst two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were unusual visitors to Parkgate on Sep 25<sup>th</sup>.

Three Merlins were at Parkgate on Sep 25<sup>th</sup>, Hobby at Burton and Parkgate on various dates and at least three Peregrines at Parkgate on Sep 9<sup>th</sup>. Great Grey Shrike was at Denhall Lane on Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, Firecrest at Decca Pools on Sep 29<sup>th</sup>, 10,000 Starlings at BMW on Nov 26<sup>th</sup>, seven Spotted Flycatchers at BMW on Sep 14<sup>th</sup>, Black Redstart at Shotwick from Dec 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>. A Whinchat was at Burton Marsh on Sep 3<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, a max of eight Bearded Tits at BMW on Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, up to three Water Pipits were in the Neston area and three Crossbills at BMW on Nov 6<sup>th</sup>.

## Halton area

A Brent Goose was at Hale on Nov 18<sup>th</sup>, a Whooper Swan there on Oct 21<sup>st</sup> and a Garganey at Carr Lane Pools on Sep 14<sup>th</sup>. A Cattle Egret was at Pickering's Pasture on Sep 28<sup>th</sup>, six Great White Egrets at Hale Duck Decoy on Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, and 70 Little Egrets there on Sep 10<sup>th</sup>. A Marsh Harrier was at Hale on Sep 27<sup>th</sup>, two Hen Harriers there on Oct 31<sup>st</sup> and a Honey Buzzard at Pickering's Pasture on Sep 11<sup>th</sup>.

Waders of note included: an American Golden Plover reported from Pickering's Pasture on Oct 25<sup>th</sup>, a Whimbrel at Hale on Sep 27<sup>th</sup>, also there a Bar-tailed Godwit on Sep 26<sup>th</sup>, and a Curlew Sandpiper on Sep 11<sup>th</sup> with another one at Carr Lane on 25<sup>th</sup>, four Little Stints at Pickering's Pasture on Dec 28<sup>th</sup>, Wood Sandpiper at Carr Lane on Sep 11<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> with another at Pickering's Pasture on 30<sup>th</sup>. Two Hobbies were at Halebank on Sep 12<sup>th</sup>. Ring Ouzel was at Hale on Oct 11<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, two Whinchats at Carr Lane on Sep 26<sup>th</sup> and also there a Tree Pipit on Sep 11<sup>th</sup> and Water Pipit on Nov 16<sup>th</sup>. Three Rock Pipits were at Pickering's Pasture on Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>. At Hale: over 700 Bramblings were noted during visible migration watches from mid-Oct to early Nov, five Hawfinches on Nov 17<sup>th</sup> and a Crossbill on 6<sup>th</sup>.



Honey Buzzard  
by Phil Jones

## Macclesfield area

300 Pink-footed Geese flew over Macclesfield on Oct 28<sup>th</sup>, seven Whooper Swans were at Handforth on Oct 28<sup>th</sup>, Smews were at Redesmere on Nov 30<sup>th</sup> and Dec 16<sup>th</sup> and 12 Goosanders at Rostherne on Nov 19<sup>th</sup>. Two Great White Egrets were at Redesmere on Dec 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, Red Kite over Cranage on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> and a Caspian Gull at Rostherne on Nov 17<sup>th</sup>.

## Vale Royal area

Four White-fronted Geese were at Frodsham Marsh on Dec 9<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, also there 800 Pink-footed Geese on Nov 26<sup>th</sup>, 25 Whooper Swans on Dec 23<sup>rd</sup> and two Bewick's Swans on Dec 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>. Four Egyptian Geese were at Tatton Park on Oct 6<sup>th</sup>. Garganey was at Neumann's Flash from Sep 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> and 100 Wigeons there on Oct 30<sup>th</sup>, 10 Goldeneyes were at Frodsham Marsh on Oct 6<sup>th</sup>, Smew at Newchurch Common from early Sep, a max of 44 Goosanders at Marbury CP on Dec 31<sup>st</sup> and a single Red-breasted Merganser remained at Frodsham from Dec 14<sup>th</sup> onwards. Two Bitterns were at Marbury CP on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>, five Great White Egrets at Frodsham Marsh on Nov 4<sup>th</sup> with Cattle Egret for most of early Dec and another at Marbury CP on Nov 15<sup>th</sup>.

Osprey was at Carey Park on Sep 5<sup>th</sup>, a Red Kite over Church Minshull on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup>, and Moulton on Oct 21<sup>st</sup>, two Marsh Harriers and a single Hen Harrier at Frodsham Marsh. Five Avocets at Frodsham Marsh on Sep 8<sup>th</sup>, 114 Golden Plovers at Rudheath on Dec 11<sup>th</sup>, Little Stint at Neumann's Flash on Sep 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> and Wood Sandpiper at Neumann's Flash on Sep 6<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>. A single Common Tern at Neumann's Flash on Oct 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, two Black Terns at Marbury CP on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Hobbies were at Barnton, Neumann's Flash and Newchurch Common during Sep with two Hobbies at Winsford on 9<sup>th</sup>. Five Cetti's Warblers were at Anderton NP on Oct 21<sup>st</sup>, 10,000 Starlings at Marbury CP on Dec 24<sup>th</sup>, Whinchat at Ashton's Flash on Sep 5<sup>th</sup> and Neumann's Flash on 6<sup>th</sup>, Tree Pipit at Witton Mill on Sep 7<sup>th</sup> and Hawfinch at Lostock Green on Dec 14<sup>th</sup>.

## Warrington area

2500 Pink-footed Geese were at Woolston Eyes on Oct 25<sup>th</sup>, also there two Whooper Swans on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>, Garganey on Sep 1<sup>st</sup> and 136 Shovelers on Sep 27<sup>th</sup>. Four Goosanders were at Silver Lane Pools on Dec 27<sup>th</sup>. Goshawk at Silver Lane Pools on Dec 27<sup>th</sup>. Five Woodcocks at Risley Moss on Dec 13<sup>th</sup>. A Merlin at Culcheth on Oct 9<sup>th</sup> and Silver Lane on Nov 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, Hobby at Risley Moss on Sep 18<sup>th</sup>. A Waxwing was at Woolston Eyes on Dec 10<sup>th</sup>, Woodlark at Silver Lane Pools on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup>, two Tree Pipits at Silver Lane on Sep 10<sup>th</sup> and Risley Moss on 18<sup>th</sup>, a Yellow-browed Warbler was at Woolston Eyes on Oct 21<sup>st</sup> and 10 Crossbills at Silver Lane on Sep 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## Wirral area

A max count of 242 Brent Geese were at Hilbre on Nov 30<sup>th</sup>, 4410 Pink-footed Geese at Thurston on Oct 15<sup>th</sup>, 5000+ Shelducks at Heswall on Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, Garganey at Gilroy NP on Sep 6<sup>th</sup>, and 730

Pintails at Heswall on Dec 10<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. Three Scaups were at Hilbre on Nov 8<sup>th</sup>, also there five Eiders on Nov 20<sup>th</sup>, Velvet Scoter on Sep 7<sup>th</sup> with another at Leasowe on Nov 5<sup>th</sup>, over 2500 Common Scoters off the north Wirral during Oct, two Long-tailed Ducks off Hilbre on Oct 28<sup>th</sup>, with eight Red-breasted Mergansers at Heswall on Dec 26<sup>th</sup>. Seabirds of note: three Red-throated Divers off Hilbre on Sep 7<sup>th</sup>, a Great Northern Diver at West Kirby Marine Lake from Nov 29<sup>th</sup> until Dec 16<sup>th</sup> with others at Hilbre, Hoylake, Leasowe and New Brighton. 15 Leach's Petrels were off Hilbre on Sep 21<sup>st</sup>, eight Manx Shearwaters off Leasowe on Sep 21<sup>st</sup>. 63 Little Egrets were at Thurstaston on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1610 Cormorants counted out of the Dee Estuary on Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> and a single Shag at Hilbre and West Kirby ML.

