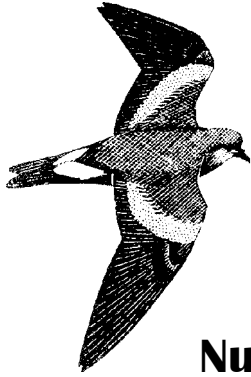


Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society

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BIRD NEWS

Number 112 November 2019



County Rarity: Sabine's Gull
The Seven Whistler: Whimbrel
Book Review: Rostherne Mere
WeBS counters needed

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

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Front cover: Teal by Ray Scally

Other illustrations by Tony Broome, Phil Jones and Ray Scally

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 15th February 2020

Guest Editorial

It would appear that any thoughts that the earth can recover to something of its past richness and diversity in relation to the environment and in particular its avifauna, are way off the mark as we approach 2020. The world seems to be on fire in many places and hit by floods and violent storms in other places. Whatever you believe in, no matter how many times the politicians tell you global warming isn't happening, extreme weather events that were touted as 'once in a hundred years' are now happening annually, if not monthly. I'm certainly no expert. All I can go off is what the scientists tell us. They have no reason to lie and have no hidden agendas. Bird populations are down by over 30% in North America which equates to a frightening *three billion* birds... Once common and easy-to-see bird species in Australia are now rare and difficult to see and in Asia birds are being decimated by prime forest being replaced by oil palm plantations. Even in Europe, familiar bird populations are a fraction of what they used to be. The poles aren't unaffected with some arctic species at both ends predicted to become extinct in the next few decades.

Anyway, back to *Bird News*. It seems a long time since the first issue. I wonder if anyone can remember what was on the front cover. In this one, Graham Jones summarises the last few months including the successful breeding of Great White Egrets with high counts on the Dee and the growing winter flocks of Pink-footed Geese which have surely benefitted from the lack of wildfowling disturbance.

There are a couple of reviews of the recently published *Rostherne Mere*, which is a two volume account of the 130 years of ornithological recording and human history of the mere and its birds. I've had chance to read them myself and I'm not sure if I'd describe the works as an avifauna or be able to compare them with other avifaunas. They are interesting in places and the species chosen for the accounts have been thoroughly researched and well presented. Both volumes have had an enormous amount of effort put into their final publications and are a credit to their primary authors, so why do I still feel there is so much missing and so much left out? As a Rostherne regular for around twenty years I can recall worthy events of which there is little or no mention at all. In fact, few of the young birders who spent their days watching from the hide and enhancing their birding abilities are mentioned. The famous Rostherne brass telescope was removed for cleaning by me and a friend and we tried it out sea-watching at Spurn Point before returning it, but there's no mention. We did have permission! There are a lot of bird species not mentioned at all. I went straight for Barn Owl in the pages because I found the first for a long time in a barn on Marsh Lane, twitched by Ron Harrison, but no mention. The lack of a complete bird list mystifies me as I'm used to that sort of format. It just feels that this is an account of those fortunate to have access to the mere. A private account. I'd have loved to see a chapter on visiting birders and in particular the youngsters who spent so much of their youth staring out across the mere and challenging the long-held beliefs of the old timers... Even so, there are gems throughout the pages and you'll enjoy reading them.

John Elliott has done a write-up on Hilbre and recent migration. A great place and always enjoyable to read what's been going through. Lower numbers of some regular species have been recorded this year so it will be interesting to see if there is an increase next year. There is also a favourite of mine 'One Man's Birding'. Bob Anderson seems to be able to put into words what birders feel but are very rarely able to describe and his ramblings (in the kindest sense) always bring a wry smile to my lips for some reason. It feels as though I was sat there with him when his leaf-warblers quietly passed by. Oh, and he's been to Spurn sea-watching! He has kept that quiet! The mixed fortunes of local Peregrines is summarised by Norman Sadler. It's a pity people still think shooting them is acceptable. Michael Miles gives details of the ringing activities at Woolston Eyes with some species appearing to be down in numbers, even allowing for a reduced ringing effort. Richard Smith explains where our Whimbrels migrate to and from. Two subspecies, one from Scandinavia and the other from Iceland stage through Cheshire and Wirral and the use of geo-locators has shown that Icelandic birds fly directly between Iceland and West Africa in autumn, out over the Atlantic, a distance of around 4000 miles. Waders are amazing.

You'll notice that I haven't mentioned the 'B' word, mainly because I have really given up on the ability of politicians to tell the truth. I just hope that whatever happens, environmental protection isn't watered down and there are birds for our children to enjoy in the future.

Tony Broome

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 15th February 2020 - 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 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 May to August 2019

SITE REPORTS

Chester area

Two Egyptian Geese were at Ledsham on May 12th, a Quail was at Puddington on May 5th and 6th and Jun 12th and Bickley Hall Farm on Jul 4th. Two Hobbies were at Puddington on Jul 27th and a Channel Wagtail was at Puddington on May 5th.

Congleton area

13 Mandarins were at Scholar Green on Jul 21st and eight Common Scoters were at Astbury Mere on Jul 28th. A Marsh Harrier was at Mow Cop on Aug 27th and Red Kite there on May 19th and 23rd. A single Greenshank was at Astbury Mere on Aug 4th along with five Common Terns, three Arctic Terns and a single Black Tern was there on May 8th. Single Hobbies were noted at Astbury Mere, Congleton, Mow Cop and Scholar Green. Two Spotted Flycatchers were at Brereton CP on May 14th, Pied Flycatcher at Swettenham on Jun 30th and two Crossbills at Mow Cop on May 30th.

Crewe and Nantwich area

Two Egyptian Geese were at Elton Hall Flash on Jul 17th to 26th, two Garganey at the same site on Aug 26th and three Common Scoters at Doddington Pool on Jul 29th. A Black-necked Grebe was at Doddington Pool on several dates in Aug whilst two Cattle Egrets were at Elton Hall Flash on Aug 22nd. A Red Kite was at Burleydam on Jul 8th and 29th and Aug 27th with another at Coppenhall on Jul 11th. An Avocet was at Elton Hall Flash on Jul 18th to 21st, and also there two Wood Sandpipers on Jul 21st and Greenshank on May 15th to 18th. A Caspian Gull was at Elton Hall Flash on Aug 7th, three Common Terns there on Jul 14th and 21st and an Arctic Tern at Watch Lane Flash on May 8th, elsewhere three Black Terns were at Hurleston Reservoir on May 8th. Single Hobbies were noted at several sites throughout the period. A Marsh Tit was noted at Bickerton Hill on Jun 22nd, a Wood Warbler at Bulkeley on May 12th, two Spotted Flycatchers at Lawton Woods on May 27th, Sound Common on Aug 12th and Wyburnby Moss on Aug 26th.

Ellesmere Port and Neston area

Four Garganey were at BMW on Jul 27th. Quails were in the Burton area on May 19th, 22nd and Jun 16th. Three Black-necked Grebes were at Shotwick on May 6th and 7th, a Glossy Ibis was at Denhall on May 28th, nine Spoonbills at Parkgate on Aug 3rd, two Cattle Egrets regularly seen at BMW where Great White Egret bred for the first time, whilst 35 Great White Egrets were at Denhall on Aug 2nd. Ospreys were over Burton Point on Jun 5th and 6th, four Marsh Harriers at



Hobby
by Ray Scally

Parkgate on Aug 31st and single Hen Harriers were there on several dates in May and Aug. Waders included: at BMW two Curlew Sandpipers on May 19th and 20th, Terek Sandpiper on Jul 9th and 10th, Sanderling on May 26th, Little Stint on several dates in May, two Wood Sandpipers on Jun 26th, Jul 27th, Aug 6th, eight Spotted Redshanks on Jul 3rd, and 25 Greenshanks at Parkgate on Aug 22nd. A Little Gull was at BMW on May 10th, Jul 15th and Jul 16th where nine pairs of Mediterranean Gulls bred, and a Caspian Gull at BMW on Jul 1st. Four Sandwich Terns were at BMW on Jun 19th, also there two Black Terns at BMW on May 10th and a White-winged Black Tern on 24th and 25th. Three Short-eared Owls were at Parkgate on May 1st and Burton Marsh on Aug 19th, and three Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were at Burton on Aug 21st. Merlins were at Parkgate on Jul 22nd and Burton Marsh on Aug 13th and two Hobbies at Denhall on Jul 9th. Bearded Tits bred at BMW, a Spotted Flycatcher was there on Aug 11th, 10+ Yellow Wagtails at Shotwick on Aug 4th and a Channel Wagtail on May 6th.



