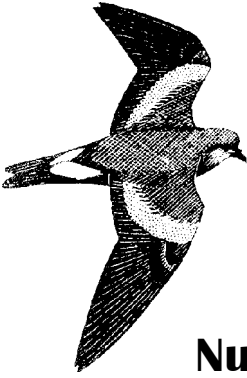


Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society

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BIRD NEWS

Number 111

July 2019



County Rarity: Golden Oriole

Ring Ouzels in Spring

Wirral Wader Festival

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Welland Hs, 207 Hurdfield Road, Macclesfield SK10 2PX Tel: 01625 421936

Email address : chairman@cawos.org

Vice-Chairman : vacant

Secretary : Ted Lock

2 Bourne Street, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5HD Tel: 01625 540466

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Email address : treasurer@cawos.org

Recorder : Hugh Pulsford

6 Buttermere Drive, Great Warford, Cheshire SK9 7WA Tel: 01565 880171

Email address : countyrec@cawos.org

Membership Secretary : Phil Hampson

2 Winsfield Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 6ES Tel: 01625 260059

Email address : memsec@cawos.org

Newsletter Editor : Sheila Blamire

Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, WA16 6QG Tel: 01565 830168

Email address : sheilablamire@cawos.org

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Front cover: Dotterel by Ray Scally

Other illustrations by Tony Broome, Phil Jones, Ray Scally and Ron Plummer

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 19th October 2019

Guest Editorial

These editorials come around so fast. It doesn't seem a minute since my arm was twisted by Sheila last time. The fact that *Bird News* is still going strong after all these years is testament to both the support of CAWOS members and the hard work of the production team. Anyway, from my point of view I enjoy rambling on, so I'll get on with it...

Graham Jones highlights the success of Burton Marsh RSPB Reserve where Cattle Egrets and Great White Egrets have bred and Spoonbills almost so... plus two pairs of Bearded Tits and rarities like a White-winged Black Tern and White Stork. What a place! Marsh Harriers have also bred nearby. Hot off the press was a Terek Sandpiper that turned up one night in July and left the following morning. Great bird.

The long-awaited book *Rostherne Mere* is now available in two volumes. I grew up birding at Rostherne and it's a place dear to my heart. I used to ride from Hazel Grove to the mere on a push-bike, even in winter. One night riding back along Tatton straight my hands almost stuck to the handlebars it was so cold and I was almost in tears as they thawed out when I got home. I saw a few good new birds there but missed the mega, a Little Shearwater, originally identified as a Manx by the locals. However, when I look back the real value was what it taught me in identification and counting birds. The huge rafts of diving ducks were taken for granted at the time. Little did anyone suspect that they'd be gone one day...

This year the Wirral Wader Festival will be held on 31st August and 1st September at RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands, 10am to 5pm, free entry to everyone. There's an interesting article by Dr Karen Leeming about the Dee Estuary Voluntary Wardens and the vitally important role that they play in educating the public and keeping disturbance for the waders to a minimum.

Richard Smith, with input from Eddie Williams, has written an interesting piece on the arrival of Ring Ouzels that turned up in late April, part of an outstanding spring migration along the western coast of England with numbers of migrants that you'd normally associate with the east coast. Eddie's gut feeling is that the Ring Ouzels were Scandinavian in origin... an interesting theory which could well be correct.

Okay... So who said that wind turbines wouldn't kill birds in any significant numbers? One of our 'prominent ornithologists' and I had a heated discussion about the subject back when they were still on the planning board. He said that there was no evidence that the casualties would be significant and research had been carried out into the height birds fly at, etc etc... Well, that would all appear to have been incorrect and the evidence now is that they kill birds, and bats, in huge numbers, in the millions...as I suspected. Worldwide there are papers to support this and conservationists are querying the price of cheap renewable energy in terms of fatalities. The problem at sea is that corpses are lost, but if you can count birds below the turbines on your local patch then perhaps they can be switched off at peak migration times. The small site north of Spurn at Easington is switched off during October to reduce casualties. One genuinely prominent person has also raised the issue. President Putin has recently remarked that Russia isn't investing in this technology because of bird deaths, so it must be fact, rather than the country having massive oil and gas reserves....

Technology is marvellous stuff. I've often mentioned how lucky young birders are these days and it's true. If you compare two identification references I was brought up with, Peterson's *Birds of Britain and Europe* and South's *Moths of the British Isles*, both had illustrations for some species in black and white... talk about making it difficult! Spurn Bird Observatory in partnership with Hull University are embarking on a new venture where birds are tracked along their migration routes using a telemetry network. The star of the autumn migration will be Yellow-browed Warblers fitted with telemetry devices that ping when they pass over receivers. So birds caught in Russia and Scandinavia are fitted with a tiny electronic tag. There are base stations sited at strategic sites, initially coastal either side of the North Sea, which sit and wait for one of the birds to fly over. As a uniquely tagged Yellow-browed Warbler passes over the base station, it is picked up and recorded by some electronic wizardry. Spurn Bird Observatory are amongst the first in the UK to embark on this venture which is already used in other countries. Other bird observatories such

as Sandwich Bay and Portland are also interested in the project. Imagine that, a bird smaller than a Chiffchaff flying at a few hundred feet up, in the dark, picked up as it goes overhead! If successful, the project may become expanded and in the future could become commonplace. Imagine what we will learn about migration with this new technology? The mind isoggled... Let's hope for an easterly autumn.

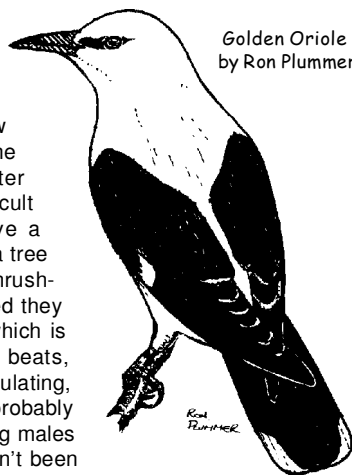
So the big question is...would CAWOS fund a base station on Hilbre and at Hoylake? I'd like to think so...

Tony Broome

County Rarities

GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*

You might be forgiven for wondering what identification challenge Golden Orioles offer, but you would be surprised I think. Of course, if you see an adult male then there are almost no other large thrush-sized birds with all bright yellow upper and underparts and black wings with yellow tips to the primary coverts, giving a yellow comma effect on the outer wing. Even so they can be surprisingly secretive, shy and difficult to locate in tall leaf-filled tree tops. Obviously, they have a distinctive loud call and song, but even so, finding a male in a tree canopy will not be easy. Golden Orioles are about Mistle Thrush-size, with strong bill, long wings and quite a long tail. Perched they look like large Starlings in shape and it's their flight action, which is swift and powerful, but made up of unequal bursts of wing beats, sudden side slips with wings spread and generally very undulating, that give them a woodpecker-like flight. Golden Orioles have probably now been lost as a breeding bird in the UK, occasional singing males are recorded in spring at well-wooded sites but breeding hasn't been proven for 5-years plus. They are also probably declining across Europe, where they breed as far east as Russia and as far south as Turkey and Cyprus. Most European Golden Orioles winter from sub-Saharan Africa right down to South and East Africa taking a south, south-easterly route, so occasional reverse migrants can occur as spring overshoots or autumn reverse migrants.



Golden Oriole
by Ron Plummer

It's the female and first and second calendar year (2CY) birds that actually present a bit of an identification challenge, since within the UK, size-wise and in their flight action, they are similar to woodpeckers, and given their secretive nature, often it is only as a brief view amongst the tree tops or as a flyby that you notice one. Juveniles or first calendar year (1CY) birds are pale green above and greyish off-white below with fine streaking. Females can be much the same with a greyer head and neck but overall green above with a yellowish rump and a pink bill. This species is nearly unique that 1CY birds have a partial post-juvenile moult where they acquire some yellow in the rump and pinkish tones to the bill, and have a nearly complete moult on the wintering grounds but retain the same plumage features. So a 2CY male will look practically identical to a juvenile. So, the main confusion species is Green Woodpecker as that is our only woodland bird that has a conspicuous yellowish rump, green upperparts and an undulating flight, and these too can be surprisingly shy and wary, often not giving good views. Although being considerably bigger a flying bird through a canopy of trees can be difficult to judge in size and as a juvenile Green Woodpecker has pale spots on its back and lots of dark barring underneath so it can look similar to Golden Orioles. However, once you can get a good view, Green Woodpeckers' red on the head and face and the more extensive black spotting to the entire underparts will tell them apart.

Hugh Pulsford

GOLDEN ORIOLE IN CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL

In *The Fauna of Cheshire* (1910) Coward wrote "There are only two recorded instances of the Golden Oriole in Cheshire", and told of two birds shot and preserved in collections. The first was a male, 'obtained' at Taxal in May 1830 and the second, a female, shot at Styal in the late 1850s when it was said to have been "consorting with a number of thrushes and about half a dozen birds of its own species". Coward noted that it was usually noticed in England singly or in pairs, but thought that the half-dozen birds which were not obtained at Styal may have been incorrectly identified. Coward appears not to have been convinced by a report of a bird seen from a car between Ashton-Hayes and Kelsall on 6th May 1907 - perhaps the old adage 'What's Hit is History, What's Missed is Mystery' was applied.

October 1916 saw the publication of Coward's *Notes on the Vertebrate Fauna of Cheshire and South Lancashire* a 40-page update to *The Fauna*. It included details of a male Golden Oriole seen and heard at Plumley on 27th June 1915 and Coward referred to it as "the third satisfactory record for Cheshire". The fourth followed quickly and was published in *Notes on the Vertebrate Fauna of Cheshire and South Lancashire for the year 1916* where Coward wrote that he had "no hesitation in accepting" a record of a male and female seen near Beeston on June 20th. There were no further reports during Coward's lifetime.

The next record is probably the most unusual of all the Golden Oriole sightings in the county. A note in *British Birds* for February 1936 detailed the sighting of a male flushed by (Macclesfield) Forest and District Beagles from near the summit of Sutton Common on the very late date of 2nd November 1935, during a considerable movement of birds in a strong south-west wind. A W Boyd in *The Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Committee Report* for 1935 added that "this or another was seen later in November at (nearby) Wildboarclough". A single female at Arley on 27th May 1945 and a male seen and heard at Delamere Forest on 3rd June 1961 are the only records prior to the publication of the first stand-alone *Cheshire Bird Report* for 1965.