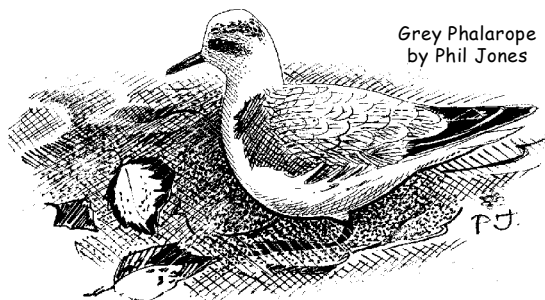
Osprey was at Pensby on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> and Hoylake on 5<sup>th</sup>, Marsh Harrier at Heswall on Sep 11<sup>th</sup>, Hen Harrier at Heswall and Leasowe on several dates. Waders of note included 9000 Oystercatchers at Hilbre on Sep 6<sup>th</sup>, Avocet at Leasowe on Sep 20<sup>th</sup>, 400 Grey Plovers at Hoylake on Nov 26<sup>th</sup>, 240 Ringed Plovers at Heswall on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup>, 420 Bar-tailed Godwits at Thurstaston on Dec 19<sup>th</sup>, 5800 Black-tailed Godwits at Caldly on Sep 5<sup>th</sup>. 135 Turnstones were at Hilbre on Nov 17<sup>th</sup>, 14,000 Knots at Hoylake on Nov 25<sup>th</sup>, four Curlew Sandpipers at Hoylake on Sep 9<sup>th</sup>, 1000+ Sanderlings at Hoylake on Oct 13<sup>th</sup>, two Grey Phalaropes were at New Brighton on Sep 21<sup>st</sup>, 3500 Redshanks at Thurstaston on Sep 17<sup>th</sup> and Heswall on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> and five Greenshanks at Hilbre on Oct 14<sup>th</sup>.

A Sabine's Gull was at New Brighton on Sep 21<sup>st</sup>, two Little Gulls there on Sep 21<sup>st</sup>, four Mediterranean Gulls at Thurstaston on Sep 13<sup>th</sup>, Caspian Gull at Birkenhead Docks on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>. 780 Sandwich Terns were off Hilbre on Sep 1<sup>st</sup>, three Arctic Terns at Hoylake on Sep 19<sup>th</sup>, a Black Tern at Leasowe on Sep 19<sup>th</sup> and New Brighton on 21<sup>st</sup> and Roseate Tern at New Brighton on Sep 21<sup>st</sup>. Two Great Skuas were at New Brighton on Sep 7<sup>th</sup>, Hoylake on 19<sup>th</sup> and Leasowe on 21<sup>st</sup>, Long-tailed Skua at Hoylake and New Brighton on 21<sup>st</sup> and five Arctic Skuas at Hoylake on 19<sup>th</sup>. Five Guillemots were at Hoylake on Sep 27<sup>th</sup> and two Razorbills at Wallasey on Oct 13<sup>th</sup>.

The final Swift was reported at West Kirby on Dec 1<sup>st</sup>. Hobby was at Caldly on Sep 3<sup>rd</sup> and Leasowe on Sep 4<sup>th</sup>. A Chough was noted at Hilbre on Sep 16<sup>th</sup> and in the Thurstaston/Caldly area from Oct 16<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>. The last Swallow was at Red Rocks on Oct 21<sup>st</sup>, two Yellow-browed Warblers at Red Rocks on Oct 15<sup>th</sup> with others at Hilbre, Leasowe and West Kirby. Firecrest at Heswall on Dec 25<sup>th</sup>, Ring Ouzel at Red Rocks on Oct 18<sup>th</sup>, Black Redstart at Hilbre on Oct 31<sup>st</sup>, 20 Wheatears were at Leasowe on Sep 4<sup>th</sup>, Pied Wheatear remained at Meols from Nov 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, Tree Pipit at Leasowe on Sep 5<sup>th</sup>, five Rock Pipits at Hilbre on Oct 4<sup>th</sup>. 1170 Chaffinches were over Red Rocks on Oct 21<sup>st</sup>, 33 Bramblings, 135 Greenfinches and Common Rosefinch on Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, three Crossbills at Leasowe on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>. Snow Buntings were at Heswall and Hilbre on several dates during Dec.

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**Thanks/acknowledgments to:** Dee Estuary Website, SECOS, WECG, Dermot Smith (Mersey WeBS), NNHS, Frodsham Marsh Birdlog, *Birdwatching* Magazine, Manchester Bird Forum, Rob Cockbain and everyone else who passed records on.



Grey Phalarope  
by Phil Jones

**Note:** If YOU see anything of interest in your local paper, on the Internet, or even in the national press, relevant to Cheshire and Wirral, please bring it to the Editor's attention. Either scan in the article and email it, or cut it out and put it in the post. Please make sure the source and date is clear. Editor's contact details are on the inside front cover of *Bird News*.

# Obituary

## **TONY MURPHY 15 December 1948 to 25 December 2018**

I met Tony through birding, a friendship that developed far beyond birding to become a very close personal one. It is impossible to talk or think about Tony without including Enid. They were so on a par with each other it was almost two people in one body and they were totally devoted to each other and inseparable. It goes without saying that Enid was the love of his life, his rock and foundation, even more so than birds and that is saying something. He was completely devastated to lose her on 1 July last year when she passed away after a very short but devastating illness. His bravery and fortitude at this time was really quite amazing, I was with him nearly every day for over 6 weeks and will always admire his outward strength. Although I know when he was alone it was different, his heart was broken.

He passed away on 25 December 2018 in hospital. It was a real surprise, I had spoken to him the day before and said 'I'll see you tomorrow'. The response was "don't bother to come and see me on Christmas Day", we wanted to and got the terrible news whilst en route! He was just 70, an age he never thought he would get to with all his health issues over the years.

Tony started birding in his late teens frequenting amongst many places Altrincham Sewage Works, where he met Ivan Clarke, one of his 'mentors' who remained a close friend right until the end. Prior to the switch he was an avid and expert train-spotter travelling all over the country with his father and cousin. His knowledge was encyclopaedic of trains.

Many people will have known Tony from FocalPoint, a venture they set up in 1982. Initially operating from their house near Northwich and then into 'The Unit' on a nearby business development. Many people in the area purchased their first birding optics from them. Always honest advice was given relative to budget, no hard sell and try for as long as you like from the Unit, which in itself had an impressive bird list. It may have been hard work, but they loved it and more importantly provided a superb service.

After selling FocalPoint they purchased 'The Cottage' in Thornage, Norfolk, just a few miles inland from Cley. This enabled them to spend long periods of time there, before his health started to fail. He was especially fond of early morning and evening birding. "Less people and often better light" he said.

Over the years, he related many tales of his birding escapades, such as journey's sitting in the back of John Shakeshaft's, another dear friend, van, he described it as a furniture van but I'm not sure it was, and falling all over the place whilst cornering. The fateful Spanish trip when they ended up in jail after an accident! Skipping work to go on a twitch was done often, I guess he had some very original excuses.

Before Tony owned a car he used to borrow his father's scooter, a Vespa I think, and travelled all over the country. Tony up front and Enid hanging on at the back. It was impossible for her to fall off as she was loaded down with all the gear, especially an impossibly heavy wooden tripod. They never travelled light - right up to the end. There were trips to North Wales, Anglesey, Norfolk and many other locations, whatever the weather. Sadly, I never witnessed the intrepid couple, it must have been a sight to behold!

One year there was the expedition, his words, up to the top of Cairngorm to look for Snow Buntings and his special favourite UK wader, the Dotterel. Tent, food the lot including all their water requirements! No drinking from streams for Tony. I do wonder who carried the bulk of it all, well actually I don't as I know who did - Enid.

Many times they could be seen walking to Bishop's at Cley, a place he dearly loved, the central hides or along the East Bank, Titchwell, Thornham Harbour, Holme or Sculthorpe. Tony at the front and Enid behind with all the heavy gear, tripod, multiple telescopes, camera and associated lenses, latterly on the trolley he'd bought. I can hear him now "Come on Nid you're falling behind!" A man and couple known to many. Wherever I went with him there was always a 'Hello Tony', sometimes hard for him to associate a name with a face as many were old customers of FocalPoint.

Tony loved to study optics, he was very adept at finding equipment reviews for optics or camera equipment on his laptop. Many a time he'd ask my opinion about some new camera. I had no idea what he was talking about as I rarely read reviews, but he'd read and study them all and could discuss the positives and negatives of each with all. He had an incredible memory for the facts about these equipment types.

I was very fortunate to share his last trip to Norfolk in August last year. He hadn't been for many months after his last major operation, but he really did enjoy it. Evenings spent in the central hides watching gulls, discussing the id of Caspian Gulls and just general birding chat with people he knew. He was very frustrated in later years with his sight issues, but it is thankful that optics and cameras remained usable for him, not as good as in years past but still passable. Sadly he was unable to drive though. Then of course there was his health which steadily declined over the years, he still managed to get out birding though.

A great list man: Comberbach Garden list, Norfolk Garden list, year list, it was never ending and Enid religiously wrote them up each day. His lifelong birding ambition was to see all the waders of the world. He never made it of course but he had a very good try, well into 3 figures, I have an idea it was over 140. As an aside, Enid's similar objective was the herons of the world, sadly I cannot remember how many she had seen.