Lesser Spotted
Woodpecker
by Ray Scally

Halton area

Two Egyptian Geese were at Pickering's Pasture on Jul 3rd, Garganey at Carr Lane Pools on Jun 17th, 27 Common Scoters past Pickering's Pasture on Jul 28th. Three Great White Egrets were at Hale on Aug 26th and 27th. Raptors included at Hale: Osprey on Aug 27th, Honey Buzzard on May 19th, Marsh Harrier on Aug 23rd, Hen Harrier on several dates in May and Aug, and single Red Kites were over on May 23rd, Aug 24th and 25th and another at Runcorn on Aug 22nd. Seven Avocets were at Hale shore on Jul 1st with a good count of 950 Ringed Plovers on Aug 19th, seven Whimbrels on Aug 19th, 170 Black-tailed Godwits were at Pickering's Pasture on Jul 11th, at Hale two Turnstones were present on Aug 11th, four Knots on Aug 12th, two Curlew Sandpipers on Aug 30th and seven Sanderlings on Aug 17th. A Wood Sandpiper was at Carr Lane Pools on May 27th and 31st and a Greenshank on Jun 8th and 23rd. A Little Gull appeared at Carr Lane Pools on Aug 29th, Common Tern at Hale on May 21st and five Arctic Terns on May 9th along with a single Black Tern. Short-eared Owl was at Hale on May 3rd, and 300+ Swifts over Hale village on Jul 24th. Two Hobbies were at Hale on May 5th. A Firecrest was at Hale on May 9th, two Spotted Flycatchers at Pickering's Pasture on Aug 20th, single Redstart were at Hale on May 9th and Pickering's Pasture on May 1st, Aug 20th and 25th, a Channel Wagtail was at Hale on May 4th and four Tree Pipits at Pickering's Pasture on Aug 27th.

Macclesfield area

31 Mandarins were at Rostherne on Jul 10th, single Common Scoters at Redesmere and Rostherne on several dates. A Black-necked Grebe was at Rostherne on Aug 4th. A Marsh Harrier was at Rostherne on May 23rd. Two Dotterels were at Danebower on May 5th to 8th, Greenshank at Poynton and Rostherne on Aug 25th, 30 Arctic Terns at Rostherne on May 8th and two Black Terns at Mere Farm SQ on May 9th. A pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers bred at Rostherne. Two Hobbies were at Poynton on May 8th. A Chough was at Windgather Rocks on several dates in Aug, Wood Warbler at Bosley Cloud on May 11th and 18th to 20th, four Spotted Flycatchers at Rostherne on Aug 20th, 21st and 25th, Redstart at Bosley on May 12th and 18th and two Tree Pipits at Bosley on May 18th.

Vale Royal area

Wildfowl included: a Whooper Swan at Neumann's Flash throughout May, Egyptian Goose and Ruddy Shelduck at Frodsham Marsh from Aug 3rd to 11th, three Garganey at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 5th and 9th, four Common Scoters at Tatton Mere on Jul 14th and a Long-tailed Duck at Frodsham Marsh on Jun 13th to 17th. The Smew remained at Newchurch Common until May 8th, reappearing on Aug 13th, five Goosanders were at Neumann's Flash on Jul 13th. Two Black-necked Grebes at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 4th and 5th and two Spoonbills there on May 17th. An Osprey was at Winsford on May 19th, Honey Buzzard at Lach Dennis on Jun 3rd, Marsh Harrier at Neumann's Flash on May 17th and a Hen Harrier at Frodsham Marsh on several dates. A Red Kite was at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 4th with another at Lostock on Jun 15th. c60 Avocets at

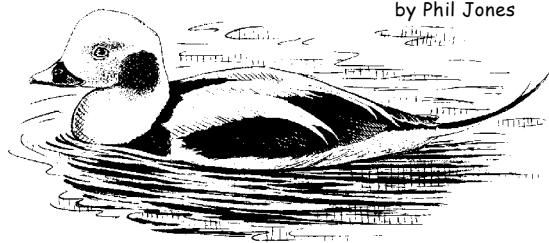
Frodsham Marsh on Jul 10th, 11 Little Ringed Plovers there on Jul 11th, six Whimbrels over Newchurch Common on May 7th, Bar-tailed Godwit at Frodsham Marsh on May 18th, 1138 Black-tailed Godwits at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 26th with Knot there on Jul 18th to 23rd and again in Aug, two Sanderlings at Neumann's Flash on May 26th, Wood Sandpiper at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 3rd to 9th along with four Greenshanks on May 18th and 20th. 15 Common Terns at Winsford on May 8th included at least two Arctic Terns, and five Black Terns at Frodsham Marsh on May 9th. Two Cuckoos were at Newchurch Common on May 31st and Jun 6th. A Wood Warbler was at Marshall's Arm on May 3rd, Pied Flycatcher at Delamere on May 1st along with Redstart, whilst a Tree Pipit was at Winsford on Aug 28th.

Warrington area

Pair of Garganey bred at Woolston Eyes with 580 Gadwalls present on Jul 22nd and single Goosander on Aug 22nd. An Osprey was at Moore on Jun 9th with another at Woolston Eyes on May 17th and Aug 29th with Red Kite on Jul 20th. Three Sanderlings were at Woolston Eyes on Aug 8th, seven Green Sandpipers on Aug 26th, Wood Sandpiper on May 3rd and Greenshank on Aug 15th. A Kittiwake was at Woolston Eyes on May 9th and Aug 10th, two Common Terns at Woolston Eyes on May 9th along with two Black Terns on May 8th and 9th. Two Cuckoos were at Woolston Eyes on May 25th. Three Hobbies were at Risley Moss on May 12th and Silver Lane Pools on Aug 6th. A Wood Warbler was at Risley Moss on May 6th, a Marsh Warbler was ringed at Woolston Eyes on Aug 8th, 20 White Wagtails at Silver Lane Pools on Aug 15th, Tree Pipit at Culcheth on Aug 25th and Woolston Eyes on 27th.

Wirral area

Six Eiders were off Hilbre on May 1st, 300 Common Scoters at Hoylake on Aug 29th, a Long-tailed Duck at Hilbre on Aug 19th, seven Goosanders at Leasowe on Aug 30th and eight Red-breasted Mergansers at Hoylake on Aug 25th. Seabirds of note included: 64 Red-throated Divers at Hilbre on May 1st, three Storm Petrels at New Brighton on Aug 15th, 100+ Manx Shearwaters at Hoylake on Aug 17th.



Long-tailed Duck
by Phil Jones

Five Great White Egrets were at Heswall on Aug 4th and 93 Little Egrets there on 25th. 120 Gannets were off Hilbre on Aug 19th with two Shags on Aug 2nd. An Osprey was at Hilbre on May 10th and Aug 8th and another at Leasowe on May 17th. Waders included: 2750 Ringed Plovers at Hilbre on May 27th, 87 Whimbrels at Heswall on May 7th, 1930 Curlews at Heswall on Aug 21st, 6140 Black-tailed Godwits at Caldy on Aug 23rd, two or three Curlew Sandpipers were at Hoylake on Aug 31st, 150 Sanderlings at Hoylake on Aug 29th, Wood Sandpiper at Heswall on May 29th, a Spotted Redshank on Jun 10th there and two Greenshanks at Hilbre on Aug 10th. Five Mediterranean Gulls were at Meols on Jul 25th and Hoylake on Aug 1st, a Glaucous Gull at Hoylake on May 10th. 650 Sandwich Terns were at Hilbre on Jul 21st, nine Little Terns on Aug 6th and two Black Terns at Hoylake on May 8th. Two Great Skuas were at Hoylake on Aug 23rd and 31st, two Pomarine Skuas on 23rd and 18 Arctic Skuas at Hilbre on Aug 19th. Four Razorbills at Hoylake on Jun 29th, two Puffins at Hilbre on Jun 2nd and a Black Guillemot off New Brighton on Jul 13th and Hilbre on Aug 28th and 30th. A Hooded Crow was at Meols and Leasowe on May 5th and 6th, Marsh Tit at Heswall on Aug 1st, Ring Ouzel at Leasowe on May 17th to 22nd and three Spotted Flycatchers at Leasowe on May 20th. A Redstart was at Hilbre on May 10th and Jun 29th and at Leasowe on May 1st. 13 Whinchats were at Leasowe on May 10th with 20 Wheatears on May 1st, 10 Yellow Wagtails on May 10th, a Blue-headed Wagtail was at Leasowe on May 10th and Meols on 15th.

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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, whatsapp groups (Cheshire, Marbury and Sandbach), Rob Cockbain, Bill Bellamy and everyone else who passed records on.

Notes and 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.