Two males near Elton Hall Flash on 17th May 1967 were the only other birds in the sixties, while a male at Bidston Hill on 31st May 1974 was the only record from the seventies. The eighties were represented by a female at Dingle Valley, Sandbach on 16th May 1983, a female at Barnston Dale on 13th July 1984, an adult female at Lea Green near Church Minshull from 30th June to 2nd July 1985 (the first stay of more than one day since November 1935), and a male at Woolston on 25th May 1986.

Golden Oriole is one of the species considered by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel from its formation in 1973. Based on figures published in *British Birds*, the 1990s was the peak decade for the breeding population. Despite a decline being apparent from the later years of the decade, the annual average maximum number of breeding pairs in the nineties was 30. Certainly the nineties turned out to be easily the best decade for records of the species in the county. A bird singing at Peers Wood near Burton Point Farm on 19th and 20th May and two males at Bidston Hill on 20th May 1990 provided the only known instance of birds being present at two sites in the county on the same day. These were followed by a first-summer male and a female at Rostherne Mere NNR on 17th May 1992, while on 31st May 1993 a male visited Bosley Reservoir, two local-patchers had a deserved reward for long hours in the field when finding a bird in Tatton Park on 9th June 1995, a first-summer male was at Thurstaston Country Park on 20th May 1997 and another first-summer bird was at Crook of Dee on 18th May 1998.

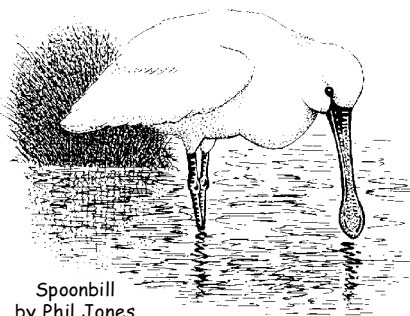
The English breeding population declined further into the new century and breeding was last confirmed in 2009. The only Cheshire and Wirral sightings this century have been of an immature male at Moore Nature Reserve from 21st to 23rd May 2005, a female or immature male at Lingham Lane, Leasowe on 18th May 2012 and a female or immature which flew across the road at Rodeheath in front of a surprised but alert birder driving to work on 10th June 2014.

From 1965 there have been records in just 15 of the annual County Bird Reports to 2016. The birds that have appeared have been at widespread sites and have only rarely stayed longer than a day. Of the 16 post-1965 sightings 12 records have been between May 16th and 31st with single records on June 9th and 10th and only two later records - from June 30th to July 2nd and on July 13th. A summary of its present status in the county would be that Golden Oriole is a very rare spring migrant.

Steve Barber

Sites to Watch

BURTON MERE WETLANDS AND DEE MARSHES



Spoonbill
by Phil Jones

The big news this spring at the Dee has been the breeding egrets, with Cattle Egret and (the long awaited) Great White Egret both nesting in the heronry. We're still yet to see evidence of chicks from both nests, but hopefully any day now... It was hoped that Spoonbill would also breed this year too, with a pair appearing in May that started nest building soon after that carried on for several weeks. The appearance of a second male however, appeared to upset the pair, and they stopped any serious nesting attempt shortly after. Here's hoping they try again next year.

The Bearded Tits, meanwhile, have had a fantastic breeding season with two pairs fledging five chicks (three and two) so far, with both now feeding second broods. A fantastic success. Marsh Harriers are also back breeding at Neston Reedbed again this year, and the young birds should be leaving the nest within the next week or so.

Breeding waders have had another very good year too, with breeding pairs and productivity similar to previous years. Fortunately, the very heavy rain we had in the middle of June didn't have an adverse impact on wader chicks. While Burton Mere Wetlands was the most flooded it had ever been, much of the wet grassland at the back didn't overly flood so families were able to disperse, and most chicks were old enough to be able to take the hit for a few days.

The best rarities of the spring included a White Stork at BMW and Burton Marsh on 30th and 31st March (9 days earlier than last year's bird), which due to its notable wing moult was tracked moving south over the following week, and was last seen at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory, Kent. A superb adult White-winged Black Tern at BMW was another spring highlight, appearing the morning of 24th May and staying until the 26th.

It's been a reasonable year for Wood Sandpiper at BMW, with four birds so far. A scattering of Curlew Sandpiper over mid-May was the best of the rest in terms of the spring wader passage. Although, with up to a dozen jet-black Spotted Redshanks and a noticeable increase in Green Sandpipers recently, it's fair to say that the autumn passage has already started. Water levels have been duly lowered, and muddy edges abound. Come on Yanks!

Graham Jones, Site Manager at RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve

ROSTHERNE MERE

For the second year running, the Boyd Observatory has provided wonderful views of a pair of Kestrels which have nested in a dead alder near the Boat House. It has been fascinating watching the male bringing food to the female who flies off with it to eat it in private. Fingers are crossed for the arrival of offspring within the next couple of weeks.

The sights and sounds of the largest inland breeding Cormorant colony in Cheshire continues to fascinate with a record 176 active nests counted, several of them harbouring four hungry juveniles per nest.

The abundance of flies emerging from the Mere attract Swifts, Sand Martins, House Martins and Swallows to feed, but numbers vary according to the weather conditions, with often



wet days providing the best sights. Recently a mixed flock of several hundred Swifts, Swallows and House Martins was seen whirling and wheeling over the water and the adjacent fields under leaden skies.

The Spotted Flycatchers returned to Wood Bongs in May to the same location where they bred last year. They are very active and can be viewed easily from the permissive path just as you enter the wood.

A pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers bred in Mere Covert. The family party is now active around the Reserve, with the adults feeding a juvenile.

Barn Owls bred successfully in two boxes on the Reserve last year and from Marsh Lane they can be seen quartering the fields during summer evenings. In addition, both Little Owl and Tawny Owl can often be observed from this location.

An exciting project, which should be completed by the time you read this, is the construction of the Dave Clarke Memorial Hide by the Rostherne Volunteers. The new hide will be situated in Old Hall Wood to the left of the Observatory with entry near the Churchyard. This facility will provide a great view across Dolls Meadow, Brook Meadow and the Rostherne shoreline. It will be accessible to Observatory permit holders providing additional opportunities to view the Reserve.

Permits for the A.W Boyd Observatory are priced at £10 single, £15 family, £5 children 11-16 years. They can be obtained from Sheelagh Halsey, Rostherne Permit Secretary. Please email Sheelagh at rostherne_permit@btinternet.com for an application form.

Bill Bellamy

BOOK PREVIEW

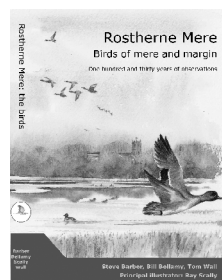
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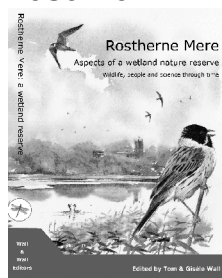
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Wirral Wader Festival

**31st August and 1st September 2019 at RSPB
Burton Mere Wetlands, 10am to 5pm**

This year the Wirral Wader Festival is celebrating waders for the fifth year and I think it's fair to say that all of those involved in organising it have been surprised at how enthusiastic everyone has been about both the idea and their support. So, how do you set up a Wader Festival? Well, first a bit of background information.

For those of you not familiar with the beautiful Dee estuary, it lies on the North Wales/North-West of England border. The Clwydian mountain range and coast of North Wales are on one shore and the large, award winning, sandy beaches of the Wirral peninsula are on the other. It is also one of the largest and most important areas in the country for wetland birds and it regularly holds over 110,000 waders and 20,000 wildfowl in winter. These large flocks of waders have been a feature of the Dee Estuary for many years and have contributed to the estuary's recognition both nationally and internationally as an outstanding habitat.

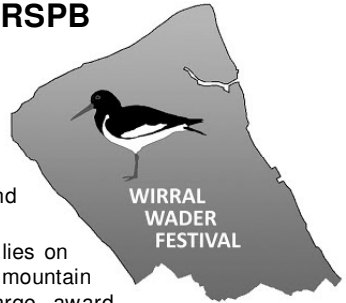
Of course, the estuary and its beaches are not just attractive to birds, they also attract people in their hordes to enjoy the various leisure activities the area has to offer. Most of these have the potential to impact adversely on the flocks, especially when they are roosting. For example, a stray dog running into the flock or a kite surfer can force them to take flight, in what often forms a breath-taking ballet like tumbling smoke that, whilst stunning, can have serious repercussions for the birds if it happens too often. In the short term, if there is a cold spell they can die, or they are weakened making them easy prey. In the long term, if they fail to reach the optimum weight for migration and breeding, they can die on the journey or fail to breed.

The problems of disturbance in the Dee escalated so much from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s that the numbers of birds plummeted. For example, Bar-tailed Godwits fell by 99% and Knots by 79% (Michell, Moser and Kirby, 1988). It was partly because of these catastrophic falls that the Dee Estuary Voluntary Wardens (DEVW) was formed in 1986, with the support of Wirral Borough Council (WBC), the Nature Conservancy Council (now Natural England), RSPB and local enthusiasts. The other reason was that it would be in mitigation by WBC for extending the Marine Lake. Thirty three years on, the DEVW continue to warden the West Kirby beach in winter and use a variety of methods to minimise disturbances so that waders will continue to return to the Dee. This makes it the longest-running scheme of its type in the world.

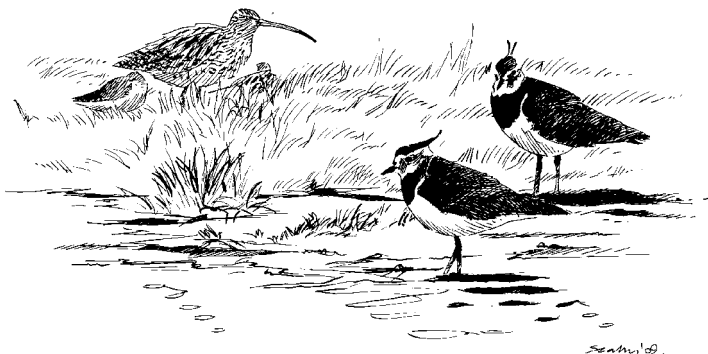
The DEVW are used to requests to visit or for information on setting up similar schemes from organisations around the country. So, it wasn't out of the ordinary when, in early 2015, Rick and Elis Simpson, founders of Wader Quest, asked if they could come and see us in action. We organised a date and they came along and asked lots of questions including whether I would be interested in taking part in a wader festival. I said yes thinking they wanted me to help out leading a walk, giving a talk, etc, said goodbye and thought no more about it assuming they'd contact me with details.