It would be impossible not to mention the 'Marbury' patch. He lived in the area for more than 40 years and had the largest list of all the local birders, he was really proud of that. Sadly, I cannot remember the exact number but it was well in excess of 200.

It never ceased to amaze me how he could remember exactly where and when he had seen a rarity, even as far back as 40 years ago.

Then of course the trips abroad with friends and Bird Guides, I have 76 trips in mind but don't know exactly, New Zealand, Kenya, Gambia, North America, Mexico, Venezuela, India and many more, often multiple times. There was the epic 80-day tour of the Southern Hemisphere which included Hawaii, Australia and New Caledonia to name a few. The torture to get high enough in Chile for the Diademed Sandpiper-Plover, he loved that bird. And of course Madagascar, especially for the lemurs. Finland, again which he loved, apart from the endless salmon meals!

God bless and rest in peace my friend.

**Phil Hampson**

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## **DAVE CLARKE 15 February 1936 to 31 December 2018**

With the death of Dave Clarke, Rostherne Mere National Nature Reserve (NNR) and its A W Boyd Memorial Observatory have lost a real stalwart. Dave started birding there in the mid-1970s. He rarely missed a Sunday and in retirement came mid-week too. But Dave did more than birdwatch at Rostherne: for over 30 years, with just one short break, he acted as Permit Secretary, firstly for the Manchester Ornithological Society and then, from January 1999, for CAWOS. In the early days there were in the order of 500 permits taken out each year, so the task was a significant one.

Dave's interest in birds - and flowers and insects too - was awakened and nurtured by his mother. It was an interest that he passed on in his turn. In 1982 the Girl Guides leased and renovated the Egerton Hall (Rostherne's village hall) as a residential centre, where groups of up to 30 Rainbows (5-7-year-olds), Brownies and Guides stayed and were hosted on visits to the Observatory, the NNR and the Whitley Hide. Dave led many of these visits and he accompanied other groups too.

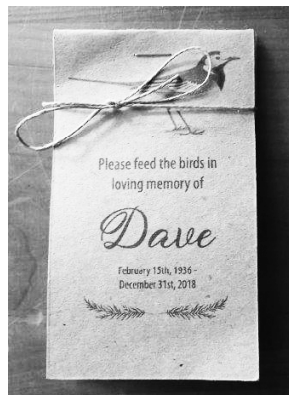
For many years the monthly winter wildfowl counts, then organised by the Wildfowl Trust ('and Wetlands' was a later addition), involved three grandees of Cheshire ornithology: Hedley Bell (author in 1963 of the *Birds of Cheshire*), Lance Samuels (a *Guardian* 'Country Diarist') and Alan Pownall (then BTO's Regional Representative). In recognition, respectively of name, clothing and physique, Dave, whose humour always enlivened proceedings, christened them 'ding-dong, baggy pants and roly-poly'. When age caught up with this trio, the duo of Dave and his good friend Peter Day (1931-2015) took over the task of traipsing round the Mere to flush out the ducks, which could then be counted from the Observatory. He also contributed to the annual Common Birds Census on the NNR, where some plots have now been surveyed for more than 40 years.

But he was no 'baggy pants', being that rarity, a well turned out birder; he was a trim one too. Dave served as a Voluntary Warden of the NNR from 1979 and he became a passionate mainstay of the Reserve, succeeding in being protective but inclusive too. Many years on, when volunteers were wanted for practical management work on the Reserve, he enrolled. Although within touching distance of 80, he applied himself enthusiastically to the task of the week. He also undertook maintenance work at the Observatory and added comfort to the new Bittern Hide by carpeting the seating!

Much though he loved Rostherne, Dave was always up for a trip elsewhere. He and Peter went many times to north Norfolk, staying in the holiday, and later retirement home, of Ron Sellwood (another Rostherne regular). There was the annual pilgrimage to Minsmere too, and Leighton Moss was visited when he and Joan were on their regular holidays at Carnforth. He joined coach trips as well, notably with the Hale Ornithological Society (sadly now no more) and Stockport RSPB Group.

Latterly, as a Rostherne regular of long standing, Dave was called on to write tributes in the annual Rostherne Bird Report to others of his vintage who had pre-deceased him, notably Ron Sellwood and Ken Parker. Ken was another roly-poly individual, and Dave's tribute included an account of his rescue some years earlier from a quagmire on the Reserve; he had to be dug out, leaving one of his wellies behind. It was characteristic of Dave that he added a further humorous detail: we learnt that Ken's ordeal had been eased by the delivery from the Warden's house of a piece of toast.

Dave's amused take on life will be much missed, as will his friendly presence in the Observatory, his guiding of visiting parties and his enthusiastic participation in the practical group. Dave's wife Joan and their daughters Fiona and Jenny arranged a get-together in early February to celebrate Dave's life. It was held in Sale where Dave had lived there throughout his life and where he played his football, cricket and snooker. A number of Rostherne regulars attended, joining other friends and family. A particularly nice touch was the distribution of beautifully presented memorial sachets of bird seed put together by Dave's much-loved granddaughter, Lorena. We mourn his passing but remember with gratitude and pleasure the contributions he made, his friendship and his humour.



**Tom Wall, former Warden of Rostherne Mere**

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## WATER OUZEL

(Dipper - *Cinclus cinclus gularis*)

*For Robert Gillmor*

I was already happy, so  
it seemed too much that also then,  
at dusk, I saw the stocky bird,  
dark as the boulder where it bobbed.  
Just seen above the cold, grey stream  
of noisy water, there it dipped  
and dunked and preened and stretched - and stayed.

I dared not move, propped as I was  
against the hard bridge-parapet:  
it had to go before I could.  
We took each other for granted, bird  
and I, as it sang in rippled notes;  
then, turning to out-brave the gloom,  
shone up its white chest-badger of hope - and flew.

**Peter Walton, River Bollin, Wilmslow**

# Ringling News

Ringling plays an important part in developing our knowledge of birds. In this new feature 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).

Future contributions from other groups and/or individuals will be welcomed; contact Bob Anderson 01270 623044 or email [Robert@andersons.myzen.co.uk](mailto:Robert@andersons.myzen.co.uk).

## **HILBRE BIRD OBSERVATORY (HIBO)**

### **Ringling October 2018 to early February 2019**

Only 54 new birds were ringled on Hilbre from the start of October 2018 to the early part of February 2019. However, one of them was a Great Spotted Woodpecker, only the second ever ringled on the island, and it was followed by several more 'great-spot' sightings later in October, no more were caught though. This might just be a random effect or it might indicate a good UK breeding season in 2018 for this species of woodpecker; a species which has become almost annual on the islands in recent years.

The summer of 2018 was wonderful not just in the UK but all round Europe. We would expect that a good summer like this would lead to good breeding results for European birds. However, our long-term monitoring of Goldcrest numbers only recorded seven birds ringled during their autumn migration in 2018. We would hope to trap 40 to 80 birds under normal circumstances. Other local ringlers have commented on the small number of Goldcrests in 2018 and following some work done by David Norman after the catastrophic autumn of 2009, where we caught no Goldcrests at all, we would suggest that, despite the wonderful summer, something has gone wrong with their breeding in Scandinavia in 2018.

Colour-ring sightings are very important at this time of year and we continue to report lots of colour-ringed Brent Geese to the Irish Brent Goose Research Group co-ordinating their monitoring. The wintering population of Brent Geese on Hilbre is in excess of 200 birds currently. Our own colour ringling continues to provide results. One of our Turnstones, which was ringled in the winter of 2008/09, has been seen round the island regularly this winter. One of our members found another colour-ringed Turnstone from the winter of 2007/08 on the north Wirral coast and the Scan ringling Group caught one of our Redshank that was ringled in the winter of 2007/08.

We urge birders to report all colour-ring sightings to the BTO via their web page [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org) - just click the 'report a ringled bird' button. Waders, geese and swans are often colour ringled but small birds are colour ringled as well, for example a national colour-ringling project, which involves some local ringlers, on UK wintering Blackcaps is underway and any colour-ring sightings of Blackcaps would be welcomed.

In winter, as well as new birds, we trap birds that have already been ringled by us in previous years. This re-trapping activity has enabled us to identify three classes of resident birds on Hilbre: winter residents; breeding birds; and permanent residents. From re-trap results, we can say that Song Thrushes and some Blackbirds are winter residents; Linnets, Meadow Pipits and Swallows are breeding birds that do not stay for the winter; and Wrens, Robins and Dunnocks have some birds in their populations that are permanent residents. We have made some significant steps forward regarding the Rock Pipits that are found on Hilbre and the times when the British race and the Scandinavian race are to be found. We have a small amount of data that shows that Rock Pipits that breed on Hilbre have some elements of their population as permanent residents on the island, like Wrens or Dunnocks, rather than just being summer residents, like Meadow Pipits. We continue to try to get more data on these birds but, through their residence, they appear to have learned to avoid our potter traps, which makes our task more difficult. Nothing is ever straightforward but we will keep trying.