PEREGRINE UPDATE

First published in the *RSPB Chester Group Newsletter* August 2019.

Peregrines locally have had mixed fortunes in 2019. The Beeston pair laid four eggs but only one hatched. However, the pullus did very well from all the adults' attention and so was deemed too big when licensed climbers went down to recover it for ringing. The pair on the Shot Tower in Chester produced three fledglings, despite all the disturbance of the local building development work. Raptoraid, run by Jimmi Hill, has been running a watch on these birds to show members of the public. On my shift, I had great views of the female plucking a pigeon on the top of the Steam Mill, although on a different day I just missed one of the pair attack and kill a Buzzard. Another pair have taken up residence on the clock tower at Eaton Hall and produced chicks.

However, in April a badly-injured Peregrine was found in Aldford and taken to the Lower Moss Wood Wildlife Rescue Centre. Identified as a first-year bird, x-rays confirmed it had a broken wing and had been shot. Sadly, it had to be put down humanely. As the bird was not ringed and young Peregrines are driven out of their territory by the parents when old enough, the origin of the bird could not be ascertained. However, it must have been shot locally near Aldford, potentially sustaining the broken wing during the fall. Anyone who can offer information to assist the police with their investigation into this crime is urged to get in touch with the police, or the RSPB Investigations Unit at The Lodge.

Norman Sadler, RSPB Chester Group Leader

A BATTLE ROYAL

What I like about Rostherne Mere National Nature Reserve is that the unexpected can happen. Sometimes, if you are lucky you can be rewarded with a wildlife spectacle that can rival those to be found on any reserve you care to mention. Take Sunday morning 29th September for example. Martin Steele, Bill Bellamy and myself were sitting in the tranquil comfort of the AW Boyd Memorial Observatory looking out on the quintessential English landscape, scanning the mere, reedbeds, meadows, encircling woodlands and the sky to build a picture of the avifauna present, for entry into the log.

Now a Little Egret¹ though not regular, is however not an unusual bird to see on the reserve these days. So when one flashed across my field of view and made a hasty and ungainly landing into the tangle of half-submerged trees and vegetation below the Cormorant colony in Harpers Bank Wood, I merely called out "Little Egret just dropped in" to my companions. But what happened next was far from usual. The reason for the egret's crash landing immediately became apparent. It was being pursued by a large raptor. Was it a Buzzard? I looked again and no, it wasn't. I found myself exclaiming "can that be a Marsh Harrier??"

The female Marsh Harrier made a more dignified landing on a nearby perch and weighed up her target for a while before sidling along the branch to make a lunge at the hapless egret below. The egret tumbled into the water to avoid her talons and as it fell, presented its dagger-like bill to the aggressor. After some untidy flapping the bedraggled egret recovered its position on a perch and the cycle repeated. Sometimes the egret would plummet into the water and sometimes it would leap out of the way, but the harrier certainly kept a respectful distance from the egret's weapon. We watched this half-hearted battle for some 30 minutes or so until the harrier seemed to lose interest and flapped lazily over to Mere Covert Wood on the opposite side of the mere.

Would a Marsh Harrier take a Little Egret? Well they have been recorded taking and carrying prey equal to their own body weight, eg Pheasant and Woodpigeon so a Marsh Harrier would be capable of taking a Little Egret. However, their usual hunting strategy is a slow flight quartering the ground at low level and pouncing on small birds, mammals or amphibians, taking prey by

surprise and minimising the risk of injury to themselves. We did not see evidence of contact and of course neither bird would want to risk injury.

None of us had witnessed such a conflict before, neither on Rostherne Mere nor anywhere else for that matter. On reflection, I think that what took place was probably a territorial dispute with the harrier trying to displace the egret rather than take it.

Acknowledgements to Bill Bellamy, Keeper of the Records.

Phil Dell

References

¹ Little Egret, several sightings per year. Usually along the shoreline of Harpers Bank Wood.

² Marsh Harrier. Annual visitor but usually only one sighting.

HOBBIES AT ROSTHERNE

Through the month of September excellent views of Hobbies were regularly obtained from the Rostherne Mere Observatory. On September 18th I was watching two birds, an adult and a juvenile, perched close together in a mereside tree, when a female Sparrowhawk appeared to attack them and they scattered. I was puzzled by this but in retrospect I wonder whether the Sparrowhawk was in fact after a Jay perched just below the Hobbies, which managed to escape in the confusion. A gang of three Jackdaws were often a menace, constantly dislodging the Hobbies from perches, as well as chasing the local Kestrels. The Hobbies themselves weren't averse to a bit of mobbing, buzzing a passing Peregrine or a circling Buzzard. There was a profusion of dragonflies available over and around the mere for many weeks so one can but hope for a repeat performance next year.

Bob Groom

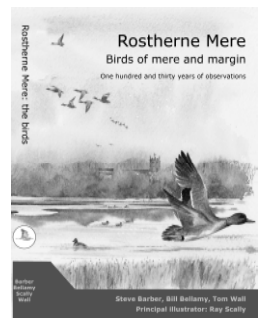
BOOK REVIEW

These reviews were first published in the *Newsletter of the '49 Club'*, the association of staff members of the Nature Conservancy, Nature Conservancy Council and English Nature. Peter Clement is the author of the *Helm Identification Guides: 'Finches and Sparrows'* (1993), *'Thrushes'* (2000) and *'Robins and Chats'* (2015). John Sheail is the author of *'Nature Conservation in Britain: The formative years'* (1998) and other histories of nature conservation.

ROSTHERNE MERE Birds of mere and margin One hundred and thirty years of observations

by Steve Barber, Bill Bellamy and Tom Wall; principal illustrator, Ray Scally, 2019. 250 pages.

This north Cheshire National Nature Reserve (NNR) has long been an important and well-watched site for birds, with records dating back to the 1880s. This delightful book provides an updated account of its birdlife building on previous works in 1914 and 1955 by ornithological luminaries, Thomas Coward and A. W. Boyd, and in 1977 by David Rogers, then the Warden, and Ron Harrison, an Honorary Warden; as such it admirably reflects 'one hundred and thirty years of observations' of the subtitle. The brief Introduction sets the scene (and some of its history) in context and is followed by chapters on Swans and Geese; Ducks; Divers, Grebes and Cormorants; Gulls; Terns, Skuas and other seabirds; Herons, Rails and relatives; Waders; Passerines; Exotica; ending with 'A history of bird recording' on the site. In addition, most of the individual species accounts are accompanied by some finely crafted watercolour illustrations principally supplied by Ray Scally.



This format follows that of other local and county avifaunas but is so much more than just an annotated list of dates and occurrences. Written in an informative yet pleasantly chatty style, the sections on individual species contain details on behaviour, movements and trends that reflect more widely in a national or even international context and drew me in to want to know more and would hopefully appeal to a wider audience than those already converted. For example, the Great Crested Grebe account includes the history of the bird at the site (good years and blank ones) as well as the impact of taking numbers for 'grebe furs' from the breast feathers fashionable in the late 18th and early 19th century and was, of course, the *raison d'être* of the incipient RSPB. To take another example, the Cormorant account documents the rise of inland breeding in trees since the 1980s and how many of these are attributable to the spread of the continental race *P.c. sinensis*. Gulls too get a detailed account in particular the relevance of roosting movements to the rise of the nearby Manchester Airport and efforts that were pursued by interested parties to have the birds evicted from the site.

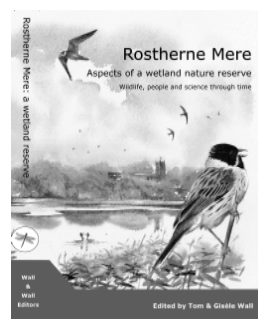
The chapter on passerines and other visitors to the Mere such as Osprey and Hobby ('A miscellany at the margins') is a delight in itself, detailing breeding migrant Sedge and Reed Warblers along with more fleeting visitors to the site. In many ways the detailed accounts of the species numbers and trends are a present-day summary of what is happening on a wider scale. Anyone who has watched a local patch for any length of time will recognise and empathise with the attachment such devotion brings, along with the rewards and quieter times when little seems to happen. The closing chapter faithfully documents (as a labour of love which shines through) those who have worked there or simply spent time looking at and recording birds for which this book would be so much less (and in whose memory the book is dedicated). As an old Nature Conservancy Council hand (and if I had to quibble) I would say that the only detail missing is how the site has benefitted from being a NNR, but this is only a minor issue. In summary, the authors (who include Tom Wall, a former Warden of the NNR) are to be congratulated on a thorough piece of work. Highly recommended.