Which they did in the April - asking me how I was going to organise this festival!!! After, I'd recovered from the blind panic, I thought that it was actually a brilliant idea as we have the birds, we have good places to watch them from without disturbing them and hopefully we had the people to make it happen. This latter element was the most important as we needed to bring together various organisations to pull this off.

The very first person I contacted was the coastal ranger, who worked most closely with the DEVW, whose first question was "why didn't we think of this?". Other coastal rangers and managers were approached, came on board, and Wirral Country Park offered us Thurstaston Visitor Centre for a base for activities - we could make a start and tentatively looked at a date in November.



One of the things about Wirral that I love is the close working relationships many of the environmental organisations have with each other. There really is partnership, synergy and close 'stakeholder participation' and all of those other buzzwords that abound in funding bids. And it was through these relationships that the Site Manager and the Visitor



Experience Manager of RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve and Area Manager West of Cheshire Wildlife Trust, who had responsibility for the Red Rocks Nature Reserve, were approached. Again, the only reaction was enthusiasm and when do we meet?

The first meeting took place in June and we covered a huge amount and realised that we had to sort everything very quickly as Rick had gained sponsorship from *Birdwatching Magazine*. They would advertise the Festival for free and do a special Wader edition in November to coincide with the Festival. Topics that needed to be addressed were: what we were going to do, where we were going to do it, who was going to deliver, insurance, volunteer training, toilets, publicity, children's events, roving reporters, event programmes and whether we could do something on the Welsh side - those relationships again!

To ensure it would come together in the timescale, we met every month. We were poised to hold high-tide birdwatches at West Kirby and Hoylake on both days. Guided walks around the Red Rocks NR. We had a presence at New Brighton to show people the waders on the pontoons. We had stalls at Thurston VC, and exhibition in the theatre, an artist, talks, a wadercam on Little Eye, children's activities, low-tide birdwatches and several local businesses were taking part. It had been publicised in *Birdwatching Magazine*, all the local newspapers and magazines, on the internet and on Radio Merseyside, all the public loos were open, the insurance was sorted and we had been granted permission to hold the event by the council - we were ready.

I don't know if you remember, but 2015 was the first year that the Met Office had decided that it was going to name severe storms. And guess what, storm Abigail was heading our way and listening to the BBC, everyone in the country needed to stay indoors and batten down the hatches as storm Barney was hot on its heels (I refuse to anthropomorphise weather). As we got closer to the Festival the warnings got more dire and it definitely affected the number of participants. As it was, it was just a bit windy and there were loads of birds to the great delight of those who did attend. We did try and keep count but with so many access points it proved too difficult and we only know that almost 600 engaged at New Brighton and Thurston VC.

To keep the Festival fresh each year we've added new things, changed things, changed sites and changed the dates - to improve the chances of better weather and the possibility of seeing some waders that are more difficult later in the year, and in 2017 we had an hilarious and informative talk by Iolo Williams to raise funds for the Festival to continue.

This year the **Wirral Wader Festival will be held on 31st August and 1st September at RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands, 10am to 5pm, free entry to everyone.** There will be people around to help with bird identification, stalls, children's activities - although adults are welcome to take part, and a webcam. We decided to hold the Wirral Wader Festival at Burton Mere Wetlands because the RSPB has been on the Dee for 40 years and we all want to help them celebrate - remember all those 'buzz words' that are actually real here - and hope that you can join us.

Dr Karen Leeming, Chair Dee Estuary Voluntary Wardens and Wirral Wader Festival

References

Mitchell, J.R., Moser, M.E., and Kirby, J.S. (1988) 'Declines in midwinter counts of waders roosting on the Dee estuary' *Bird Study* 35: 191-198.

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 January to April 2019

SITE REPORTS

Chester area

Three Cattle Egrets were at Puddington on several dates during Mar with 30 Little Egrets on Mar 8th. Osprey flew over Stoak on Apr 30th.

Congleton Area

Two Common Scoters were at Astbury Mere on Mar 27th with two Smews on Jan 8th. A Bittern was at Hassall Green on Jan 18th. A Red Kite flew over Mow Cop on Mar 29th. A Little Gull was at Astbury Mere on Apr 5th and two Arctic Terns there on Apr 27th. A Merlin was at Brereton on Jan 4th. A Ring-necked Parakeet was at Scholar Green on Feb 16th. Two Ring Ouzels were at Mow Cop on Apr 20th, Redstarts at Scholar Green on Apr 6th and 13th, up to 100 Bramblings at Astbury Mere on Apr 1st.

Crewe and Nantwich Area

Two Egyptian Geese were at Elton Hall Flash on Mar 23rd, three Whooper Swans at Nantwich on Mar 20th, 25 Mandarins on Lawton Lake on Jan 24th, single Common Scoter at Doddington Pool on Mar 28th. Two Great White Egrets were at Railway Flash on Jan 12th and 30th and Elton Hall Flash on Jan 21st. A Marsh Harrier was at Elton Hall Flash on Jan 15th, a single Hen Harrier at Bag Mere on Jan 28th, 30th and Feb 1st, a Red Kite over Doddington Pool on Apr 1st and others were over Crewe, Maw Green Tip and Wistaston. Three Avocets were at Pump House Flash on Mar 19th, 10 Little Ringed Plovers on Apr 1st, two Bar-tailed Godwits at Doddington Pool on Apr 23rd, Greenshank at Pump House Flash on Apr 1st.

A Kittiwake was at Elton Hall Flash on Apr 7th, Little Gull at Pump House Flash on Mar 14th, Iceland Gull at Sandbach Flashes on several dates, Sandwich Tern at Elton Hall Flash on Apr 20th, Common Tern at Hurlleston on Apr 28th and Black Tern on Apr 27th. Four Marsh Tits were at Bickerton on Mar 19th, Bearded Tit at Nantwich on Mar 5th, Ring Ouzel at Bickerton on Apr 19th and 22nd, two Pied Flycatchers on Apr 22nd along with three Redstarts and a Tree Pipit. 450 Linnets were at Watch Lane Flash on Jan 9th, 60 Reed Buntings at Green Lane on Jan 6th.

Ellesmere Port and Neston Area

Four Brent Geese were at Parkgate on Feb 4th, c10,000 Pink-footed Geese at Burton Marsh on Mar 22nd, Bean Goose at BMW on Feb 23rd, 23 Whooper Swans at Shotwick on Feb 2nd and three Egyptian Geese in the Burton/Shotwick area on Feb 18th and 23rd. Three Garganeys at BMW on Apr 23rd, American Wigeon at Denhall on Jan 12th, a Long-tailed Duck at BMW from Mar 22nd to Apr 12th. A White Stork was at BMW on Mar 30th and 31st, a Spoonbill was there from Apr 17th to 25th, two Bitterns were at Parkgate on Jan 23rd, three Cattle Egrets at BMW on several dates, nine Great White Egrets at BMW on Jan 17th and Parkgate on Feb 4th. An Osprey was over Denhall on Mar 31st and Ness on Apr 21st, 11 Marsh Harriers at Neston on Jan 19th, four Hen Harriers at Parkgate in Feb, single Red Kite over Burton on Jan 8th and Mar 12th, Ness on Apr 27th and Parkgate on Mar 5th.

110+ Avocets were at BMW by late Mar, 26 Whimbrels at Stanlow on Apr 21st along with 3148 Black-tailed Godwits, 11 Spotted Redshanks at BMW on Jan 12th and five



Greenshanks were there on Apr 25th. Little Gull was at BMW on Apr 10th, 17 Mediterranean Gulls on Apr 23rd, Black Tern on Apr 30th and two Common Terns on the same day. At least 12 Short-eared Owls were at Parkgate on Mar 1st. Two Merlins were at Parkgate on Jan 25th and Mar 2nd, Hobby at BMW on Apr 29th and 30th. Six Bearded Tits were at BMW on Jan 3rd and 6th, eight Cetti's Warblers on Feb 25th, Pied Flycatcher at Burton on Apr 28th, Black Redstart at Shotwick on several dates from Jan 4th to 17th. Two Channel Wagtails were at BMW on Apr 14th, nine Water Pipits at BMW on Jan 15th and eight Twites at Parkgate on Jan 16th.

Halton Area

A male Eider was off Hale lighthouse in Mar. An Osprey flew over Hale on Apr 9th, Marsh Harrier noted in the Hale area on several dates with two Hen Harriers during Apr. At least seven Water Rails were counted along Hale shore on Feb 18th. Two Avocets were at Carr Lane Pools on Mar 21st, seven Whimbrels at Pickering's Pasture on Apr 14th with single Bar-tailed Godwit on Mar 21st. Five Ruffs were at Carr Lane on Mar 22nd, two Little Stints at Pickering's Pasture throughout the period, a Greenshank at Hale on Mar 29th and Carr Lane on Apr 21st. Two Merlins were in the Hale area up to early Apr, a Hobby at Hale Duck Decoy on Apr 30th.



A Wood Warbler was at Hale Park on Apr 13th, Ring Ouzel noted at Hale on Apr 9th and 14th and one at Carr Lane on 12th, Redstart at Hale on Apr 14th, 19+ Yellow Wagtails at Hale on Apr 12th, three Channel Wagtails at Hale, Blue-headed Wagtail at Carr Lane on Apr 12th and another at Hale on 28th. 60+ White Wagtails were at Hale on Apr 12th, two Tree Pipits at Hale on Apr 29th, three Water Pipits at Carr Lane during Jan-Apr and up to three Rock Pipits at Pickering's Pasture during Feb-Mar.