**John Elliott, on behalf of the Hilbre Bird Observatory**

## CHESHIRE SWAN STUDY GROUP

Since my last report in October, the Swan Study Group has ringed a total of 81 swans including 21 adults, 1 second-year, 1 third-year, and 58 cygnets. We also ringed 1 juvenile Whooper Swan.

### **The maximum counts of flocks of Mute Swans since my last report are as follows:**

Acre Dell Pools, nr Congleton: 76 on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct; 73 on 25<sup>th</sup> Nov; 83 on 18<sup>th</sup> Dec; 86 on 13<sup>th</sup> Jan.  
Cholmondeley Estates: 6 on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct; 10 on 10<sup>th</sup> Dec; 8 on 13<sup>th</sup> Jan.

Comber Mere, nr Whitchurch: 83 on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct; 61 on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov; 51 on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec; 9 on 28<sup>th</sup> Jan.

Doddington Mere, nr Nantwich: 51 on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct; 56 on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov; 54 on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec; 58 on 15<sup>th</sup> Jan.

Trent and Mersey Canal, Middlewich: 31 on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct; 35 on 11<sup>th</sup> Jan.

Woolston Eyes, nr Warrington: 12 on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct; 14 on 10<sup>th</sup> Nov; 15 on 8<sup>th</sup> Dec; 27 on 19<sup>th</sup> Jan.

The *Cheshire Swan Study Group Report* for 2018 is should be available to view in March on our website: <http://cheshireswanstudygroup.wordpress.com>

**Sightings** of all swans, geese and Mallards should be sent to David Cookson at [Cheshireswans@aol.com](mailto:Cheshireswans@aol.com) giving details of place (6-fig map ref), colour/character combination of ring and, if with other birds, total number present in flock. All sightings will receive a printout of the history for the relevant bird(s). Please note that if you need any more information visit our blog/website: <http://cheshireswanstudygroup.wordpress.com>

**David Cookson, Group Leader, 70 Rope Lane, Rope, Crewe, CW2 6RD**  
Tel: 01270 567526. Email: [cheshireswans@gmail.com](mailto:cheshireswans@gmail.com)

## MID-CHESHIRE BARN OWL GROUP

I'm tempted to say that the start of any year is always relatively quiet, while we wait to see what Mother Nature throws at us, and how that affects the forthcoming breeding activities of our Barn Owls. But this time of year is actually still a busy one for us. We have to check the many boxes we manage to see how they've coped over winter, and to repair, re-erect or replace any which have suffered.

However, it does give us the opportunity to look back over 2018 and assess our successes (and failures).

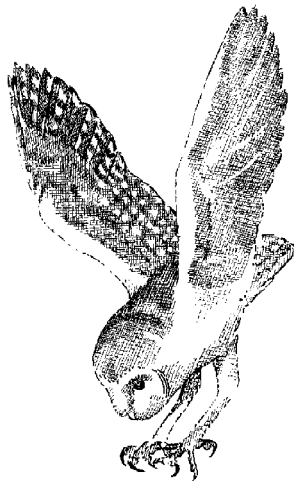
In fact, 2018 was very good for Barn Owls in Cheshire overall, and identical in terms of breeding numbers to 2017 (195 recorded successful breeding pairs and 488 recorded chicks). The success is all the more surprising given the weather extremes of 2018 - the 'Beast from the East' and the extremely hot summer weather. I know we lost birds in both of these periods. So 2018 could have been even better but for these conditions.

As for 2019? Who knows? I've given up trying to make predictions. But one thing is fairly certain, we are due a poor breeding year soon. The voles, shrews, etc - the main prey of the Barn Owl - have their own breeding cycle, and have a 'low' breeding year every 4-5 years. This is reflected in an equally poor breeding year for the Barn Owl (less food available).

In Cheshire we've been at a relatively high breeding level for a few years - between 2014 and 2018 we've regularly seen well over 100 breeding pairs. The last poor year being 2013 when we only had 25 recorded breeding pairs. What will 2019 bring?

To repeat our usual concerns and plea - if you have seen any Barn Owls recently, please could you let us know (either direct or by our sighting report on the website [www.cheshirebarnowls.co.uk](http://www.cheshirebarnowls.co.uk)); as you will appreciate it is important that we know where the birds are regularly seen.

**John Mycock, Chairman Tel: 07970 235437 Email: [cheshirebarnowls@gmail.com](mailto:cheshirebarnowls@gmail.com)**

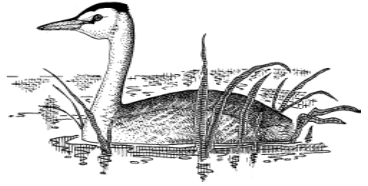


# One Man's Birding

## .....WITH AGE AND INFIRMITY

I think it is in a Frederick Forsyth novel that a young German, ending his national service, is asked what he would like to be in civilian life. He replies "A rich layabout."

I guess many of us would agree with that, even though we know we will never achieve this happy state. Why should I recall it on reading Tony Broome's guest editorial in the last issue of *Bird News*? I'm not suggesting for a moment that Tony is either rich or a layabout; it is just that I was a bit amused by his envy, as somebody who still has to work for his living, of those of us who are retired. I know what he means, and how he feels - I've been there myself. There is, though, a downside to this retirement business.



The way things work, retirement comes relatively late in life - and the longer we live, the more age and infirmity begin to take their toll. Lately, I have become acutely aware of this. I'm not going to catalogue my ailments - that would not only be boring but would produce justified snorts of derision from those worse off than me. Suffice it to say that over the past two years, since the day I returned from a walk in Wales and boasted that I wasn't doing too badly for my age, the medics have discovered problems which increasingly restrict my mobility. And, of course, this has had an impact upon my birding.

I suppose I have always been a rather mobile birder. I don't mean that I never sit down to watch quietly, or that I can't appreciate the comfort of a (thinly-populated) hide. Rather, I have enjoyed my birding when I have been fairly active. Having to trek across the sandur to reach petrel and Bonxie colonies in Iceland made the experience of visiting them more exciting and satisfying. Locally, one of the best periods of my birding career was Atlasing: setting out with boots and an OS map to plot a route through a tetrad which was new to me, gingerly crossing dodgy plank bridges or crazy stiles in the hope of something new at the end of the day.

Now, I have to reluctantly accept that some familiar places are beyond me (and that the list will lengthen as the months pass). Where I used to walk my dogs freely over the Bickerton and Peckforton hills, I now see the terrain as a major challenge. While friends rebuilt the NNHS hide at Bar Mere, I knew I could not access the site to help.

There is the nostalgia factor, too. We had some excellent family holidays, as well as birding visits, on Holy Island. Yet, when my son and daughter planned a trip there I couldn't help a feeling of regret: it may be a flat island, but it won't be the same if I can no longer walk the lonnens out to Emmanuel Head. Or, last summer, standing by the Forth at North Berwick I could see Craighleith close at hand, the Bass covered with Gannets, the Isle of May visible near the Fife shore. All can be reached by boat - but I know I will never walk over them again. It is all pure AE Housman: "the happy highways where I went but cannot come again".

Housman, of course, can make everybody miserable - and I don't think that is expected of my regular contribution. Rather, look at the positives; I can still drive, and have friends and family who will help out. Looking back over 2018, the year in which all the problems really kicked in, I can see that there were some excellent times. I watched part of the great Hawfinch irruption from the comfort of somebody's sitting room, and in the course of a low-level walk on the edge of the Pentlands discovered young Dippers exploring their burn. On a lovely summer evening I sat with binoculars and beer on the terrace of a Welsh hotel, trying in vain to actually see the Cuckoo which was belting out his call from the hillside above. Revisiting the Solway for the first time for some years I enjoyed the sight of thousands of Barnacle Geese; discovering a Great White Egret, new to the NNHS recording area, at Deer Park Mere was an unexpected surprise.

Then there was a short time spent, avoiding the shopping, during a Christmas visit to the family in Devon, watching a low-water creek. Scattered pairs of Shelduck paddled around; a Curlew took slow and stately strides as it fed across the mud, in contrast to the brisk, military pace of a passing Redshank. A pair of Mergansers, the drake's plumage quite ostentatious, swam and

dived their way up the remaining channel; as they passed, the amorphous brown blob on the margin, which I had thought might or might not have been a bird, unfolded and revealed itself as a Little Grebe, which followed them upstream. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a movement of something grey - a graceful Greenshank, emerging from one of the runnels to feed in front of me. Barely half an hour, about half a dozen species, nothing rare - but a wholly enjoyable experience. Yes, I enjoy just watching birds. I've been doing it for seventy-odd years, and I suppose I will go on doing it as long as I am able.