Peter Clement

ROSTHERNE MERE Aspects of a wetland nature reserve Wildlife, people and science through time

edited by Tom and Gisèle Wall, 2019. 384 pages.

This is a remarkable book, not least for its rarity in providing what every NNR should have - a succinct record, so clearly written and abundantly illustrated by photographs, drawings and tables, of the history, current value and possible futures of this Cheshire Reserve. 'Edited' is not quite the word to describe what Tom and Gisèle have achieved. Rather, they have been joined in producing an integrated whole by others with recollections, data and insights in successive chapters upon acquisition and management, water status, wildlife and the usage made of the Mere and its environs. Contributors include the late Brian Moss and Colin Reynolds. Beyond what can be learnt from old records now preserved at The National Archives and numerous other locations, and from old-timers like Philip Oswald (one of the first Wardens), there is the knowledge and insight of those so familiar with the Reserve today. Given the weight Natural England rightly places on public awareness and experience of its Reserve holdings, Rostherne Mere has provided a powerful stimulus to what others might aspire. If and where achieved, the intrinsic merit of the Reserves holding will have been greatly enhanced.



John Sheail

These two books are published as companion volumes by:

Tom Wall, 18 Kempton, Lydbury North, SY7 0JG (walltom@hotmail.co.uk)
 'Birds' is available at £20 (£23.50 inc p&p); 'Aspects' at £25 (£28.50 inc p&p)
 When purchased together: £40 (£47 inc p&p)

Cheques payable to Tom Wall, or contact him to arrange a bank transfer. Arrangements may be made for collection from Rostherne so as to avoid paying p&p.

County Rarities

SABINE'S GULL *XEMA SABINI*

Flyby seabirds can always catch one out, you get used to the routine birds moving past your sea watching places, but on days when there are good sightings, as often off the Wirral coast when the wind is in the NW for a few days in September and the Leach's Petrels are moving through, there is always an air of other good stuff being out there. Sabine's Gull falls into that category, folks are looking out for them but there are a couple of commoner species one needs to eliminate, and often distant individuals claimed are misidentified Kittiwakes.

If we are in early autumn (i.e. August), then most Sabine's Gulls off UK shores are adults, and a combination of a dark head (or hood), black primaries, grey mantle and wing coverts and a large area of white on the inner primaries and secondaries makes for a distinctive and recognisable gull. Long, thin, pointed wings and a forked tail also help and Sabs is a small gull, smaller than Black-headed Gull. Once into September, then it's juvenile birds that pass through in small numbers. These can be confused with young Kittiwakes, a species which is also becoming somewhat scarce, and by no means seen routinely on our coastal sea watches.

1CY Sabine's Gulls do not moult until mid-winter, so they are classically brown plumaged like many 1CY gulls. So, they have a brown head, nape, mantle and entire upper body plumage, with black primaries and a white wedge of secondaries and rear to the wing. This gives a striking almost dipped in black ink effect to the outer half of the wing. The tip of the tail feathers are also black. Juvenile Kittiwake has a much cleaner contrasting plumage, a black 'W' of outer edges to the wings, clean grey back, a black collar and mostly white head. Some Sabines by late October may have moulted their upperparts and show a grey back, but the wings never lose that brown forewing and only ever have a smudge of black on the nape of the head. 1CY Little Gulls could be another confusing species, but they are smaller with the black 'W' on the forewings and very dark mantle and back, whilst adult winter Little Gulls look like a 1CY Kittiwake without the black collar.

Some claim they have a more bouncy distinct flight but I have never seen that; small gulls ploughing into a headwind seem to fly the same to me, and when seeing them foraging off pelagic seabird trips, they behave the same as any small gull would.



Sabine's Gull
by Tony
Broome

Hugh Pulsford

SABINE'S GULL IN CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL

Sabine's Gull is one of a suite of species which draws birders to the north Wirral coast in the hope of seeing one when strong north-westerly winds blow in autumn. In such conditions, sightings may be obtained as the bird is blown within sight of land as it migrates to its wintering grounds off south-west Africa.

The first bird seen in the county was part of what *British Birds* (Vol 46 p254-6) reported as an "invasion" in September 1950 in which what were described as "unusual numbers" occurred in England and Wales. Twelve individuals in all were reported, including an immature at Wallasey (A M Woods), in addition to birds near Rhos near Sea and the Isle of Man. *BB* gives the date as September 22nd, although the *Merseyside Naturalists' Report* for 1950 has the following day. The MNA Report includes a description of the bird and of the sighting, which included a period when the bird was out of the water. Coloured sketches were made and exhibited at a Wild Life Exhibition in Birkenhead Art Gallery in February 1951.

There was to be no quick repeat visit to the shores of our county and it was 30th September 1962 at Red Rocks before the next bird was reported. Subsequently, however, appearances of Sabine's Gull have been not far short of annual, missing only three years in the 60s, one in the 70s, none in the 80s, four in the 90s, two in the 'noughties' and two so far (to 2017) in the present decade.

A review of *Cheshire (and Wirral) Bird Reports* for the period from 1962 finds sightings in every month except for May and December. However, the monthly distribution of records is very far from even. Of the total of 169 dates, 106 are in September and 32 in October. The fact that 10 of the dates are in August and nine in November shows just how unusual sightings outside of this prolonged autumn period are. Over the years the peak period for the number of records appears to be 8th to 16th of September.

The pattern of records year by year show that in most years there is a very limited window of opportunity to see a Sabine's Gull. Only in 1980, when birds were seen on ten dates, have the number of dates with records reached double figures. Otherwise, only in four years have birds been reported on more than five days, while in 17 years there have been reports on just single dates. Given the popularity of the species with birders this is likely to be due to the relative lack of just the right weather conditions at the time birds are moving south rather than any lack of effort.

The very large majority of sightings are from the north Wirral coast from New Brighton, where birds can be viewed coming into and out of the mouth of the River Mersey, round via viewpoints at Wallasey, Leasowe, Dove Point/Meols and Hoylake/Red Rocks to Hilbre, from where birds have been reported on more dates than any other single site in the county. Birds have been viewed from sites as far up the Mersey as Eastham, but Seacombe has provided the most records up the estuary over the years.

Sightings can be fleeting as the observer struggles to follow the movements of the gull in strong winds, which also move the telescope or binoculars, the lenses of which can quickly be coated in spray. However, birds have been known to settle on beaches, e.g. at Hoylake and New Brighton as in 1997 and New Brighton in 2000 and 2001, when excellent views were obtained.

It is by no means obvious just how many birds are visible from land while caught up in these blows. Birders are often stationed at all the viewpoints mentioned above and it seems inevitable that to some extent they will be reporting the same individual birds as they move along the coast. However, if every submitted record involved a different individual bird, then the years with most birds are 1978 with 15 and 2001 with 14.

Largest numbers occur in September when reports of more than two birds are five in the Mersey mouth on 30th, in 1978 when three were off Meols/Leasowe and three from New Brighton on 15th in 2001, Leasowe on 4th in 2009 and Hoylake on 11th and 14th in 2017. On 21st September 2004 an experienced Hoylake observer was sure of at least four different individuals, but speculated that as many as nine were involved. In other months there are three reports of two in October and one in November. Otherwise reports refer to single birds.

Most of the birds recorded in September and October were aged to either imm/juv or adult, 73% of those aged were imm/juvs.

Every once in a while there are surprises: Hilbre has records on two dates in January (1983 & 1984), once in each month February (1983), March (1984) and April (1985) and two in the first half of July (1973 & 1976); there are two January sightings from Leasowe Bay (1981); and one from New Brighton in March (1970). In June 1976 an immature bird at Seacombe on 1st was followed by an adult on the Weaver Estuary from 5th - this was picked up moribund some days later and now resides in Liverpool Museum. In 1977 the only September bird was on the Weaver Bend on 10th! Fiddler's Ferry had a bird on 6th October 1991. More recently birds delighted observers at Eaton Hall Sand Quarry on 9th October 2011, Burton Mere Wetlands for four days from 20th September 2012 and Elton Hall Flash on 12th July 2016.

The North Wirral coast is the place to be in September when the north-westerly gale blows.

Steve Barber

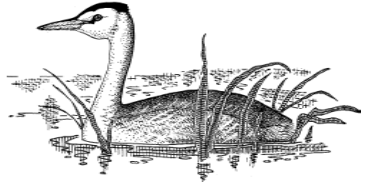
Note: If YOU see anything of interest in your local paper, on the Internet, or even in the national press, relevant to Cheshire and Wirral, please bring it to the Editor's attention. Either scan in the article and email it, or cut it out and put it in the post. Please make sure the source and date is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

One Man's Birding

.....WHEN SUMMER IS DONE

There are some evocative lines in Kipling's poem *The Long Trail*, which I found myself thinking about during September:

There's a whisper down the field where
the year has shot her yield,
And the ricks stand grey to the sun,
Singing: 'Over then, come over, for the bee
has quit the clover,
And your English summer's done.'