A Whooper Swan was at Rostherne on Jan 22th and 25th with 12 Mandarins on Mar 8th and 22nd. A Garganey was at Redesmere on Apr 1st and 3rd, 14 Goosanders at Rostherne on Feb 22nd. Black-necked Grebe was at Rostherne on Mar 29th and 30th and Chelford SQ on Apr 14th, two Great White Egrets at Redesmere on Jan 12th. Single Red Kites flew over Rostherne on Feb 17th and Redesmere on Apr 1st. A Green Sandpiper was at Brook Meadow on Feb 17th. Six Little Gulls were at Mere Farm SQ on Apr 9th, two Caspian Gulls at Rostherne on Feb 15th, Common Tern at Redesmere on Apr 5th, two Arctic Terns at Rostherne on Apr 27th. Two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were at Rostherne on Mar 15th and Apr 24th. Cetti's Warbler was at Rostherne throughout the period, Redstart at Bosley on Apr 22nd and a Tree Pipit there on Apr 20th and 22nd.

Knutsford and Macclesfield Area

A Whooper Swan was at Rostherne on Jan 22th and 25th with 12 Mandarins on Mar 8th and 22nd. A Garganey was at Redesmere on Apr 1st and 3rd, 14 Goosanders at Rostherne on Feb 22nd. Black-necked Grebe was at Rostherne on Mar 29th and 30th and Chelford SQ on Apr 14th, two Great White Egrets at Redesmere on Jan 12th. Single Red Kites flew over Rostherne on Feb 17th and Redesmere on Apr 1st. A Green Sandpiper was at Brook Meadow on Feb 17th. Six Little Gulls were at Mere Farm SQ on Apr 9th, two Caspian Gulls at Rostherne on Feb 15th, Common Tern at Redesmere on Apr 5th, two Arctic Terns at Rostherne on Apr 27th. Two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were at Rostherne on Mar 15th and Apr 24th. Cetti's Warbler was at Rostherne throughout the period, Redstart at Bosley on Apr 22nd and a Tree Pipit there on Apr 20th and 22nd.

Vale Royal Area

Four White-fronted Geese were at Frodsham Marsh until Jan 5th, 30 Whooper Swans at Frodsham Marsh on Feb 16th, three Bewick's Swans there on Jan 25th, 280 Pintails noted on the Mersey WeBS count on Jan 28th, Scaup at Marbury CP on Mar 18th, the Smew remained at Newchurch Common throughout the period, 50 Goosanders at Marbury CP on Jan 2nd, a single Red-breasted Merganser at Frodsham Marsh on Jan 12th. Slavonian Grebe was at Middlewich on Jan 2nd, two Bitterns at Marbury CP on several dates during Jan, six Great White Egrets at Frodsham Marsh on Jan 23rd. Osprey flew over Allostock on Apr 10th, up to four Marsh Harriers at Frodsham Marsh along with single Hen Harrier, Red Kite over Higher Whitley on Mar 20th and Aston on Apr 19th.

72 Avocets were at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 9th, three Whimbrels at Neumann's Flash on Apr 19th, four Woodcocks at Middlewich on Jan 1st, four Green Sandpipers there on Apr 5th and Marbury CP on Apr 19th, Greenshank at Marbury CP on Apr 29th. A Little Gull was at Winsford on Apr 18th. Merlin was at Winsford on Feb 14th. 304 Ravens were in the Frodsham area on Feb 25th, two Waxwings noted at Hartford on Feb 22nd, 500+ Sand Martins at Marbury CP on Apr 2nd and 6th, Ring Ouzel at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 14th, Pied Flycatcher and Redstart at Delamere on Apr 25th, c100 Pied Wagtails at Marbury CP on Mar 13th. Three Water Pipits were at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 3rd.

Warrington Area

15 Whooper Swans flew over Woolston Eyes on Jan 23rd, a pair of Garganey were present from Apr 15th to month's end, 650+ Tufted Ducks on Feb 6th, Scaup on Feb 18th and Common Scoter on Mar 26th. Three Black-necked Grebes returned to Woolston Eyes on Mar 19th increasing to 24 on Apr 14th. A single Bittern seen at Woolston Eyes on Feb 9th. Osprey flew over Woolston Eyes on Apr 10th, Red Kite at Stretton on Mar 26th and Rough-legged Buzzard over Moore NR on Mar 25th. Five Whimbrels and single Bar-tailed Godwit were at Woolston Eyes on Apr 23rd.

A Kittiwake was at Woolston Eyes on Mar 26th with Little Gull from Mar 14th to 21st, and five Mediterranean Gulls on Apr 17th, an Iceland Gull frequented Warrington town centre on various dates up to early Apr. Two Arctic Terns were at Woolston Eyes on Apr 27th. Two Cuckoos were at Woolston Eyes on Apr 24th and two at Moore on 25th. Hobby at Woolston Eyes on Apr 29th. Five Waxwings were in Warrington town centre on Jan 5th, two Marsh Tits at Moore NR on Feb 27th, c200,000 Starlings roosted at Woolston Eyes on Mar 4th, Ring Ouzel at Moore NR on Apr 1st and Silver Lane Pools on 14th, Pied Flycatcher at Moore NR, on Apr 18th, Redstart there on 11th and 31 Bramblings at Woolston Eyes on Jan 30th

Wirral Area

318 Brent Geese were at Hilbre on Mar 4th, 3268 Pink-footed Geese over Hilbre on Apr 17th and 11 Whooper Swans at Thurstaston on Mar 26th. Seven Scaups were off Hilbre on Feb 24th, six Eiders at Hilbre on Mar 17th and 18th, 2000 Common Scoters off Leasowe on Feb 19th and 11 Red-breasted Mergansers at Heswall on Feb 19th. Seven Red-throated Divers were off Leasowe on Apr 6th, Black-throated Diver at Hilbre on Apr 10th, Great Northern Diver off Leasowe on Apr 5th and Hilbre on several dates during Feb-Mar. Two Cattle Egrets were at Heswall on Feb 21st, four Great White Egrets at Thurstaston on Feb 15th and 31 Little Egrets at Heswall on Apr 29th. Two Ospreys flew over Leasowe on Apr 20th with single birds over Hilbre, Hoylake, Leasowe, Liscard, Meols, Red Rocks and West Kirby from Mar 25th onwards. Three Hen Harriers were at Thurstaston on Feb 15th and Red Kite over Meols on Mar 24th.

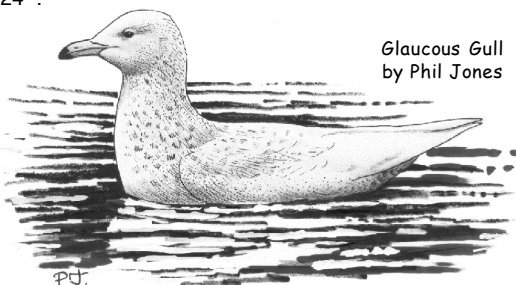
542 Grey Plovers were at West Kirby on Jan 20th, 79 Whimbrels at Heswall on Apr 24th, 260 Bar-tailed Godwits at Heswall on Feb 16th, nine Purple Sandpipers at New Brighton on Feb 21st, Little Stint at Hoylake on Jan 23rd. 25+ Little Gulls were at Hilbre on Mar 30th, Glaucous Gull at Leasowe on Mar 16th, Caspian Gull there on 17th, 600 Sandwich Terns at Hilbre on Apr 30th, three Little Terns at Red Rocks on Apr 17th, 60+ Common Terns at Hilbre, eight Arctic Terns there on Apr 29th,

Great Skua at New Brighton on Apr 28th, eight Arctic Skuas at Hilbre on Apr 29th, at least six Guillemots at Hilbre on Apr 10th with single Puffin on Apr 16th.

Eight Ravens were at Leasowe on Feb 26th, two Marsh Tits at Heswall on Mar 26th, Yellow-browed Warbler at Leasowe on Apr 24th, 100+ Willow Warblers at Leasowe on Apr 18th, Iberian Chiffchaff at Red Rocks on Apr 29th. A Firecrest was at Pensby on Apr 27th, 10+ Ring Ouzels at Leasowe on Apr 18th, Pied Flycatcher at Leasowe on the same day. Single Black Redstarts were at Hoylake on Apr 7th and Meols on 20th, six Redstarts at Leasowe on 20th, also there six Whinchats on Apr 19th and 20th, seven Stonechats on Feb 26th, 100+ Wheatears on Apr 19th. 40+ Yellow Wagtails were at Leasowe on Apr 22nd, Spanish Wagtail reported there on 26th, 28th and 29th and 45 White Wagtails at Hoylake on Apr 7th. Nine Tree Pipits were on Hilbre on Apr 30th, c30 Twites over New Brighton on Feb 16th.

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

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



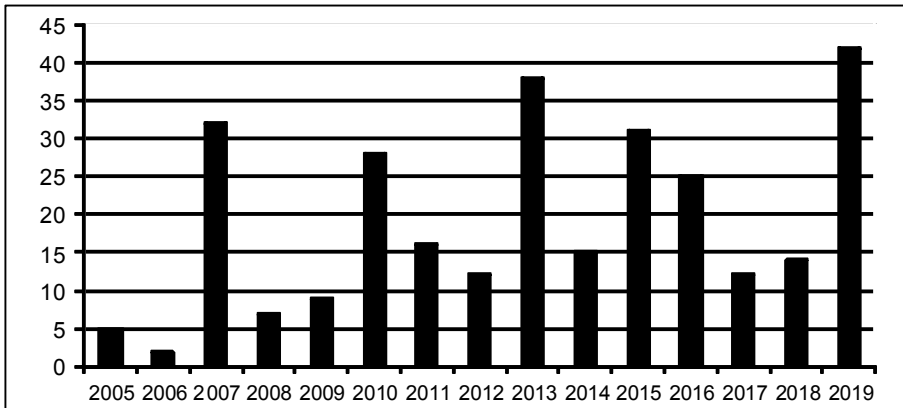
Glaucous Gull
by Phil Jones

Species Spotlight

RING OUZELS IN SPRING

2019 has seen the best spring passage of Ring Ouzels for the past 15 years. Not only have we had the highest spring total over that time, 43, but also the highest single site count with at least 10 at Leasowe on April 18th including a flock of seven.