**Bob Anderson**

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# 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.

## **CONSERVATION NEWS FROM STEVE TURNER**

I hope you all had a good Christmas and as long as you had not been on the naughty list Santa delivered what you had asked for. We have had a busy winter here in Weaverham, table and feeders very busy with massive flocks of House Sparrows and plenty of Blackbirds, Great Tits, Blue Tits and Coal Tits have been very active. Can anyone explain why two doors down the tits eat from feeders full of peanuts every day and in my garden they won't touch them, they eat everything else. We have had large numbers of Starlings, about one in particular has turned up. The bird has black wing coverts and tail, and the rest is pure white, I have the camera ready and if it comes I will attempt to get a photo of it.

Two success stories:

Last year acting on information received, Norfolk Police arrested a male from the Norwich area and he was found in possession of nine Linnet's eggs. The search of his home after arrest revealed a collection of eggs all in trays and catalogued numbering 5,000+ eggs that were revealed to have come from all species including Marsh Harriers, Nightjars, Turtle Doves and Little Ringed Plovers. In court he was sentenced to 18 weeks in prison and placed on a behavioural order for 10 years. The collection of eggs will be placed in the hands of the British Museum.

In Kent a male was seen folding up a net, and as a result of his description and his car registration number a police visit to his house revealed five wild-caught Goldfinches, a Greenfinch and a Bullfinch along with mist nets, cage traps and a funnel net. In court he was sentenced to a community order and a fine of £300.

As a bonus a third male, also from Kent, had been found with wild-caught birds in his shed. This male had used bird lime to coat branches in his garden. When the birds became trapped he released them and placed them in cages. In court he received a 28-day curfew of 7pm to 7am and had to pay £300 in costs.

I realise you are all thinking what is he going on about. Two of these incidents were reported to the Police by people out and about who came to the conclusion the two males, albeit counties apart, were up to no good and in these instances they were right. In the first case in Norfolk the male was 65 years of age and in the second case in Kent the male was 50 years of age. In the third case in Kent the information was received from the RSPB. The male was a 39-year-old who had placed a page on Facebook showing his birds in cages. This proves that people of all ages are flouting the law. Whilst the sentences do not fit the crimes, we must be thankful that the cases got past the Crown Prosecution Service and into court in the first place; besides they won't take them in Australia any more.

As a postscript the Norfolk egg collection numbered 5,200 eggs in total and a detailed list of where all the eggs were obtained from.

Please keep your eyes open whilst you are out and about. We are the eyes and ears of the Police Force, if you think something doesn't look right it most probably isn't. If you do not pass on this information it is intelligence that the Police will miss that could be the missing link required to build a case.

Hope you all have a good spring, and let's hope this weather continues to improve.

**Steve Turner, Conservation Officer, 11 Pinfold Way, Weaverham, Northwich, CW8 3NL**  
Tel: 01606 853796 Email: [conservation@cawos.org](mailto:conservation@cawos.org)

## VALE ROYAL AREA

### Land off Cookes Lane (lime beds 4 and 5), Northwich (Application 18/04735/FUL)

An application to drain the lime beds 4 and 5 above Griffiths Road, Northwich, and use the materials as raw materials for manufacturing building materials. After the materials have been removed it is planned that the land will be restored to a condition yet to be decided as this will depend on local consultation, but agricultural land or nature reserve has been muted. Ecological surveys have been ongoing since spring 2018, winter bird surveys are currently being undertaken.

It is anticipated that some displacement and loss of habitat will occur for breeding and wintering birds. A number of options designed to mitigate these impacts are being considered, one option being pursued is the provision of funds to undertake works on Haydn Pool, with the objective to remove the scrub and ruderal vegetation to open it up for waterfowl.

I will update you regularly with the progress of this in future editions of *Bird News*.

**Roy Leigh, Vale Royal Area Representative**

## CONSERVATION REPRESENTATIVES

<b>Chester</b>	Neil Friswell, 8 Oaklands Crescent, Tattenhall, Cheshire, CH3 9QT. Tel: 01829 770463 Email: <a href="mailto:neil.friswell@btinternet.com">neil.friswell@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Congleton</b>	<b>Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role</b>
<b>Crewe &amp; Nantwich</b>	Colin Lythgoe, 11 Waterloo Road, Haslington, Crewe, CW1 5TF. Tel: 01270 582642 Email: <a href="mailto:colin.lythgoe@uwclub.net">colin.lythgoe@uwclub.net</a>
<b>Halton</b>	Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2SG. Tel: 01925 726986 Email: <a href="mailto:tonyparker@cawos.org">tonyparker@cawos.org</a>
<b>Macclesfield</b>	<b>Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role</b>
<b>Vale Royal</b>	Roy Leigh, 8 Hall Drive, Marston, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 6DT Tel: 01606 892032 Email: <a href="mailto:roysleigh@aol.com">roysleigh@aol.com</a>
<b>Warrington</b>	Brian Martin, 45 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2PF. Tel: 01925 264251 Email: <a href="mailto:brianmartin1940@hotmail.com">brianmartin1940@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Wirral</b>	Richard Smith, March Wall, King's Drive North, Caldley, Wirral, CH48 1LL. Tel: 0151 625 2320 Email: <a href="mailto:richard@deestuary.co.uk">richard@deestuary.co.uk</a>

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## SWIFT CONSERVATION IN CHESTER

Swifts have frequently been in the news in recent years, following a steady stream of alarming statistics about their breeding status across the UK. BBS data show a continuous decline since the mid-nineties with 2017 numbers more than 55% down on 1994. In 2016 and 2017, Chester RSPB Group members surveyed breeding Swifts in Chester with the help of partners from the CWAC Environment Team, Chester Zoo Wildlife Connections and Record, and found a very similar rate of decline in numbers. The benchmark we used to compare with was the *Survey of Summering Swifts in Cheshire and Wirral and their Conservation Status* by Brian Martin (1998), who provided valuable help to us during the survey's planning.

Spurred on by the survey results, we started to promote a Swift box scheme last year, targeting areas of Chester where we had found breeding colonies, to give the Swifts a better chance of finding and adopting the new boxes. We networked with some local community groups and did leaflet drops to raise awareness for our campaign. By the end of 2018, we had distributed 36 boxes, most of which were fitted by our handyman Andrew Smith. The main areas of Chester covered so far are Garden Quarter, Handbridge and Hoole, and a few boxes have been fitted in Great Sutton and Whitby, where we found some healthy colonies in summer 2018.

We are very grateful to The Naturesave Trust, who provided funding for most of the boxes, and to CWAC and Handbridge Community Association, who organised funding for the boxes we installed there. The box we have chosen to install is the Stimpson Model 30s, a proven design which is made of plywood with a uPVC roof for protection against sun and rain.

We are applying for more grant funding to continue our work in 2019, so that we can roll out the scheme to additional city wards such as Upton and Newton. If you live in or around Chester, please let us know if you or someone you know would be interested in having a Swift box installed on your home. If you're based elsewhere in Cheshire, we will still try to help you to select appropriate boxes and give advice on installation.

Just email the group's website at [RSPBchester@googlegroups.com](mailto:RSPBchester@googlegroups.com)

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## WOOLSTON EYES CONSERVATION GROUP

Excerpts from WECG *Newsletter* January 2019.

### **New Assistant Warden**

Over the past few years the permit fees and support from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme have allowed us to pay the RSPB in order to employ an Assistant Warden. Many of you will have met Ashley Radford, our Warden for the past two years. Ashley worked extremely hard during his time with us and had a particular talent for recruiting volunteers, whom he supervised in many important management tasks, including constructing a number of breeding rafts on No.3 bed and the shingle island in front of the Morgan Hide. WECG is very grateful for the commitment shown by all the volunteers. Ashley has moved to a new post in North Yorkshire and his enthusiasm will be missed. We are pleased to have appointed a new Assistant Warden, Daniel Gornall, who began working for us just before Christmas. We are sure you will have an opportunity to meet him on the Reserve and if you have any questions or would like to help as a volunteer Daniel can be contacted on 07906 024 354 or at [gornalldaniel@gmail.com](mailto:gornalldaniel@gmail.com).