Of course, nowadays there aren't as many bees as there were, and precious little clover for them - and instead of ricks we have those efficient but ugly plastic bales. Another change is that the maize is still standing, waiting to be harvested. In many fields the crop is well above the height of the hedge - and growing right up against it. No headland here for foraging birds or insects or small mammals.

The passing of the year, though, is the same as in Kipling's day. It is a gradual process, not a dramatic transformation, and it shows in small-scale changes to the bird life around us. The garden Robins and Blackbirds appear again, after skulking through their moult. In the rather boring summer collection of brownish Mallards by river and pool side, it becomes easier to see the first bits and pieces of identifiable drake plumage, as they emerge from eclipse and more and more of them display their new feathers. Black-headed Gulls have returned in numbers to compete with ducks, geese and Coots for the food scattered by visitors to the artificial lake, where a few weeks ago only two or three were present.

If these are our everyday, bread-and-butter birds we may take more notice of departing summer migrants. Here, I find something interesting in my approach to recording them. Because Swifts leave early and often more or less all together (to say nothing of the fact that locally we have been a bit worried about numbers and possibly late arrival) I am always looking for the last one. What will probably be my final Hobby of the year is also noted - just because it is a Hobby, I suppose, and rather a good bird. Yet Swallows and House Martins don't get the same attention. Yes, the gatherings of Swallows on wires alongside farms have gone, and little groups of hirundines drop in over a pool to feed and then move on - but it is a slow process of gradual emigration, with the knowledge that a few (especially martins, some with very late nests) will hang on for some time. It may not be any harder to record the last of them than, say, the Swifts - but somehow there is less incentive to do so.

This year, my favourite, and close, encounter with departing visitors involved maybe a dozen Chiffchaffs, and a couple of Willow Warblers. Sitting in a parked car, I realised that a little party of leaf warblers was quietly feeding along the straggly hedge only two or three feet from the window. They moved steadily past me, two or three at a time passing by, busily feeding up for the next stage of their journey and giving excellent views as they did so. Of course, the camera was in the boot.

On the pool across the road the first of the winter ducks had already appeared - half a dozen Teal, followed a few days later by the first of the winter Wigeon flock. Again, no dramatic influx - just a handful of arrivals slipping in, almost unnoticed. There should, of course, have been waders at this time of year, but we have very few, and small, wader sites, all of them dependent upon water levels. This year, the necessary fringe of mud has been absent; a thin scattering of Snipe is all we have to show so far: just another sign that summer has slipped away.

Kipling's poem is not about the English countryside, but a (highly romanticised) picture of the attraction of the sea:

You have heard the beat of the off-shore wind,
And the thresh of the deep-sea rain.

That can resonate with the birder too: as summer ends, attention shifts to the passing sea-birds. The off-shore wind may not be welcome to the sea-watcher, and the 'thresh' of the rain must bring back memories - of those occasions when a sudden, savage squall sweeps hissing in, flattening out the surface of the sea and blanking out everything behind a grey curtain of water, just when you think you have located a shearwater or something.

I can't think of sea-watching without recalling an autumn visit to Spurn, many years ago. A party of birders arrived very late at night after a long drag from London. Their driver, a tall, languid sort of chap turned in immediately. Next morning, he was woken early by his excited friends, crying out that it was a great day for the sea-watch. The driver, in his beautifully modulated, well-educated voice, said something very pithy and unprintable about the sea-watch before rolling over and going back to sleep. He was just getting up when I returned to the bunk-house three hours later; I assured him that he had missed absolutely nothing. With a self-satisfied smile, he replied, "I knew I wouldn't miss anything..."

I guess he was a veteran of too many off-shore winds and too much threshing rain; they don't call it sea-watching for nothing...

Bob Anderson

Sites to Watch

BURTON MERE WETLANDS AND DEE MARSHES

The Great White Egret pair successfully raised two young, and these were observed around the Inner Marsh Farm area for a few days after fledging in mid-July, still begging for food from their parents. No Cattle Egret young were observed, but they can be remarkably elusive, and no young were seen last time they bred here either.

On 3rd August a site record of 35 Great White Egrets was counted flying to roost from Denhall Quay. Numbers currently remain at a similar level, with 22 roosting at BMW and at least eight at Denhall Fishery.

As Tony Broome mentioned in his editorial in the July issue, a stunning Terek Sandpiper graced the scrape at Burton Mere Wetlands on the evening of 9th July. The third record for Cheshire. While still around at dawn the following day, it departed high south at 06:50.

Wader passage on the Dee since then has been very lacklustre, with just two Curlew Sandpipers (16th September and 1st October) and two Little Stints that hung around for a week between 15th - 21st September at BMW. A few Spotted Redshanks and a Wood Sandpiper were the best of the rest.

Our wintering Bitterns are back at Parkgate Marsh, roosting at Neston Reedbed each evening. Two were seen to roost on 30th October, although there have been reports of possibly three birds. Three Hen Harriers are around currently; a grey male, a 1st year male and an adult female. Although Short-eared Owl numbers are still a little up and down as I write this at the end of October.

Over 4000 Pink-footed Geese are feeding at BMW and the surrounding fields, with over 5000 roosting on the estuary of an evening - here's hoping we have another record-breaking year. Wigeon numbers have been impressive too, with at least 4000 feeding off Denhall Quay over the recent high tides.

During September a new path and boardwalk were installed to Inner Marsh Farm hide as part of a project to make all of the paths and hides at BMW 'access for all' standard. Late summer next year will see a new hide installed to replace the old Inner Marsh Farm hide, which will be larger and sited slightly further south to allow better views over Border Pool. At the same time, a new boardwalk will be installed across the fen that will allow wheelchair and mobility scooter access to the new hide.

Graham Jones, Site Manager at RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve

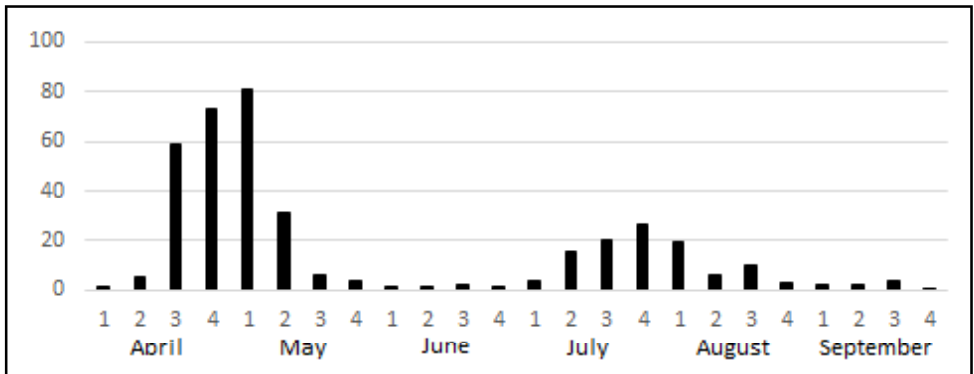
Species Spotlight

THE SEVEN WHISTLER

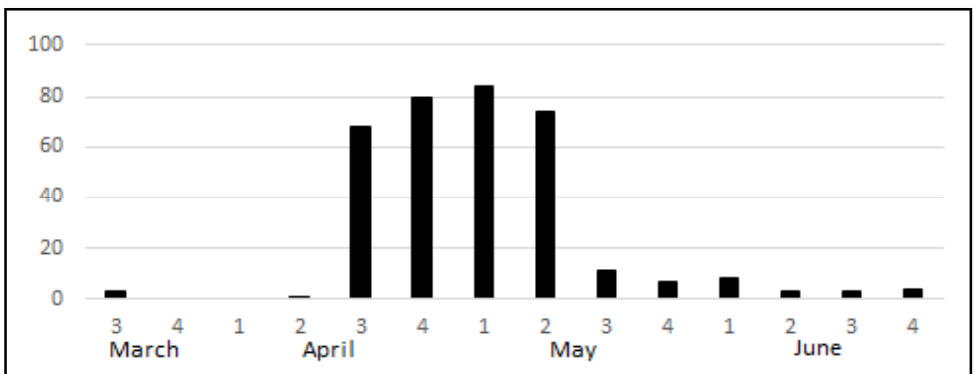
This article was first published in the July On-line Newsletter of Dee Estuary Birding (www.deeestuary.co.uk).