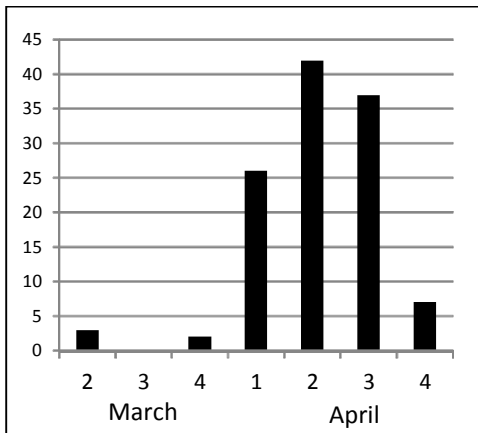
Total of Annual Spring Records 2005 to 2019 - North Wirral/Dee Estuary Area



The bar chart above shows the sum of daily spring records for each year - 2005 to 2019. As you can see there appears to be a cycle peaking every three years with only 2015 spoiling the picture. To my mind the pattern doesn't make any sense! As we see only a tiny proportion of the birds which are flying through the country, or indeed up the west coast, you would have thought numbers here should be governed solely by weather events such as wind strength and direction, cloud cover, amount of early morning mist, etc and therefore would be purely random and not show a pattern. Steve Stansfield kindly sent the Ring Ouzel spring records from Bardsey Bird Observatory (2006 to 2017) and these show no discernible pattern and, in contrast to the Dee, 2019 has been a poor year for them with just six records up to April 26th, compared to 45 in 2015 but only five in 2013 when we had 38 - ie no correlation whatsoever between the Dee and Bardsey. So it remains an intriguing mystery.

I would have liked to have gone further back but unfortunately my records are incomplete prior to 2005.

Total Records per week 2015 to 2019 - North Wirral/Dee Estuary Area



Nearly all our Ring Ouzels come through in April with just a handful in March. The early ones are likely to be British breeding birds whereas the large majority of those in April will be on their way to Scandinavia. In any particular year most birds pass through in just a few days but the timing of this peak can differ - so in 2015 25 birds were recorded in the second week of April, in 2016 we had 17 in the first week and in 2019 25 in the third week. 2019 saw an unusual May record with a female present at Leasowe Lighthouse between 17th to 22nd. The bird was

obviously in no hurry to move on and, together with the late date, it would seem that this was likely to have been a failed breeder rather than a migrant so I haven't included it in the data for the bar charts.

I finish the article with some thoughts from local birder, Eddie Williams, who has been following the migration of Ring Ouzels both here and in North Wales for a good number of years:

I do have a few thoughts on the migration of Ring Ouzels through our region based on my own observations.

The nearest main traditional spring stopping-off points for migrant ouzels (vast majority being Scandinavian birds) are along the Clwyd Hills just across the Dee from us. They run as a south-north axis along their route and contain prime ouzel habitat, although they no longer breed here. I get up there about once a week during spring migration and in about 70% of visits connect with ouzels, usually in small groups of between 3 and 8 birds, although double-figure flocks are by no means uncommon. As an indication of the large numbers passing through, on 8th April last year there were separate flocks of 16, 6 and 9 on Penycloddiau with another group of 5 on neighbouring Moel y Parc, 36 in a morning! The whole area is hardly covered by birders so the numbers going through unnoticed must be huge. Birds only seem to stick around for a day or so before moving on, similar to the Wirral coast.

Most records of ouzels on the Wirral seem to consist of single birds in contrast to the Clwyd Hills where records of singles are in the minority. It seems to me that a few birds choose to follow the coast rather than the traditional route, with others becoming slightly displaced. Displacement I think is the reason for many of the records we have seen on Wirral this spring. On 18th April in particular 10 birds were at Leasowe, including a flock of 7, and another group of 3 on Red Rocks, with singles on Hilbre, Ness and Caldy. The weather conditions that morning were slightly misty. This mist would have also obscured the Clwyd Hills for any ouzels either heading north or intending to stop there, forcing them to re-orientate along the nearby coast, with some stopping off. Hence the numbers I would usually associate with the Clwyd Hills being present on the Wirral coast on that day.

By the way, the situation is completely different in autumn when Scandinavian ouzels follow a far more easterly route south and are extremely rare on the Clwyd Hills then. Birds seen then on Wirral are more likely traditional 'easterly drift' migrants.

Eddie Williams

Eddie makes the point that the vast majority of Ring Ouzels seen both along north Wirral and the Clwyd Range are Scandinavian breeders. I asked him if we knew that for sure and why couldn't some be Scottish breeding birds. He replied:

Unfortunately I have no hard evidence to support this ie colour-ringed birds, etc and there is no racial difference between British and Scandinavian breeding Ouzels. I have plenty of circumstantial evidence though.

1. I have noted numbers and dates through the Clwyds for the last 11 years visiting regularly once a week during spring passage. The volume of passage has been heavy and constant, showing no reduction in numbers which would be reflected if these were Scottish breeders due to recent big declines there. This decline is not reflected in Scandinavian populations, which remain healthy.
2. The actual number of birds involved in the passage indicates destinations other than within UK as our native population is relatively small. There is also recognised evidence that ouzels take a more westerly route in spring, this including Scandinavian birds.
3. The timing of the sightings is relevant. Most British ouzels arrive on breeding grounds late March to early April, but I am getting large groups still passing through in the last week of April into early May, eg 9 on 28/4/08, 6 on 28/4/13 and 5 on 6th May, these groups still contain good proportions of males which would usually be first to arrive on territory. Weekly totals are fairly constant throughout April. Scandinavian breeders arrive later on their breeding ground due to later snow melt.

4. While there are likely some Scottish birds involved in the passage, especially some recorded late March to early April, I believe the majority are Scandinavia bound. I am hoping for a colour-ringed bird one day.

Eddie Williams

RING OUZEL STATUS

British breeding birds are declining such that they have at least halved in number over the past 30 to 40 years and probably currently down to 5,000 to 6,000 pairs. As Eddie has already mentioned numbers in Scandinavia seem to be stable, although exactly how many there are is not really known, one source said the number of pairs in Norway was anywhere between 10,000 and 100,000 pairs! Even in the UK, where there have been regular surveys, their habitat of rocky mountain crags and steep slopes

means accurate counting is very difficult and you can certainly imagine the problems of trying to estimate numbers in the mountains of Norway even if you could get the volunteers to do it.

Ring Ouzels used to breed in the Clwyd Hills, probably up to the 1980s, but there could still be one or two pairs in the eastern hills of Cheshire, down from the four pairs estimated during the Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas surveys (2004 to 2007), and a few more pairs are said to breed in Derbyshire just across the border. According to reports several years ago Ring Ouzels are doing well in Snowdonia with around 160 territories. Why British breeding birds are declining is not fully understood but climate change, change of land use and French hunters during migration are all likely contributors.

Latest News

I hear that 2019 seems to have been a good breeding season in Yorkshire where in one 15-mile valley out of nine pairs two nests fledged six young per pair, whilst at Capel Curig in Snowdonia two nests each fledged four young (info from Paul Sothern). Hopefully, the good weather for most of April means it has been a good breeding season elsewhere.

Richard Smith (article first appeared in May 2019 Newsletter on www.deeestuary.co.uk)

References and Further Reading

1. Latest sightings from 2005 to 2019 on www.deeestuary.co.uk, thanks to all those who contributed.
2. Allan Conlin, Eddie Williams and Steve Williams (pers comm April 2019).
3. Ring Ouzel Study Group <http://www.ringouzel.info/index.html>. This website has much useful information and links to other sites.
4. *European Red List of Birds* published by BirdLife International, *Turdus torquatus* (Ring Ouzel), supplementary Material, 2015.



Ring Ouzel
by Tony Broome

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 19th October 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.

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 ringed 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.

MID-CHESHIRE BARN OWL GROUP

The first few months of every year are, typically, a quiet period for the Barn Owl groups. This year is no different. We have, for the last year or so, been expecting a poor breeding year (linked to the breeding cycle of the vole, shrew, etc). Was this to be that 'poor' year?

Colin Shawyer (a national expert on the Barn Owl) reported earlier this year that he expected this to be a very good breeding year - with vole and shrew breeding expected to be at a high. Consequently, our expectations for 2019 are positive.

Indeed, initial isolated box checking is reinforcing that expectation. We've found good breeding activity already, with brood sizes in the 4-6 region, indicating a good food supply. In fact, in a similar manner to last year, it is becoming clear that breeding this year is following what we would determine as a more normal timescale, with birds still on eggs as at the end of May (or with very young broods), suggesting an August fledging time. Clutch sizes look quite good, but at this moment in time we have no real feel for the number of breeding pairs actually out there. We will not really know how the numbers stack up for a couple of months or so.

Let's hope the weather stays fair - as once eggs start to hatch then hunting for prey to feed the young becomes a premium activity.

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); 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

CHESHIRE SWAN STUDY GROUP

Since my last report in February, the Swan Study Group has ringed a total of 25 swans including 17 adults and 8 second-years. These included 4 controls and 3 retraps. We also ringed [another] juvenile Whooper Swan.

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

Acre Dell Pools, nr Congleton: 62 on 17th Feb; 49 on 17th Mar; 55 on 14th Apr and 66 on 19th May.

Burleydam Pool, nr Whitchurch: 9 on 29th Apr and 20 on 27th May.

Cholmondeley Estates: 6 on 24th Feb; 8 on 25th Mar and 7 on 29th Apr.

Comber Mere, nr Whitchurch: 4 on 25th Feb; 7 on 24th Mar; 7 on 29th Apr and 9 on 19th May.

Coolle Pilate, nr Nantwich: 23 on 28th Feb; 25 on 25th Mar; 43 on 28th Apr and 38 on 5th May.

Doddington Mere, nr Nantwich: 58 on 1st Feb; 13 on 25th Apr and 58 on 29th May.

Trent and Mersey Canal, Middlewich: 13 on 22nd Feb and 30 on 4th Mar.

Neumann's Flash, Northwich: 36 on 21st Apr and 84 on 23rd May.

Woolston Eyes, nr Warrington: 16 on 16th Feb; 22 on 23rd Mar and 23 on 20th Apr.

Movements

Yellow-colour-ringed Whooper Swan, V9J, was ringed as a second-year male on 21-4-19 on the Trent and Mersey Canal in Middlewich. Seen on Neumann's Flash, Northwich on 26-4-19 and 23-5-19. Last sighting was on 7-6-19 at Groby Pool near Leicester - c115kms from ringling site.