### **Sightings on the Eyes in 2018**

The Black-necked Grebes had another successful breeding season, with 10 pairs fledging up to 17 young, making Woolston and a site in Yorkshire, the two main breeding sites in the UK. Wildfowl had a mixed year, with good numbers of Gadwall and Shoveler. Wintering Pochard continue their worrying decline, but many pairs did breed, however. There were more sightings than usual of Garganey on spring passage. More Black-headed Gulls returned to breed than in recent years, but there was an unexplained desertion of the gullery when adults were still on nests and consequently only a few young fledged. Birds of prey never disappoint at Woolston, and there were many sightings of Marsh Harrier, Peregrine, Sparrowhawk, Hobby, and of course Buzzard. As for waders, more Avocets were seen than usual and Black-tailed Godwits were present until quite late in the year. Willow Tits continue to thrive, with many nests located and over 40 ringed, the majority juveniles. Cetti's Warblers continue to expand their population at the Eyes and a record 28 were ringed. Other notable ringing totals were an outstanding 1002 Blackcaps, 631 Reed Warblers, 837 Greenfinches and a record 247 Bramblings, and it was also a record year for catches of Garden Warblers. Bramblings are currently to be found below the Morgan Hide feeders. Finally, on New Year's Day, a Starling roost estimated at 10,000 birds was found on No.3 bed. A few days later it had doubled in size, with spectacular murmurations. It was definitely worth a visit!

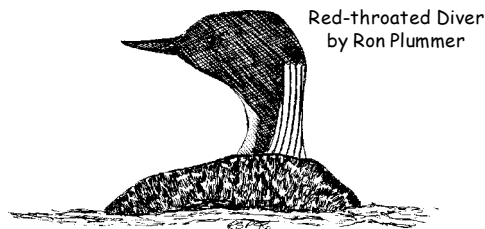
**Brian Martin**

# 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.

## MOON BIRDS?

The North American term 'loons' for the family of birds that we in Britain know as 'divers' is usually explained by this being derived from their call, usually described as "weird", "wild", "like hysterical laughter", etc. 'Loon' in human terms is an alternative usage to 'lunatic', with the connotations of craziness (e.g. howling at Luna, the Moon) and clumsiness. However, I have recently read of a completely different explanation. Apparently the Lapp word 'lumme' means lame, in Norwegian, Danish and Swedish 'lom', and this is applied to divers. All diver species do, of course, struggle on land as they can't walk, only shuffle. At some time in the past this usage was translated into 'loon' when Europeans settled in North America and encountered divers in Canada and the northern part of the USA.



Red-throated Diver  
by Ron Plummer

**Bob Groom**

## INTERESTING BIRD BEHAVIOUR AT TATTON PARK

We have had breeding Ravens at Tatton Park for many years on the eastern side of our boundary; two summers ago a second pair of Ravens set up home on the western edge of the park and successfully raised young. I noted that while there were young in the nest, one of the adult birds was regularly seen heading off in a westerly direction towards Manchester Road. After speaking to one of the staff at the Gauntlet Bird of Prey Centre, which is situated on Manchester Road, I found out why..... their pet Raven called Scooby was seen to cache the food given to it by the staff. The Tatton Raven would make the journey from the park to Scooby's cage where Scooby would pass the food through the cage mesh to the Tatton bird to take back to its young. This behaviour was witnessed by staff on numerous occasions.

A more recent note of interest occurred on the lagoon of Tatton Mere. This is the northern most tip of the mere where the outflow is and is a shallow area of water linked to the main mere by a small channel. This is the area that the adult carp go to spawn. A group of about 30 Cormorants was seen regularly in the lagoon area and always seemed to be swimming in a line. Upon closer inspection I discovered hundreds of small carp in this area, which had been corralled into this corner among the reeds by the Cormorants. Some had even beached themselves and died in a desperate attempt to escape the Cormorants. The Cormorants could be seen working together, holding a line and corralling the fish, trapping them in the corner. They were also joined by a group of Grey Herons which stood by in the margins only too happy to reap an easy meal. I am aware that this behaviour has been noted before but unusual to see nonetheless.

**Darren Morris (Park Ranger, Tatton Park)**

## EXODUS OF RAVENS

*Published on the Frodsham Marsh Bird Blog 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019*

I left work after 4pm with a renewed effort to witness the exodus of Ravens which leave their feeding grounds to spend the night in north-east Wales. Soon after my arrival the first bird of the watch croned its way overhead. With my elevated position it was possible to see birds from a 360 degree angle. I was hoping to beat my previous count from earlier in the month, but I wasn't expecting to give it a sound thrashing with my last Raven flying from south on its lonesome at 18.15pm no.304!

**Bill Morton** <https://frodshammarshbirdblog.wordpress.com>

# Projects and Surveys

## COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo* SURVEY 2019

I am sure that all readers will agree to a feeling of amazement watching the wheeling and cartwheeling of Buzzards displaying on a clear early spring morning. They are increasing in numbers and are becoming common even over the towns and suburban areas of the county!

It's been 20 years since the original C&W RSG carried out a survey on the breeding population and distribution of Common Buzzards in Cheshire and Wirral.

Since then, of course, the *Breeding Bird Atlas* has shown the amazing population and distribution increase, which, as we expect has increased significantly since given the number of sightings noted in the *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report*.

It is planned to run a Common Buzzard survey this spring, which entails recording soaring birds for a set time within a tetrad. The aim of the survey will be to gain reliable population levels and distribution range across the county; the methodology we are using will rely on a tried and tested statistical analysis.

It is hoped that we can present the results in the *Bird Report* and *Bird News* in the future. The 1999 survey has given us a great basis for comparison, so it will be interesting!

The survey is not onerous, just a couple of one-hour surveys in spring recording soaring and displaying Common Buzzards. If you wish to participate, please contact me (see below) for survey instructions and recording forms. Happy recording.

**Roy Leigh, Chairman Cheshire and Wirral Raptor Study Group**  
Email: [RoySLeigh@aol.com](mailto:RoySLeigh@aol.com)

## SEABIRDS COUNT

### - SO LET'S COUNT CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL'S SEABIRDS!

In international terms, Britain's most important birds are our breeding seabirds. Most of these are in Scotland and its islands, and in Cheshire and Wirral we don't, of course, have any of the cliff-nesting species such as Fulmars, Gannets or auks, but the county does have Cormorants, gulls and Common Terns.

To monitor the UK's breeding seabird numbers, national surveys have been organised for the last fifty years at roughly 15-year intervals: Operation Seafarer (1969-70); Seabird Colony Register (1985-88); and Seabird 2000 (1998-2002). Each census takes several years to complete and 2019 is the final year of the latest survey, named Seabirds Count (2015-19) <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7413>.

For most of our seabirds, reasonable counts have already been submitted to the CAWOS database in the years 2015-17, but some known colonies have been missed, even at well-watched sites. So if you have a few minutes to spare, please count or estimate the number of 'Apparently Occupied Nests' (AON) of any of these species this year. The best dates to count Cormorant nests are mid-April to mid-May, and for gulls and terns are mid-May to early-June. Most of the nests should be visible from a distance and easy to census without disturbing the birds. It can be difficult to get good counts of rooftop-nesting big gulls, however, some can be seen from adjacent buildings, or the population can be estimated from the number of adults circulating above the site. Estimates are better than nothing!

Please contact me if you have any queries, and send me your 2019 records as soon as possible after completion of your counts. The seabirds of Cheshire and Wirral were not included in the Seabird 2000 census. We should make sure that their true status in our county is properly recorded so please take a few minutes to join in with this simple survey.

**David Norman, [davidnorman@cawos.org](mailto:davidnorman@cawos.org)**



# CAWOS News

Council has met twice since the last edition of *Bird News* in November 2018 and January 2019. With regard to new members I must apologise that I forgot to welcome M. Warner, K. Manning and B. Jordan who joined us last year. Can I also welcome Mr A. Done, Mr and Mrs J. Edwards, Ms H. Chesters and Ms M. Lumpkin. Membership numbers currently stand at 322 which include nearly 50 members not paid up this year. These later members are about to receive a final reminder.

Regarding the Budget for 2018, the end of year accounts have been completed and our auditor Norman Scott has signed them off. Norman will be standing down as our auditor having done our accounts for the past 30 years. We are extremely grateful for his support and wish him well in the future. In 2018 we made a small loss of £62 for the year. A number of different factors impacted on last year's budget: the sale of the 2015 *Bird Reports* was weak with just 35 copies sold, to counteract this database searches came in over budget, plus some unexpected advertising income. Attendance at indoor meetings dropped significantly in 2017 and 2018 compared to earlier years and the cost of speakers increased. Income from membership was also down. Council is recommending at the Annual General Meeting that subscriptions should be increased from £12 to £15 per annum.