It was Jeff Clarke (ex-Senior Ranger at Thurstaston - see Jeff Clarke Ecology) who told me that the old name for Whimbrel was the 'Seven Whistler' because of its distinctive seven whistle call. We only hear that call for a few weeks as they pass through the estuary on their way north in spring, before returning south in late summer. Whimbrels don't over-winter here so we only see them on migration making them something special to look out for, particularly in late spring when the estuary can otherwise be very quiet with many waders having already left us.

**Whimbrels on the Dee Estuary/North Wirral
Average weekly max 2016 to 2018**



**Whimbrels on the Dee Estuary/North Wirral
Weekly max March to June 2019**



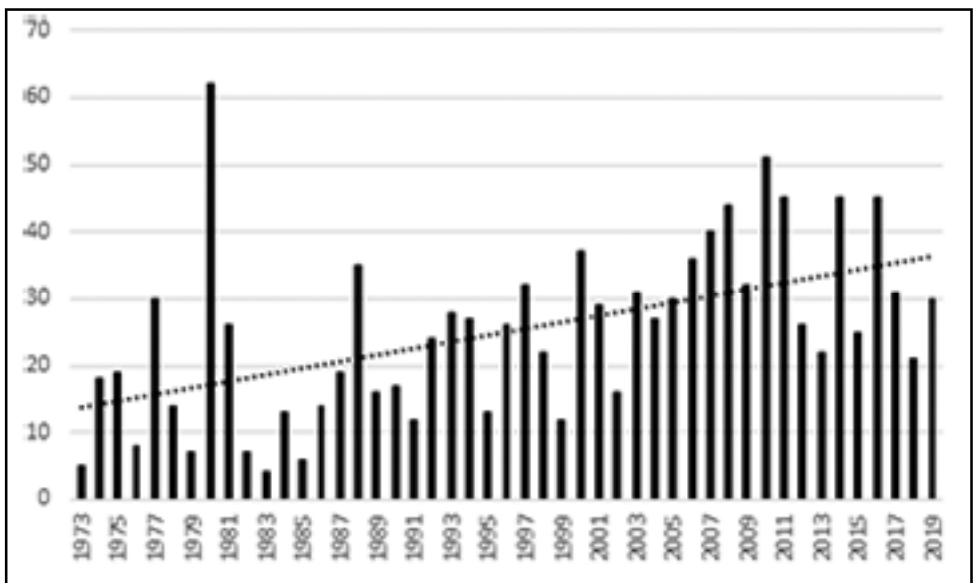
The majority of Whimbrels pass through the Dee estuary on their way north from mid-April to mid-May, although in some years the migration can start as early as March and in 2011 two were recorded exceptionally early at Leasowe on February 23rd. We often get a few birds present in June including at least three at Heswall in 2019, presumably immature non-breeding birds which make the journey this far north without making the final flight to the breeding grounds. Numbers

then increase through July and certainly by the second week breeding birds are returning and the southerly migration peaks in the last week of that month. Counts then decrease through August and into September and by October only one or two are left.

Where to find them

Whimbrels can turn up just about anywhere on the estuary and north Wirral, from Leasowe Shore down to Burton Mere Wetlands, and along the Welsh coast all the way to Gronant. But during the main migration periods two sites almost guarantee good sightings: Heswall and Hilbre. I've drawn up a graph of max annual counts for Hilbre from 1973 to 2019 (2019 up to the end of June) and the trend line (dotted line) suggests an increase in numbers over that period. Coverage at Heswall has been nowhere near as good as Hilbre over that period, but again numbers have been higher there in recent years and all three-figure counts have been over the past five years: 110 in 2012, 156 in 2014 and 131 in 2017, all during the spring migration. The 2014 count is the highest ever recorded for the Dee estuary.

**Max Whimbrel Counts - Hilbre
1973 to 2019**



At Hilbre birds can easily be seen around the island at low tide and many roost on the west side at high tide, there is even a spot called 'Whimbrel's Rest' used regularly by them for many years. At Heswall on higher tides the birds roost in the marsh, rather hidden in the long grass. But they can be more easily seen on an incoming tide on the sand/mud banks, it's best to get down to Caldy at half tide and walk towards Thurstaston and Heswall - here you will see and hear the birds as they are pushed towards the shore as the tide rises. On lower tides some will roost on the rocks between Thurstaston and Caldy, or on the sand bank off Shore Cottage. If walking from the car park at Banks Road, Heswall, you need to get there at least two hours before high tide and walk towards Thurstaston where you should see the birds passing you on the way to the main roost site.

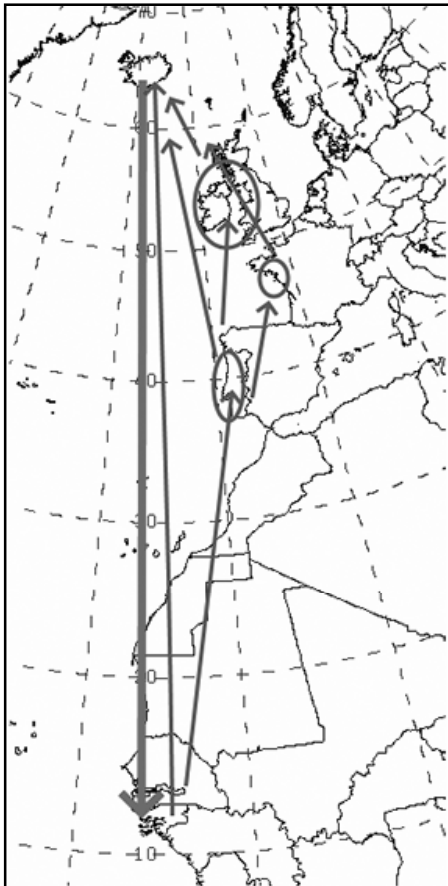
On the Dee estuary Whimbrels are usually observed feeding on mudflats, but they can also be seen in damp fields, the paddocks near Leasowe Lighthouse seem to be to their liking and in April 2019 a small flock of up to eight fed for several days close to the footpath at the lighthouse end of Park Lane. Elsewhere, there are sites in the UK where hundreds of Whimbrels feed in fields, the most important being the area around Barnacre Reservoir in Lancashire and here they roost at night with a massive 730 on May 3rd 2019, the highest count there since 847 in May 1998. The Reservoir is private but there are guided walks in spring specifically to see this spectacle.

Where are they coming from and where are they going?

We see two sub-species of Whimbrel in the UK - Icelandic breeding birds (*Numenius phaeopus islandicus*) and north-east Europe (Scandinavia and Baltic) breeding birds (*N. p. phaeopus*). It is estimated that around 250,000 pairs breed in Iceland and up to 110,000 pairs breed in north-east Europe with many more of the nominate race breeding in western Siberia. Whimbrels breed right around the northern hemisphere but, depending on which estimates you use for total numbers, between 25% and 40% of them breed in Iceland which is thus a vitally important country for them.

Both of these sub-species winter on the coast of West Africa and perhaps all the way down to South Africa, with a few wintering in Iberia. Although these wintering grounds have been confirmed by observation, ringing and satellite tracking the large majority of birds, which must be in the region of at least one million, have never been found. I quote Delany et al:

“Counts of Whimbrel at their winter quarters in Africa can account for only a small proportion of the populations concerned. Smit & Piersma (1989) could account for only 69,000 *islandicus* and *phaeopus* combined, and recognised that this was a major underestimate. The total from 1990s mid-winter counts and estimates was only slightly higher at 89,000 (Stroud et al. 2004). These low figures suggest that either the main wintering areas in West Africa remain to be discovered, and/or that the species is readily underestimated by counts in the wintering areas. This might occur, for example, if a high proportion makes use of mangroves, and/or the wintering range for this population extends considerably further south in Africa than was previously believed (Stroud et al. 2004). It is also possible that breeding numbers may have been over-estimated.”



(NOTE: Recent surveys in 2014 and 2015 have confirmed the high figure of 250,000 pairs breeding in Iceland - Richard Smith)

Between 2012 and 2015 40 adult Whimbrels in Iceland were fitted with geolocators and this has shown (together with previous studies) that *islandicus* birds fly direct from Iceland to Africa after breeding - a distance of almost 4,000 miles. The study shows that for the spring migration some birds, perhaps around half, stopover in Portugal, France, western UK and/or Ireland. Ringing data had already suggested that the majority of Whimbrel flying up the eastern side of the UK were heading for north-east Europe and those on the west were heading to Iceland, so this confirms that pattern. The birds we see here on the Dee estuary in spring are therefore probably mostly *islandicus* with some *phaeopus*, whilst the return migration likely to be wholly *phaeopus*. This would explain why, as shown in the first graph, above, that we get more birds in spring than in summer/autumn.