The *Cheshire Swan Study Group Report* for 2018 is now available on our website: <http://cheshireswanstudygroup.wordpress.com>

Sightings of all swans, geese and Mallards should be sent to David Cookson at 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

RINGING AT WOOLSTON

WINTER 2018/2019

This note covers the winter period from October 2018 through March 2019 ('this winter'). In this winter period 1,941 new birds were ringed at Woolston which compares with 2,806 new birds ringed in the 2017/2018 winter period ('last winter'). This significant reduction of 865 birds (or 30.8%) results from a small number of different influences. Water levels remained very low throughout the fourth quarter of 2018 and it was not possible to operate the fixed duck trap on No.3 Bed until early February. As a result, just 57 Teals were ringed compared with 142 last winter. Inevitably most returns for our ringed ducks are from wildfowlers and the geographic footprint of returns from our wintering Teals continues to expand with a bird shot south-east of Moscow. Reduced operation of the trap also limited opportunities for the Moorhens which enjoy the grain put out for the ducks and just six were ringed compared with 26 last winter.

Winter waders are unusual. Three Snipes were trapped, but the star was the Woodcock ringed on No1 Bed.

Winter ringing is a combination of resident birds and migrants from further north in the UK or Continental Europe. Totals for a representative selection of resident birds are shown below. It would seem that the 2018 breeding season was not a good one at Woolston which reflects national trends.

	2018-2019	2017-2018	Delta
Blackbird	29	46	-17
Song Thrush	8	14	-6
Robin	18	25	-7
Wren	37	62	-25
Long-tailed Tit	67	88	-21

Warblers lingered into the last quarter of 2018 with seven Reed Warblers, 10 Blackcaps and 20 Chiffchaffs ringed. More unusual was that a further 10 Chiffchaffs were ringed in the first three months of 2019. A Yellow-browed Warbler was trapped on No.1 Bed on 21st October 2018.

Winter visitors were evident in variable numbers. It was a modest 'Brambling winter' and only 67 were ringed compared with 179 last winter. Redwing passage is primarily a fourth quarter event and although 2018 produced a creditable 130 Redwings ringed, it in no way compared with the massive passage in the last quarter of 2017 when 376 were ringed. The late autumn of 2017 had also been exceptional for the arrival of Continental Goldcrests and 376 had been ringed at Woolston. 2018 was more typical of recent years with 225 ringed. Amongst other irruptive finches Lesser Redpolls arrived in good numbers with 70 ringed compared with a very poor 44 last winter.

Reed Buntings bucked the trend, arriving in good numbers with 161 ringed across the reserve compared with 87 last winter. Some of these found the sacrificial crop on No.3 Bed where other seedeaters were notable by their absence. Yellowhammers are restricted to the eastern end of the reserve and small numbers are caught on No.1 Bed. The 10 ringed in the first quarter of 2019 was a notable total.

It is too early to have any view of the breeding season except to say that the Blue Tits and Great Tits appear to have done well in the nest boxes. A total of 171 chicks have been ringed on No.3 Bed compared with 158 in 2018 and 155 in 2017.

Michael Miles, on behalf of the Woolston Ringing Team

HILBRE BIRD OBSERVATORY (HIBO)

Ringing March 2019 to May 2019

On 6th March 2019 Stephen Simpson visited Hilbre and photographed lots of birds including a Turnstone. He sent the picture of the Turnstone to Richard Smith because it had a colour flag on its left leg. Richard contacted the Records Officer at the Obs and very quickly he found that the Turnstone had been ringed at a place called Alert in Canada. There is a military base at Alert that is reputed to be the most northerly, permanently inhabited place on the planet. It takes about 10 hours on a passenger jet to get from the UK to Toronto and then a further 10 hours in a slightly slower, military jet transport aircraft to get from Toronto to Alert. The scale of arctic Canada is immense. Consequently, Stephen's photograph is an important addition to the data regarding the migration of Turnstones, we thank him for taking the trouble to send it to us and would urge other birders to look out for colour-ringed birds and to report them to us, Richard Smith, or directly to the BTO.

Then it was April. Hilbre is a well-known migration watch point that relies on drift migration for a lot of the birds that arrive on the island. Birds are encouraged to migrate north in the spring by winds that have a component of south in their direction. If the wind has a component of east in its direction, as well as the southerly component, the birds often arrive on Hilbre. Under these conditions nocturnal migrants find themselves around the North Wales coast or over the Irish Sea at dawn and regularly turn back which means they have an increased chance of finding Hilbre.

April 2019 produced south-easterly winds for most of the month and provided a remarkable total of 378 birds ringed on Hilbre. There were no BBRC rare birds but scarce birds that do not get caught on Hilbre every spring turned up, examples ringed included Great Tit, Tree Pipit, Ring Ouzel, Lesser Whitethroat, Woodpigeon and Whinchat. There were two birds, a Chiffchaff and a Blackcap, recovered on Hilbre that had been ringed at other UK sites and a total of 236 Willow Warblers was an excellent addition to the data we have on these birds. With so many Willow Warblers arriving it was no surprise that two birds, probably of the subspecies *acredula* ('Northern Willow Warbler'), arrived. They were quite large and lacked yellow in their plumage and were not very green either. They need to be caught in Scandinavia to confirm this though.

We only caught six Wheatears, all of the Greenland race, this spring which was very disappointing. The nominate race Northern Wheatears that pass through Hilbre are not often caught, but we would hope for rather more Greenland-race birds. We did resolve an identification problem we had last year though. We followed a female, Greenland-race Wheatear around the island because it appeared to have the tail pattern of an Isabelline Wheatear. When we looked at the female Greenland-race birds we caught this year we were able to explain why the tail pattern looked wrong in last year's bird. When we examined this year's birds we found that they have very long, but flimsy, white uppertail coverts. What must have happened last year was that the uppertail coverts of that bird were stuck to its central tail feathers so that the dark parts of the central tail feathers were covered up!

April was a big month for Yellow Wagtails, *motacilla flava*, on the Wirral. These birds were present in huge numbers with most of them being of the British race *flavissima*. There were large numbers of these birds on the ground at Hilbre which is unusual here. The weather was very warm and the wagtails were feeding on insects without noticing the potter traps that had been set to catch them. It was frustrating that not a single Yellow Wagtail was caught. However, despite some disappointments, the spring of 2019 will go down as a great spring for ringing of common migrants at Hilbre Bird Observatory.

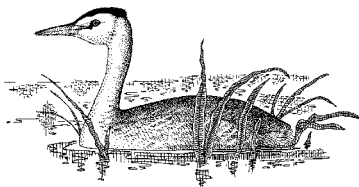
John Elliott, on behalf of the Hilbre Bird Observatory

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*.

One Man's Birding

.....AT HURLESTON

This spring, I took a sad but necessary decision to give up doing the WeBS counts at Hurleston reservoir. It is probably about half a mile from the parking place to the hide, but the walk was becoming more painful and the stops more frequent. It was, to say the least, a disappointment after many years watching a site which has always been rather special for me.

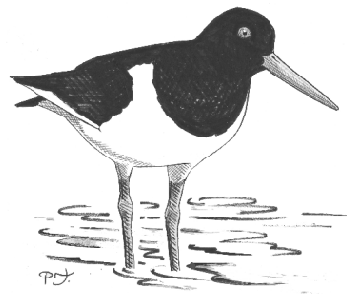


When I first came to Nantwich, I saw a nearby reservoir marked on the map and headed for it. It would clearly not be much of a birding reservoir - not very large, and boringly square. Nevertheless, it was water and it was convenient. It was there that I met two young boys who were keen to show me a Blue-headed Wagtail which they had found. One of them was Stuart Gibson, later to become a good friend and the driving force in creating Nantwich Natural History Society, as well as being very briefly (before his untimely death in a road accident when leaving Hurleston) County Recorder for the Cheshire Ornithological Association (COA).

The small hide erected by the society in his memory stands near the old oak tree, under which we often sheltered from the wind and rain. For several years we had close views of a wagtail roost in the bushes there - a hundred or more Pied and maybe a dozen or two Yellow. Sadly, they are long gone: Yellow particularly is now very much a rarity.

All this relates to the west bank, where a narrow fringe of reed-bed, a thicket of willow and alder and an overgrown hawthorn hedge provide cover and feeding for birds. The other three banks are simply sloping, grassed areas. Once on a day (and I am going back many years) they were grazed by sheep and we found plenty of butterflies as summer progressed; now, largely neglected, they are characterised by coarse and unproductive vegetation - not only have the butterflies gone, but so too have the passage Wheatears.

Sitting in the west bank hide, though, it is possible to watch a decent array of common birds visiting the feeders and find Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers moving through in spring and autumn. In summer, a couple of Reed Warblers may be heard singing (though they seem to have been absent for a couple of years now). Looking out across the water, there's a good chance of seeing a Kingfisher flying past or perched in front of the hide - and, on one occasion, I was baffled by a weird-looking creature making a bee-line towards me. It then revealed itself as a grass snake, swimming right across and making landfall immediately in front of the hide.



Hurleston is a drinking water reservoir, fed from the Llangollen Canal by a spillway; if the level from this source drops, water is pumped in from the Shropshire Union below. This means that only very rarely, and never in recent years, has there been a fringe of mud to attract waders: the odd Oystercatcher or Common Sandpiper using an empty fishing stage is about as good as it gets.

It is certainly not a place for rarities; the Red-rumped Swallow feeding over the locks a few years ago was exceptional. On the other hand, you never know what may drop in if you visit often enough and stay for a while. In summer, it might be a Common or even a Black Tern, or a stray Common Scoter or

passing Hobby. In winter Goosanders may join the regular Mallard and Tufted Ducks - and when the reservoir freezes in hard weather the inflow from the spillway keeps a limited area ice free. That's when a flock of Wigeon or a few Teal or other dabblers can be found crowded together, taking advantage of the open water. I suppose you could say that Hurleston is the sort of place where you hope, rather than expect, something unusual to turn up.

It does have, though, two very special features. In winter, several thousand gulls gather to roost: mostly Black-headed (we've strained our eyes often enough, finding the occasional Mediterranean

in the dense pack), and quite a few Lesser-Black Backs. The species aren't important, though - it is the spectacle. On a winter evening, when the birds fly up and wheel around for no reason anyone can ever understand and the bright, low light catches them, the effect is like a blizzard. Gleaming white, twisting and turning - this sight can reasonably be described as phenomenal.