You should have all received the 2016 *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report* by now and we hope you are pleased with it. A big thank you goes to Andy Livermore who took on the role of Systematic Editor and found himself sorting out the photographs and collating the whole report with the help of Hugh Pulsford and advice from Sheila Blamire. This was more than Andy signed up to do and for the 2017 *Bird Report* Council wants somebody to take on the role of organising the photographs and another for the more administrative roles. If any member has time and is prepared to help please contact Andy ([andy Livermore@cawos.org](mailto:andy Livermore@cawos.org)). Plans are already under way to start on the 2017 *Bird Report* as we are trying to catch up after a few years when nobody volunteered to take on the role of Systematic Editor.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) has been agreed for the Society and a privacy policy document prepared. Further information, is available on the website.

For many years Sheila and Geoff Blamire have handled the database for the Society to enable the *Bird Reports* to be prepared, for members to make inquiries and for ecological information to support planning applications. As many will know Sheila stepped down from Technical Editor of the *Bird Report* two years ago and Geoff has given us plenty of notice that they will be stopping handling the database in 2020. Council has had several discussions as to a way forward and the need to move another data handling system. Some other counties are using BirdTrack to keep their records and prepare their *Bird Report* and Council is currently planning to learn from their experience to help make a decision.

Several bird surveys are ongoing or in preparation for the coming breeding season. Members have been contributing to the Tawny Owl survey organised by the British Trust for Ornithology. The Cheshire Raptor Group are planning a survey of Buzzards in the county in 2019/20, and information is available in this issue of *Bird News* or contact Roy Leigh ([royleigh@cawos.org](mailto:royleigh@cawos.org)). A Willow Tit survey is also planned for this spring and several members have agreed to cover areas, but there are still some areas that need coverage, so if you are willing to join in please contact Hugh Pulsford ([hughpulsford@cawos.org](mailto:hughpulsford@cawos.org)).

Regarding conservation, members have been in contact with the Society regarding work being conducted at Frodsham Marshes. The north-west corner of No.6 tank, signs of heavy construction work with a large expanse of phragmites having been scraped off the ground, right on the edge of where the harriers roost. David Norman, who is the CAWOS representative on the Habitat Creation Management Committee for Frodsham Marshes, has been in contact with Peel. David received the following reply "Peel Environmental, in conjunction with Peel Ports, have been undertaking site investigation works on number 6 bed, with regards to assessing the classification of materials present. These works are part of the ongoing operational activities on number 6 bed and the information we gain from this exercise will be used to determine how the operational capacity of the dredging ground can be preserved for future deposits of dredging materials. The

works were programmed during the winter months to prevent ecological disturbance and an ecologist was employed during the excavation period”.

**Ted Lock, Secretary**

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## **CAWOS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1st MARCH 2019**

### **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT FOR 2018-19**

Council met six times during the 12 months since the last AGM, although we were not quorate (minimum six attendees) for the April 2018 meeting. Topics of the meetings included: the habitat management at Frodsham Marsh; progress with the Bird Report for 2016 (now published); the creation of a Privacy Policy with respect to the General Data Protection Regulations that came into force at the end of May 2018; and the system to be used in the future for holding bird records. These and other business are more than adequately reported by Ted Lock in the CAWOS News section of *Bird News* and in the Secretary’s report to the AGM.

Richard Sturman, the Speaker Organiser, has continued to find good speakers. The talks have been about both foreign countries and UK birds: October - Mark Sisson, “White and Wild - Nature in Colder Climates”, Mark acknowledged that he had broken many of the standard rules of photography in his compositions, but the results were stunning and will be remembered for a long time to come; November - Jim Almond, “Scilly Pelagic Magic”, this was an opportunity to see birds at sea without the discomfort of getting seasick in the process; December - Keith Offord, “Costa Rica, Paradise of the Neotropics”, quite a few of the attendees had experience of Costa Rica and its birds, so the talk was a good reminder of what they had seen, and a teaser for what they had missed; January - Paul Hobson, “Birds of Scotland”, Paul, winner of several awards for his photographic work, covered both the mainland and many of the significant islands for birds less familiar to us in Cheshire; February - Mike Leach, “A Funny Way to Make a Living, Part 2”, this covered more than just a few birds, with Mike telling us about the techniques of wildlife filming and how it was becoming more difficult to find something new to attract audiences to watch programmes; March - concluding the programme at the AGM, Conor Jameson on “The Search for the Goshawk”.

Attendance varied from a minimum of 20 at one meeting to a maximum of more than 40. The concern is the declining level of attendance compared with previous years, from an average turnout in the 40s only four years ago to the current average in the 20s. The programme of events has become loss-making, but the view is that it should continue as it meets one of the Society’s objectives, the education of members of the public.

The *Bird Report* for 2016 was distributed in February 2019. The new Systematic List Editor, Andy Livermore, did a sterling job and has generated a useful breakdown of the tasks involved that will help with the production of future reports. Work on the report for 2017 has started. The plan is to continue to catch up on the backlog, with the report for 2017 to be out before the end of 2019; and finally, to revert to the traditional schedule with the report for 2018 to appear shortly after that.

From an organisation perspective, we face the same challenges for the future as last year. We need to recruit a number of new members to Council, who can take over the major roles at some date in due course. Meanwhile, we are blessed with the volunteers that we have to run the Society’s affairs. Thanks to all Council and subcommittee members for their work during the year, with special acknowledgements to Andrew Livermore for the effort put in to produce his first *Bird Report*.

**David Steventon, Chairman**

### **SECRETARY REPORT FOR 2018-19**

The membership numbers seem to be holding up reasonably well standing at 322 with about 50 members still not paid as yet. Can I reinforce the views of our Membership Secretary, Phil Hampson, to encourage members to pay by standing order (SO), as this is most economical with regard to time and cost of postage. I am very pleased to report that currently 80% of the members now pay by SO, up from 73% this time last year. Really great that we have had such a positive response. So can I ask the remaining 20% to consider paying by SO next year. Can

I also remind members that if they change their email address please let the Membership Secretary know (memsec@cawos.org). I would like to thank Phil for all his work during the year and for continuing as Membership Secretary at a time when we have been unable to find a replacement. The primary function of CAWOS is to publish the *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report* and we are grateful to members and non-members who send in their records. Members also continue to conduct Common Bird Censuses and WeBS counts and are involved either as individuals, or as members of the two ringing groups in the county. I am delighted to tell you that a new contract between Natural England and CAWOS for managing the Boyd Observatory at Rostherne Mere has just been signed and will last for three years. I would like to thank John Holland and his management team at Rostherne for the excellent recording they have done this past year. As some of you may know the price of permits to visit Rostherne has gone up this year. They are now available electronically by contacting the new Membership Secretary Sheelagh Halsey (rostherne\_permit@btinternet.com). Sadly, as you will read in the March issue of *Bird News*, Dave Clarke, the former Rostherne Permit Secretary, recently died after many years of service.

During the last year Council has grappled with the new legislation which came into effect on May 25th 2018 called General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We have produced a data privacy policy which tells you what to expect when CAWOS collects your personal information. This is available on the CAWOS website. The way that CAWOS uses and protects personal data is based on the Legitimate Interests provision of GDPR. CAWOS is committed to protecting your privacy and ensuring the security of your personal data.

Council is very grateful to David Norman, our representative on the Habitat Creation Management Committee at Frodsham Marshes, who has kept Council abreast of developments during the year. Peel Energy applied for, and got approval, to have the 2-hour shutdown of the turbines after sunset to be cancelled on days when the temperature is below 11°C, or wind speed above 6m/s, as daily monitoring had shown that bats were not present in those circumstances.

More recently members reported construction work on No 6 bed, with damage to an area of phragmites. David contacted Peel and their response is that Peel Environmental, in conjunction with Peel Ports, have been undertaking investigation works on Number 6 bed, to assess the classification of materials present. The information gained will be used to determine the extent to which the bed can be used to deposit dredging materials in the future. The work was programmed during the winter months to prevent ecological disturbance and an ecologist was employed during the excavation period.

Finally, can I thank Mike Hems who has looked after our website, and to all the Council members and others who have helped me in my role as Secretary.

**Ted Lock, Secretary**

## **TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2018**

I have pleasure in submitting the audited accounts of the Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society for the year ended 31 December 2018. These show a loss for the year of £62 on our General Fund.

Membership subscriptions for the year, which amounted to £4707 (inclusive of Gift Aid), is down slightly on the previous year. Other income streams, such as advertising in *Bird Report* and database searches, continue to be satisfactory overall, though attendances at our indoor meetings continue to be lower on average than in recent years. Despite these fairly poor attendances, expenditure on speakers continues to rise following the need to keep attracting high quality presenters.