The map shows the direct southward flight from Iceland to West Africa in autumn, followed by the northward flight in spring with some birds taking a direct flight and others using staging areas in Portugal, France, Ireland and western UK. Ireland seems to be a particularly important stop-off point. It can be seen that using one of these staging areas does not add very much to the distance flown and allows the birds to feed up and be in good condition for the final leg, the Geo-locator data showed the birds typically stop for 10 to 15 days. (Maps based on data/maps shown in Refs 7,8 and 9.)

References and Further Reading

1. *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Reports* - 1973 to 2017, CAWOS.
2. 2018 Whimbrel records kindly provided by CAWOS.
3. Steve Williams and Hilbre Bird Observatory, pers. comm. June 2019.
4. Allan Conlin, pers. comm. June 2019.
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6. Simon Delany *et al.*, *An Atlas of Wader Populations in Africa and Western Eurasia*, 2009.
7. Graham Appleton, Whimbrels on the move, *WaderTales*, April 2016.
<https://wadertales.wordpress.com/>
8. C. Carneiro, T. Gunnarsson and J. Alves, Faster migration in autumn than in spring: seasonal migration patterns and non breeding distribution of Icelandic whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus islandicus*, *Journal of Avian Biology*, November 2018.
9. Veronica Mendez, Risking it all in a direct flight (The non-stop migrations of Whimbrels between Iceland and West Africa), *BOU Blog* January 2017.
10. *Waterbird Population Estimates*, Fifth Edition, Wetlands International, 2012.

Richard Smith www.deeestuary.co.uk

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.

HILBRE BIRD OBSERVATORY (HIBO)

Ringling June to October 2019

In our last report we mentioned that we had caught a Blackcap on 27 April 2019 that was ringled somewhere else in the UK. The new computer system implemented by the British Trust for Ornithology (DemOn) has speeded up how quickly we receive information about birds ringled elsewhere. We now know that the bird was ringled in the early morning of 26 April 2019 on the Calf of Man. It weighed 16.2 grams on the Calf of Man and weighed 15.1 grams when it was caught in the mid-morning the following day on Hilbre. Blackcaps are nocturnal migrants so, assuming there was not a huge weight gain or loss during the day it spent near the Calf of Man, it used around a gram of fat to fuel its 135km journey to Hilbre.

We do not get many birds on Hilbre during June that are not breeding birds, the Paddyfield Warbler 10 years ago was an exception to this rule, another exception in 2019 was a Redstart that turned up at the end of June but only spent a day on the island. The Paddyfield Warbler stayed for nearly a week. It was nice to see Meadow Pipits and Linnets producing young for us to ring, but after the best ever Swallow breeding year on Hilbre in 2018, 2019 did not see as many pairs trying to breed and the wet and windy spell of weather when the first broods had hatched led to quite large young dying in the nest. On a more positive note it was good to catch a juvenile Wheatear of the British race on 15 July, an indicator of successful breeding, probably in North Wales, and the start of post-juvenile dispersal for this species.

At the end of July the migration season started and so did a repair project on the cliff wall on the north-west side of the island. The project was intended to fix a wall that the Victorians had built to safeguard the cliffs but that now had a hole in it. The project did not go very well and eventually

a fire broke out around the hole in the wall mentioned above. The island was closed to the public for about a week and some temporary fences and warning signs have been erected to keep people away from the dangerous area. This was all very dramatic but did not appear to have an effect on the migration of birds, which remained firmly weather dependent.

The number of Goldcrests passing through the island has been a good indicator of the quality of the breeding season for these birds in Scandinavia. This year we have caught 31 Goldcrests so far which indicates a reasonable breeding season, but this number is of the order of half the birds caught in a really good year. We have recorded a drop in the number of some of the migrants passing through in autumn. Willow Warbler numbers are only half of what they were in the 1990s, but we still get a good selection of birds passing through. Spotted Flycatcher, Garden Warbler, Song Thrush and Blackbirds represented birds we have always expected to catch, we caught a Long-tailed Tit, a species not caught on the island since 2015 and we were pleased to catch a Firecrest and a Yellow-browed Warbler. Yellow-browed Warblers used to be a BBRC rarity but changing times have seen them turning up annually on Hilbre for the past 5 years.

October is traditionally the best month of the year for Rock Pipits passing through Hilbre and this year we have already caught five birds. In the past we caught a Norwegian-ringed Scandinavian Rock Pipit. We look forward to catching more Rock Pipits during the winter and contributing further to our knowledge of wintering Rock Pipits in the Dee estuary.

John Elliott, on behalf of the Hilbre Bird Observatory

RINGING AT WOOLSTON SUMMER 2019

In the period from the beginning of April to the end of September a total of 4,550 birds of 50 species were ringed at Woolston. On the face of it this is a sharp reduction from the 5,940 birds of 54 species that were ringed in the summer of 2018. Early in the spring, John Blundell, one of the two regular ringers on No.1 Bed suffered a bad accident (not at Woolston) from which, even as I write, he has not yet properly recovered and we wish him all the best for a complete recovery. Whilst Dave Riley has continued to visit the bed up to three times a week the number of nets that he can deploy safely is, by definition, around half what the pair could use working together. The annual comparison by bed shows this impact starkly with No.1 Bed down from 2,695 birds to 1,615, but No.3 Bed, where effort has been broadly similar year on year, down by just 10% from 3,245 birds to 2,935.

As a result of this misfortune the following comments rely heavily on comparisons from No.3 Bed. The following first ringing dates for juvenile birds on No.3 Bed indicate that for resident species the timing of their breeding season was at the early end of the normal range with the exception of Dunnock. This species appears to have had a poor breeding season with the 55 ringed on No.3 Bed being a 45 per cent reduction on the 99 ringed in the summer of 2018.

Ringing date of first juvenile

	2019	2018	2017	2016
Robin	07-May	26-May	28-May	07-May
Wren	09-Jun	22-Jun	11-Jun	25-Jun
Dunnock	11-Jun	08-Jun	06-May	04-Jun
Bullfinch	23-May	29-Jun	11-Jun	28-May

In the case of our migrant warblers the following table of 'first juvenile' dates indicates that the timing of the breeding season for Chiffchaff and Whitethroat was early, whilst the dates for Blackcap and Reed Warbler are more typical.

Ringing date of first juvenile

	2019	2018	2017	2016
Chiffchaff	31-May	13-Jun	03-Jun	04-Jun
Blackcap	09-Jun	02-Jun	03-Jun	25-May
Whitethroat	09-Jun	23-Jun	17-Jun	25-Jun
Reed Warbler	22-Jun	23-Jun	02-Jun	02-Jun

The Teal on No. 3 Bed were virtually all departed by the end of March and just three were ringed. The only raptors ringed were three Sparrowhawks.

The Green Sandpiper passage was well sampled with eight colour-ringed as part of the national study. A colour-ringed Green Sandpiper was photographed on the River Conder in Lancashire but, whilst the combination indicated a Woolston-ringed bird the photographs showed insufficient detail to enable the identification of an individual bird. Three Barn Owls were ringed on No.1 Bed. John's accident meant that no concerted hirundine roost netting was attempted on No.1 Bed. On No.3 Bed a small roost of about 400 birds did form and 185 Swallows were ringed compared with 118 in 2018.

We ringed 1,843 migrant warblers, on the face of it a sharp decrease from the 2,558 ringed in the summer of 2018. Teasing apart the impacts of change in population and reduced effort is not always straightforward. Chiffchaffs appear to have made a recovery from the poor summer of 2018 as similar numbers were ringed with reduced effort. Willow Warblers were ringed in reduced numbers but their core territory at Woolston is on No.1 Bed where the reduction of ringing effort occurred. Changes in Blackcap, Sedge Warbler and Reed Warbler can also probably be accounted for by reduction of effort, but the 24 Garden Warblers ringed was very poor when compared with the 'average' year of 2017 (49 ringed), let alone the record year of 2018 (72 ringed). No Grasshopper Warblers were ringed for the first time since 1987. At Woolston Cetti's Warblers are now well established but the 10 birds ringed were disappointing after 21 in summer 2018.

With the exception of Dunnock, the resident insectivores were caught in similar numbers to 2018 and variations in numbers ringed were within what might be expected given the reduced effort. The same can be said of the reduction from 19 to 10 in the number of Great Spotted Woodpeckers ringed. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was ringed on No.1 Bed, the first ringed at Woolston since 2011.