Or, in summer, it is time for the Great Crested Grebes. At the very least they will be displaying, neck-twisting and shaking out their ear-tufts. Best of all, though, is when they have young: at first being carried on the parents' backs, then swimming frantically after them with their constant, penetrating begging calls. The grebes don't succeed in breeding every year (mink are unwelcome arrivals, and may be the reason) but I have spent many a happy hour sitting in the hide and just watching and listening.

Over the years, there has been much more to remember. I've fitted in some undistinguished wildfowl counts which haven't added much to science, I've had days when the water has been virtually empty of birds and others when I've struck lucky with some of the less usual visitors. But I will always think of Hurleston in terms of the snowstorm of the gull roost as the characteristic feature of winter and the pathetic pleading of the young grebes as the sound of summer.

Bob Anderson

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 that the birds on your patch are having a good year, we have House Sparrows and Starling young coming out of our ears, the Blackbirds have also had a good first round and one pair have fledged a second clutch and are carrying nest material for a third. Swift and House Martin numbers in Weaverham are down on last year; both species numbers are below ten.

Now for a somewhat controversial issue bearing in mind these are my own views. On 25 April 2019 Natural England removed general licences for a number of species. In short the general licence allows people to shoot vermin species on land where they have permission of the land owner to protect livestock and to protect crops, also to protect humans from health issues, for example thousands of Canada Geese on public parkland, without having to apply to Natural England for a licence to do so. As of 25 April 2019 these licences were withdrawn, once again the powers that be seem to be persecuting the farming and shooting groups, when I feel that would be better employed policing SSSI and Ramsar sites.

I have seen many times a pair of Magpies and Carrion Crows scour a hedgerow system and take every nest of eggs and fledglings in the hedge. Many people I know will disagree and say that pesticides used today are responsible for the demise of many of our farmland birds. Whilst this is true to a point, many of the chemicals used forty years ago when species numbers of all our farmland birds were up were far more destructive than the ones used today. I agree that any chemical use is bad but with the high demand for foodstuffs the farmer has to use them or go under. Farmers today are doing far more for our farmland birds than they were thirty years ago, and the shooting fraternity or at least 90% of them are doing a great deal for our farmland and woodland birds.

I can recall nearly forty years ago whilst working at Peckforton Estate the gamekeepers all had active 'gibbets' the policy of displaying the vermin species they had killed by hanging them up for their Lord and Master to see, (a process I have always disagreed with), however, every hedgerow held Yellowhammers, Whitethroats, Chaffinches and Bullfinches to name but a few. Every meadow and field held Skylarks and Lapwings. The woods at Peckforton held Spotted and Pied Flycatchers in great numbers. The same cannot be said today.

Forty years ago if I had told my Grandfather we had Woodpigeons feeding on our birdtable he would not have believed me, if I had told my father we had Magpies and Jays in the back garden after birdfood he would have sent the men in white coats round. It was just not heard of. Woodpigeons and corvids because of their persecution were much more wary of man than they are today.

I am led to believe that the numbers of applications for General Licences applied for since 25 April is in the thousands, calling for a rethink by Natural England.

I hope that you all have a good summer and enjoy your holidays, whilst you are out and about at home keep your eyes open. If you think something does not look right it probably isn't, trust your gut instinct and obtain as much detail as you can and pass it on to the Police. Please do not put yourselves in any danger use your scopes and binos and as we all carry a note book list as much detail as you can. Again if you have to report a matter to the Police and do not get the response you would expect drop me a line with the incident number and I will chase it up.

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

WARRINGTON AREA

The only issue here in Warrington is one that has been running for nearly 30 years! It concerns a 68-hectare site in North Warrington called Peel Hall. A Gloucester-based developer called Satnam which owns the site has been attempting to gain planning permission to build over a thousand houses on this last wild area of north Warrington. I surveyed it many years ago and found it rich in wildlife with regular wintering Short-eared Owls (sadly no longer seen) and good populations of Reed Buntings and warblers as well as a rich flora. Warrington Council has consistently refused planning permission, as have planning inspectors, when the developers have appealed. The latest position is that a further appeal has been refused and the developers have now appealed to the High Court with a decision expected in late July. There is a very active local group fighting Satnam's plans with support from the Warrington Nature Conservation Forum. 30 years must make this one of the longest planning issues, but clearly Satnams refuse to go away because the rewards if they were to get planning permission would be considerable.

There is still much opposition to Warrington Council's Local Plan for thousands of new houses over the next 15 years on green belt land in Grappenhall and Appleton, with vast areas of land likely to disappear under concrete, to say nothing about increased congestion and pollution in a town already identified as one of the most polluted in the UK. Utter madness!

Brian Martin, Warrington Area Representative

CONSERVATION REPRESENTATIVES

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

CAWOS News

Since my last report we have had the Annual General Meeting and one Council meeting in April. Firstly, I would like to welcome the following new members, Mr D Hiley and Mr D Willars.

The AGM was held prior to the start of our final indoor talk on 1st March, which I was unable to attend. But I can report that the meeting was quorate and that the Chairman's, Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were in the March *Bird News*.

There was some misunderstanding with regard to the agenda item on the increase in annual subscriptions proposed for 2020, which have not increased since 2003. This was discussed at the April Council meeting and Council agreed **the subscription will increase to £15 for individuals and £18.75 for family membership in 2020**. Thus, any **standing order payment will need to be updated** before next year's payment.

Another issue raised was that Council should consider changing the Constitution regarding types of membership, see later.

The following officers and ordinary members were duly elected:

Officers: Chairman, David Steventon; Vice-chairman, vacant; Secretary, Ted Lock; Treasurer, John Patterson; County Recorder, Hugh Pulsford.

Ordinary members: Brian Dyke, Phil Hampson, Roy Leigh, Tony Parker and Richard Sturman.

Council met in April and a number of issues were up for discussion. Changes to the constitution were explored, as raised at the AGM, regarding membership for young people. Wording along the following lines was suggested: "Junior membership/Young persons should be free until 21 years of age or while still in full-time education. They should receive all the benefits of individual membership, but shall not be able to vote or hold office until 21 years of age or the full annual subscription is paid".

The question of having a meeting on the Wirral to enable CAWOS members from the area to attend was raised, further discussion is needed with bird societies in that area to ascertain interest, a suitable format and a venue. Heswall or Ness Gardens were suggested. It would be useful to get some feedback from our members on the Wirral as to the likely interest and willingness to work with Council to try and make this happen. Council also felt we should have a presence at the Wirral high tides, with a poster board, *Bird Reports* and membership details; volunteers to help would be greatly appreciated.

The 2016 *Bird Report* has been published and we hope members were happy with it. A big thanks goes to all those who contributed, with a special thanks to the Systematic List Editor, Andy Livermore. Work is well under way for the 2017 *Bird Report*. We are always looking for good quality photographs to be considered for inclusion in our *Bird Reports*, not just for 2017, but also 2018 and 2019. Mark Woodhead who contributed photographs for the 2016 report has agreed to collect high quality photographs for possible inclusion in the 2017-19 reports. Pictures of birds you have *seen in Cheshire and Wirral* in the relevant year need to be sent to Mark at woodheadmwa@aol.com. All species will be considered and obviously if you were lucky enough to get good shots of rarities they are a must!! Location and date are essential. So hopefully for those with a keen interest in bird photography, this is your chance to get your best pictures considered for the *Bird Report*.

On the conservation front David Norman drew the Council's attention to the last information regarding tidal power for the Mersey estuary or Liverpool Bay. David and others have been making inquiries about the impact of such a scheme on wildlife, to no avail. Recently, the Liverpool Mayor's office has offered a meeting with Mike Wilkinson, the RSPB's Senior Conservation Planner (Tidal Lagoons). Mike will be copying his notes to David Norman, as President of CAWOS, David Parker as Chairman of the Dee Estuary Conservation Group (DECG), and Gary Broad, as Chairman of the Mersey Estuary Conservation Group (MECG). The Mersey and Dee are our county's most important bird sites and we need to pay more attention to their conservation. Another area of concern has been the recent reapplication for a Water Sports Park at Mere Farm

Quarry, Chelford. You may remember, about two years ago, that CAWOS objected strongly against this planning application, which was turned down, and followed by an independent inquiry, which came down in favour of returning the site back to green belt and supporting biodiversity. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government issued a National Policy Planning Framework in February 2019, which has given the Water Sports organisation the opportunity to apply again to use the North Pool for wake boarding.

Council is in the process of putting forward an objection to Cheshire East Borough Council which has to be in by 18th July. The application number is 19/2513M, please send an objection if you feel strongly about the continuing loss of biodiversity. The North Pool has breeding schedule 1 and BAP species and hosts an assemblage of at least 10 other breeding species. While outside the breeding season it hosts 5 species of dabbling duck and 3 species of diving duck. Any one of these criteria qualifies the North Pool for Cheshire status as a local wildlife site. These would be lost if the North Pool is used for water sport. Plus the loss of green belt and openness.

Council is continuing to explore BirdTrack as a means of recording our data, a new version is now available which can use our gazetteer for names and places of bird sightings and has also been improved in other areas. It was noted that it will be possible for a representative of CAWOS to obtain access to the BTO database, for searches and for data for the annual *Bird Report*. The way forward to help with any decision to move to BirdTrack will be facilitated by a technical meeting of recorders and chairmans from Shropshire and Cheshire Ornithological Societies. There is a need to get a system in place as both Geoff and Sheila Blamire will not be handling our database after 2020.

I think you can see that Council has been busy dealing with internal and external issues whilst still finding time to do some birding and survey work.

Ted Lock, Secretary

Notes & Letters

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

For the first time I haven't received any contributions for 'Notes and Letters', which is very disappointing. This is one of my favourite sections, where we can read about unusual avian behaviour or amusing anecdotes; look back at past experiences; reflecting on the changing fortunes of Cheshire and Wirral's birdlife; examine attitudes to birding, social media, twitching, etc. Also, we are always interested in your views on any of our articles, or on the newsletter itself, which includes what you like, what we can improve on, and other things you would like to see included.

Bird News started in January 1989 (gulp!) and in the special issue of *Bird News* (93), marking the 25th Anniversary of CAWOS, I wrote in the Editorial "Its main purpose is to celebrate the 25 years of *Bird News* by highlighting articles from previous newsletters. There is a bias towards earlier issues, on the basis that these are likely to include items forgotten, or not known to newer members." So are there any previous articles you would like to be reprinted which would be interesting to newer members?