Once again we have relied on the income from database searches (£1,785) to bring our results close to break-even levels. This source of income is completely unpredictable, and probably unsustainable, as it depends on the need for environmental impact assessments connected with major infrastructure projects in our county.

The *Bird Report* expenditure of £3,943 is made up of an estimate of the production costs for the 2017 report and the distribution costs of the 2016 report; the cost of producing the 2016 report itself was accounted for last year.

Administration expenditure of £524 includes a non-recurring item of £371 for the acquisition of historic bird records (1970 and prior) from *British Birds* Rarities Committee archive. These

records were in danger of being discarded but now will be archived by CAWOS for future reference. Our balance sheet shows that reserves have increased in 2018 by £54 to a total of £40,786 when interest on our cash balances (£48,288) are taken into account.

Finally, I would like to thank our Auditor, Norman Scott, for his continued support and assistance.

**John Patterson, Treasurer**

# WANTED

## NON-EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBER

For further information, please contact:

David Steventon Email: [chairman@kawos.org](mailto:chairman@kawos.org) Tel: 01625 421936



### APRIL

- 10 NCRSPB World's End, meet on minor road SJ232485 at 7am
- 12 NCRSPB 'A YEAR ON A PATCH - IS IT WORTH IT?' by David Winnard
- 12 SECOS AGM and MEMBERS' EVENING
- 12 MCOS AGM and MEMBERS' EVENING
- 14 KOS Leighton Moss RSPB, meet in Tatton Street car park, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 14 SECOS Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB, ring for details
- 14 MCOS Cannock Chase, meet at Penkridge Bank Rd at 9am, ring Ray Evans 01829 752494
- 15 HPRSPB 'DISCOVERING DOÑANA - most important wetlands in SW Spain' by Paul Kenyon
- 16 MRSPB Danes Moss CWT Reserve, meet at Lyme Green (Homebase car park) at 8am
- 17 CRSPB AGM followed by 'THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WILDLIFE' by David Cummings
- 18 MRSPB Northwich Flashes, meet at Witton Mill car park at 10am
- 25 MRSPB Three Shire Heads, meet at Sparrent layby on A54 (Congleton to Buxton rd) at 9.30am
- 26 KOS AGM followed by 'TEXAS - THE ROADRUNNER STATE' by Sheila Blamire
- 26 WGBG AGM followed by 'IBERIAN BIRDING' by John Gardner
- 26-28 MRSPB Spring in the Elan Valley weekend, ring Graham Palmer 01625 420179 for details
- 27 NCRSPB Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve, meet at the reserve car park at 10am
- 28 WGBG Tophill Low (by coach), ring Steve McGann 01625 533652 for details
- 28 MRSPB Tophill Low (by coach), with WGBG, ring Steve McGann 01625 533652 for details
- 28 HPRSPB Fairburn Ings/St Aidan's, meet in Marple at 8am, contact David Knass 07879 646856
- 28 CRSPB Trough of Bowland, £5pp, pre-booking necessary, ring Ian Cameron 01829 770974
- 30 MRSPB Dawn Chorus at the Brickworks, meet at Jackson's Brickworks car park at 6am
- 30 ADNHS Social event and supper, ring for details

### MAY

- 2 MRSPB Goyt Valley, meet at Errwood Hall car park at 7am
- 2 MRSPB Trentabank Reservoir, meet at Trentabank Visitor Centre car park at 2pm
- 7 SECOS Goyt Valley, ring for details
- 8 NCRSPB Neumann's Flash, meet in lay-by on B5075 at 7pm
- 12 WGBG Ynys-hir (by coach), ring Steve McGann 01625 533652 for details
- 12 MRSPB Ynys-hir (by coach), with WGBG, ring Steve McGann 01625 533652 for details

- 12 SECOS Aber and North Wales, ring for details
- 14 MRSPB AGM followed by MEMBERS' IMAGES and VIDEOS
- 15-19KOS Anniversary long weekend in Barmouth, ring for details
- 15-19NCRSPB Long weekend in Devon, ring for details
- 16-19MCOS Weekend in Norfolk, ring Ray Evans 01829 752494 or Paul Kenyon 01606 77960
- 19 HPRSPB Lake Vyrnwy, meet in Marple at 7am, contact Chris and Vicky Harper 07973 727733
- 20 HPRSPB 'BIRDWATCHING IN YUNNAN, CHINA' by Jeff Blincow
- 22 NCRSPB Etherow Country Park, meet at car park SK6 5HW at 10am
- 29 MRSPB Trentabank Reservoir (2<sup>nd</sup> visit), meet at Trentabank Visitor Centre car park at 2pm
- 31 KOS Goyt Valley evening walk, meet in Tatton Street car park, Knutsford at 6:30pm

## JUNE

- 6 MRSPB Tegg's Nose CP evening walk, meet at Tegg's Nose Reservoir car park at 6.30pm
- 8 NCRSPB Anglesey, meet at South Stack RSPB car park at 10am
- 8 MCOS Bempton Cliffs, meet at reserve car park at 10am, ring Graham Haspey 01829 751949
- 8 KOS Manifold Valley, meet in Lilac Avenue, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 8-9 SECOS East Yorkshire short weekend, ring for details
- 12 NCRSPB Hale Lighthouse, park in Church Rd, Hale L24 4AZ at 7pm
- 28 KOS Mobberley evening walk, meet in Mill Lane, Mobberley at 6:45pm
- 30 HPRSPB Anglesey, meet in Marple at 8am, contact Chris and Vicky Harper 07973 727733

## JULY

- 9 ADNHS Annual barbecue, ring for details
- 10 NCRSPB Woolston Eyes, meet at barrier on Thelwall Lane, Warrington at 7pm
- 13 KOS Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB, meet in Lilac Avenue, Knutsford at 9am
- 26 KOS Rostherne Mere evening walk, meet in NE car park, Rostherne at 6:30pm

## AUGUST

- 18 NCRSPB Hilbre Island, meet on South Parade, West Kirby CH48 0QQ at 10am
- 18 HPRSPB Blacktoft Sands/Alkborough Flats, meet in Marple at 8am, Martin Durrell 0161 486 9216

## SEPTEMBER

- 2 HPRSPB AGM and MEMBERS' EVENING
- 10 NCRSPB North Wirral, meet at Leasowe Lighthouse car park CH46 4TH at 10am
- 10 ADNHS tbc
- 15 HPRSPB Pennington Flash, meet in Marple at 8am, contact Sue Banks 07880 995115
- 15 KOS Hilbre, meet in Tatton Street car park at 8:15am, or West Kirby at 9:15am - tbc

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## AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

- ADNHS Altrincham & Dist. Natural History Soc, mtgs Jubilee Centre, The Firs, Bowdon, Altrincham 7:30pm, contact Jacky Johnson 0161 928 7896
- CADOS Chester & Dist. Ornithological Soc, mtgs Caldley Valley Community Centre 7:30pm, contact Prog. Sec. Nick French 01829 271945
- CAWOS Cheshire and Wirral Orn Soc, mtgs St Vincent's RC Church Hall, Knutsford 7:45pm, contact Richard Sturman 01477 537761
- CRSPB Chester RSPB Group, mtgs Christleton Parish Hall, Christleton, CH3 7AS 7:30pm, contact Norman Sadler 01244 335670
- HPRSPB High Peak RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Senior Citizens' Hall, Marple 7:30pm, contact Tim Walters 0161 449 0299
- KOS Knutsford Ornithological Soc, mtgs Jubilee Hall, Stanley Road, Knutsford 8:00pm, contact Derek Pike 01565 653811
- MCOS Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Soc, mtgs Cuddington & Sandiway Village Hall 7:45pm, contact John Drake 01928 561133
- MRSPB Macclesfield RSPB Members' Group, mtgs United Reformed Church, Macclesfield 7:45pm, contact Daryll Bailey 01625 430311
- NCRSPB North Cheshire RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Appleton Parish Hall, Appleton 7:45pm, contact Olive Giles 01928 733405
- NNHS Nantwich Natural History Soc, occasional meetings throughout the year, contact Sec. Mike Holmes 01270 611577
- SECOS South-East Cheshire Om Soc, mtgs Ettiley Heath Church Community Centre at 7:30pm, contact Sec. Colin Lythgoe 01270 582642
- WGBG Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group, mtgs Wilmslow Guild 7:30pm, contact Brian Dyke 01625 525936

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@kawos.org**

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**Note: the copy date for the next issue is 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

We cannot guarantee that material received after this date will be published in that issue. If you are aware that your material may be delayed, please let the Editor know as soon as possible.



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