Finally, does anyone fancy writing a future Guest Editorial? It will save me twisting the arms of my selected victims! Or would you like to have a regular slot? Could you contribute any drawings to illustrate the newsletter?

So, it's your newsletter - without contributions there wouldn't be a *Bird News*!

Sheila Blamire

CAWOS Programme

4th OCTOBER 2019 'BIRDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE'

by Dr James Pearce-Higgins, BTO

Climate change has risen up the social and political agenda, and is now much discussed in the media. We are fortunate in the UK to have a wealth of long-running survey and monitoring data with which to understand how climate change is affecting our natural environment. James will use these data to summarise how birds in the UK have been affected by climate change in recent decades, particularly drawing upon analysis of BTO's long-running datasets. He will consider the ways in which climate change affects species, and how the UK avifauna may change in the future. Finally, he will conclude with some signs of hope, showing how the right action can increase the resilience of the natural world to climate change.

1st NOVEMBER 2019 'FROM MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA' by Gary Jones

Gary will take us on a journey from the mountains of Wales down to the coastal fringes, showing many of the birds that occur on the way. Wales has a great variety of habitats and wildlife, so expect a selection of great images highlighting the delights of this country, which is of course, just on our doorstep.

6th DECEMBER 2019 'AN INDIAN WINTER' by Keith Offord

Anyone who has travelled to the Indian Subcontinent cannot have returned unmoved. There are few countries in the world which offer such an exotic sensation. This talk explores the fabulous wildlife of the area, starting with the extraordinary waterbird oasis of Bharatpur, home to endangered Siberian Cranes, psychedelic kingfishers and every imaginable heron and egret, then onto the emblem of Indian conservation, the elusive tigers of Bandhavgarh. Along the way stunning wildlife is punctuated with some of the greatest cultural riches in the world.

3rd JANUARY 2020 'BEYOND 66.5 DEGREES NORTH - ARCTIC NORWAY' by Richard Steel

In this talk bird photographer, Richard Steel, will take you on a journey that starts around 200 miles inside the Arctic Circle and then northward through the taiga forest and into the tundra areas of the most north-eastern point of Europe. In the land of the summer midnight sun, where time almost becomes abstract for birds and people, a photographer is challenged by both the weather and sleep deprivation. On the journey some iconic and fascinating birds will be encountered from Pine Grosbeak to the eerie silence of the Ruff lek.

7th FEBRUARY 2020 'FROM ALASKA TO ARGENTINA - WILDLIFE THROUGH THE AMERICAS' by Mark Sisson

The Americas represent two huge and adjoining continents with an array of natural environments and a resultant diversity of wildlife. Professional wildlife photographer Mark Sisson's new talk will take you on a representative journey through some of them including the coasts of Alaska, the rainforests of Costa Rica, the beaches of north Patagonia and the mountains of southern Chile: bears, birds, bats and beaches await!

6th MARCH 2020 'MERSEY ESTUARY'S BIRDS' by Dermot Smith

The Mersey Estuary is the 10th best wetland in the UK for birds. It is the best place in Britain for overwintering Dunlin and moulting Shelduck. It is also one of the most inaccessible wetlands. However, bird counts having been taking place on the estuary since the 1950s and Dermot will reveal why this is such an important site and how bird populations have changed over the last 70 years and what threats it now faces. Although surrounded by urban development it is actually a truly wild, undisturbed place and undervalued, but really special, place.

OCTOBER 9 5 APR Sat 15 7 SEPTEMBER 8 May 7th 3 Jan Sun 28

Diary

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
- 31 Wirral Wader Festival, RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands, 10am to 5pm

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Wirral Wader Festival, RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands, 10am to 5pm
- 2 HPRSPB AGM and MEMBERS' EVENING
- 10 NCRSPB FV North Wirral, meet at Leasowe Lighthouse car park CH46 4TH at 10am
- 13 SECOS 'A YEAR ON THE MOSS' by Barry Probin
- 13 SECOS 'A YEAR ON THE MOSS' by Barry Probin
- 15 KOS Hilbre, meet in Tatton Street car park, Knutsford at 8am or at West Kirby at 9am
- 15 HPRSPB Pennington Flash, meet in Marple at 8am, contact Sue Banks 07880 995115
- 15 SECOS Hilbre Island, ring for details
- 20 NCRSPB AGM followed by 'MERSEY GATEWAY PARTNERSHIP' by Andrea Drewitt
- 27 KOS 'COASTS AND ISLANDS' by Paul Hobson
- 27 WGBG 'THE CANADIAN ROCKIES' by Ian Newton

OCTOBER

- 1 SECOS Doxey Marsh, ring for details
- 2-6 NCRSPB Lincolnshire weekend, ring for details
- 4 **CAWOS 'BIRDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE' by Dr James Pearce-Higgins, BTO**
- 6 HPRSPB Pugneys Country Park, meet in Marple at 8am, contact Peter Hill 07971 636822
- 11 SECOS 'ARDNAMURCHAN - ALMOST AN ISLAND' by Mike Roberts
- 18 NCRSPB 'FINLAND: A QUESTION OF ENDURANCE' by Sheila Blamire
- 20 NCRSPB BMW RSPB Reserve, meet at the reserve car park at 9:30am
- 20 KOS Lunt Meadows, Merseyside, meet in Tatton Street car park, Knutsford at 9am
- 20 SECOS RSPB Leighton Moss, ring for details
- 21 HPRSPB 'ICELAND - A LAND OF FIRE, ICE, WATERFALLS AND MIDGES!' by Ian Newton
- 25 KOS 'A NATURAL OBSESSION' by Holly Page
- 25 WGBG '2014 - JIM'S BIG YEAR' by Jim Almond
- 27 WGBG Spurn (by coach), meet 7:30am, ring Steve McGann 01625 533652 for details
- tba HPRSPB Weekend trip to Spurn/Flamborough

NOVEMBER

- 1 **CAWOS 'FROM MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA' by Gary Jones**
- 5 SECOS Pennington Flash, ring for details
- 8 SECOS 'IN SEARCH OF FLOWER KISSERS' by Mike Leach
- 9 KOS North Wales, meet in Lilac Avenue, Knutsford at 9am
- 10 HPRSPB Hilbre Island/Hoylake, meet in Marple at 8am, contact John Northover 0161 4276745
- 15 NCRSPB Talk (tbc) by Jeff Clarke
- 16 NCRSPB Marshside RSPB, Meresands Wood, Martin Mere, meet at Marshside car park at 9am
- 18 RSPB 'THE BIRDS OF THE GAMBIA' by Dennis Atherton
- 22 KOS 'SNOW LEOPARDS IN NW INDIA' by Hugh Pulsford
- 22 WGBG 'A SHOT AT WILDLIFE' by Pauline Greenhalgh
- 24 WGBG Martin Mere/Lunt Meadows (by coach), meet 8am ring Steve McGann 01625 533652 for details

DECEMBER

- 2 HPRSPB CHRISTMAS PARTY
- 3 SECOS Sandbach Flashes & Xmas lunch, ring for details
- 6 **CAWOS 'AN INDIAN WINTER' by Keith Offord**

- 6 WGBG 'SVALBARD: A POLAR WILDERNESS' by Robert Davidson
- 8 NCRSPB Moore NR, meet at Lapwing Lane car park at 9am
- 8 HPRSPB Marshside/Martin Mere, meet in Marple at 8am, contact Joan Potts 01663 745208
- 8 SECOS RSPB Middleton Lakes, ring for details
- 13 KOS CHRISTMAS PARTY
- 13 SECOS 'RSPB RESERVES AND THEIR BIRDS' by Gary Prescott
- 14 WGBG Chelford (by car), meet 9am (or 8:45am at Guild) followed by Christmas lunch
- 15 KOS Marshside RSPB and Martin Mere WWT, meet in Tatton Street car park at 9am

JANUARY 2020

- 3 **CAWOS** '**BEYOND 66.5 DEGREES NORTH - ARCTIC NORWAY**' by Richard Steel
- 7 SECOS Marbury CP, ring for details
- 10 SECOS 'WILD LIFE, WILD PLACES' by John Gardner
- 11 KOS Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB, meet in Lilac Avenue, Knutsford 9am
- 19 KOS Winter Birdwatch, Allen Hide, Tatton Park 11am to 1pm. Joint venture with Tatton Park
- 24 KOS 'LAND OF CONTRASTS —NAMIBIA' by Keith Offord
- 24 WGBG 'WORLD WIDE' by Dave Brotton
- 26 WGBG Fylde Coast (by coach), meet 8am ring Steve McGann 01625 533652 for details
- 26 SECOS WWT Slimbridge, ring for details

FEBRUARY

- 4 SECOS Tittesworth Reservoir, ring for details
- 7 **CAWOS** '**FROM ALASKA TO ARGENTINA - WILDLIFE THROUGH THE AMERICAS**' by Mark Sisson
- 8 KOS Tatton Park, meet at Dog Lodge lay-by, off Mobberley Rd, at 9am
- 14 SECOS 'FANTASTIC FARNES' by Jeff Clarke
- 16 SECOS North Wales, ring for details
- 21-23 WGBG Solway/Caerlaverock weekend (by coach), meet 7:30am ring Steve McGann 01625 533652 for details
- 28 KOS 'OUR NOT SO COMMON SWIFTS' by Tanya Hoare
- 28 WGBG 'THE JEWEL HUNTER' by Chris Gooddie

MARCH

- 3 SECOS Moore NR, ring for details
- 6 **CAWOS** **AGM followed by 'MERSEY ESTUARY'S BIRDS'** by Dermot Smith
- 13 SECOS 'BURTON MERE WETLANDS AND THE DEE ESTUARY' by Graham Jones
- 15 KOS Pennington Flashes, meet in Tatton Street car park at 9am

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
- MRSBP 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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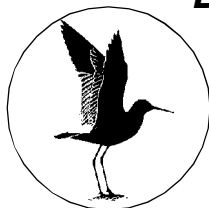
For further information, please contact:

David Steventon at chairman@cawos.org Tel: 01625 421936

If you know anyone who might want to advertise
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***** **CAWOS INDOOR PROGRAMME** *****

'BIRDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE' by Dr James Pearce-Higgins

4th October 2019 at St Vincent's RC Church Hall, Knutsford

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