It was a record breeding season for Blue and Great Tits in the nest boxes on No.3 Bed with very low losses between egg laying and chicks fledging. On No.3 Bed 24 Willow Tits were ringed compared with 17 in 2018, but on No.1 Bed the number ringed fell from 22 to 12 which might be more than would be accounted for by reduced effort. Overall the total of 36 compares well with 40 in 2018 and 33 in 2017.

The Meadow Pipit passage was not as marked as in 2018 and just 15 were ringed compared with 49 last summer.

Amongst the seedeaters, there was a very impressive crop of thistles on No.3 Bed which attracted a flock of upward of 100 Goldfinches. Across the reserve a total of 77 were ringed compared with 30 in 2018.

In another quiet summer for 'surprise captures' - a Common Redstart was ringed on No.1 Bed. However, the action hotted up dramatically in October with a Little Bunting ringed on No.1 Bed and two Bearded Tits on No.3 Bed. The Little Bunting was the first ringed at Woolston and the Bearded Tits the second and third after one in 2006.

Michael Miles, on behalf of the Woolston Ringing Team

MID-CHESHIRE BARN OWL GROUP

Barn Owl breeding for 2019 is slowly coming to an end. However, although details have yet to be confirmed, the general trend indicates around a 15-20% reduction on last year's numbers (giving an estimate of around 150-160 breeding pairs in the whole of Cheshire).

That's actually still not a bad figure overall - it's just that we've had very good results in 2017 and 2018.

However, Mother Nature has had an effect on this year's numbers, with at least five breeding sites showing signs of unusual activity this year. These breeding sites had clutches of eggs (or, in some cases, day-old chicks and eggs) in late May/early June. However, in late July/early August the sites were revisited expecting to find fully developed chicks. Instead we found the adults back on eggs (or on day-old chicks and eggs).

What seems to have happened is that the prolonged and heavy rain in the first half of June had caused the earlier clutches/broods to fail or to be abandoned (the adults being unable to hunt for food). Luckily, once the weather cleared later in June, evidently the adults started mating and laying eggs again.

At least there has been a happy ending at these sites following weather conditions which could have caused the complete loss of chicks from these adult birds.

No doubt these conditions have occurred many times over the millennia, and the birds have ultimately survived. But there can be no doubt, given the extremes of the weather conditions experienced over recent years, that Mother Nature has been un-naturally affected by the global warming we humans have caused. As we often report at our meetings, we owe it to the Barn Owls (and all other wildlife for that matter) to provide as much help and support as we can to conserve them - since we are evidently the ultimate cause of these extreme changes in the environment and the problems they have and continue to cause.

We do our best, but it stretches our limited resources to help support these beautiful and iconic birds. We get a great deal of satisfaction out of the conservation work we do. But we are always in need of more help.

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 June, the swan study group has ringed a total of 39 swans including 8 adults, 2 second-years, 1 third-year and 28 cygnets. These included 1 control and 3 retraps. We also ringed one juvenile Whooper Swan.

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

- Acre Dell Pools, nr Congleton: 51 on 16th Jun, 47 on 7th Jul, 46 on 4th Aug and 62 on 22nd Sep.
- Burleydam Pool, nr Whitchurch: 23 on 24th Jun, 11 on 29th Jul, 8 on 29th Aug and 12 on 30th Sep.
- Comber Mere, nr Whitchurch: 11 on 24th Jun, 37 on 29th Jul, 30 on 19th Aug and 34 on 30th Sep.
- Doddington Mere, nr Nantwich: 83 on 26th Jun, 88 on 8th Jul, 79 on 17th Aug and 23 on 3rd Sep.
- Trent and Mersey Canal, Middlewich: 19 on 5th Sep.
- Neumann's Flash, Northwich: 56 on 19th Jun, 19 on 20th Jul and 25 on 4th Aug.

Movements

Yellow colour-ringed Whooper Swan was ringed as a second-year male on 21/4/2019 on the Trent and Mersey Canal in Middlewich (as reported in *Bird News* 111). Here's the update:

Seen on 2/6/2019 at Neumann's Flash, Northwich = 10kms.

Seen on 7/6/2019 at Groby Pool, near Leicester = 115kms approx.

Last seen on 8/7/2019 at Rutland Water, Rutland = 130kms approx.

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**

GAZETTEER UPDATE

Recently, there have been several site amendments, particularly with the Northwich Woodlands (includes Marbury CP, Anderton NP, Neumann's and Ashton's Flashes, and a few other more minor sites). We would really appreciate it if future submissions of records could follow the gazetteer as far as possible.

You can download this new electronic gazetteer from www.cawos.org or email me at sheilablamire@cawos.org

CAWOS News

CAWOS Council has met only once since the June *Bird News*.

The Dee and Mersey estuaries are the most important sites in the county for birds and it is important that we have representatives on the Dee Estuary Conservation Group (DECG) and Mersey Estuary Conservation Group (MECG). The late Ray Eades was our representative on the DECG and I am pleased to tell you that David Hiley has agreed to take on this role, being located in the Chester area. In addition, Tony Parker, a Council member, agreed to be our representative on the MECG, as he is located in Warrington. This role is very important as the Mayor of Liverpool is conducting a feasibility study for Tidal Power on the Mersey.

The membership currently stands at 310, with no new members since the June *Bird News*. Council has been discussing ways of trying to attract younger members to the Society. In this regard at the AGM it was decided that we needed to change the Constitution to enable young members to join free up to 21, with an extension to 25 if still in full-time education. From then on they will pay the membership fee. Council has discussed this and the changes have been circulated to members which will be discussed at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 1st November indoor meeting, before the talk. The motion needs 20 members to be present to be quorate, so we hope local members will make an effort to attend. [Update - this was agreed at the EGM.]

Council is conscious that for members on the west of the county it is a long way for them to attend our indoor meetings. Council has discussed this many times in the past, and this time decided to seek the views of our members as to whether we should hold an indoor meeting on their side of the county. In total 90 members were circulated by email asking for their interest in having a CAWOS meeting in their area, and seeking offers of help with the planning and suggestions for a venue. The outcome was a very clear message with only five responses received, thus Council decided not to pursue the matter further.

The Monitoring and Surveying Committee reported that the data on the Willow Tit Survey in the county had to be submitted to the BTO; CAWOS will get access to the findings in time. There were no surprises, their distribution was similar to that found in *Birds in Cheshire and Wirral*, 2008. The Raptor Group organised a Buzzard Survey, however, the data is very limited due to poor coverage across the county.

A sub-committee of CAWOS runs the Boyd Observatory at Rostherne Mere. Recently an old hide in bad shape was removed and a new one erected in memory of David Clarke, a Rostherne member for many years, and recently dedicated. The plaque acknowledges the financial contribution CAWOS made for providing materials. Also recently, a book launch took place at Rostherne Church when the former warden Tom Wall discussed his time at Rostherne 1976-85, which formed the basis of two books he had written with others: *Rostherne Mere*, *Aspects of a wetland nature reserve* and *Rostherne Mere*, *Birds of Mere and Margin* were on sale, the later book being written by two CAWOS members, Steve Barber and Bill Bellamy, and illustrated by a third, Ray Scally. This was followed by a tour of the hides, with a number of guests paying a visit to the reserve for the first time for 30 years!

On the Conservation front, the issue of a wakeboarding application on Mere Farm Quarry is ongoing with the Company having just added new plans for the building and areas of the lakes. CAWOS continues to object to this application. More recently we have objected to planned alteration to the Lime Beds at Rudheath, which is an important roosting site for wintering gulls and Curlews during the autumn, winter and early spring.

Plans are still underway to hold a gathering of recorders and key members from CAWOS, Shropshire Bird Club and possibly the Staffordshire part of the West Midland Bird Club to discuss the use of BirdTrack for storing records and using them to produce the annual *Bird Report*. On that note, the 2017 *Bird Report* is almost complete and we plan to get it to the typesetter early November. Having almost completed this, compilers have now received data for the 2018 report, so members are working hard to try and catch up, now having found an enthusiastic and hardworking Systematic Editor.

I hope this gives you a flavour of what Council has been doing since my last report.

Ted Lock, Secretary

MEMBERSHIP NEWS - URGENT

In the last *Bird News* Ted noted the new membership rates for 2020. *If you pay by Standing Order please ensure you amend your SO.* If you use electronic banking this is easily done via your account, otherwise you will need to amend it at your bank. The new rates are:

Individual Member	£15
Family Membership	£18.75
Young Member up to 21	free
(If in full-time education up to 25 free)	

Within this copy of *Bird News* there is a Standing Order form - if you should wish to change to pay by Standing Order rather than cheque, but again, if you use electronic banking this is easily set up via your account—all the details you require are on the SO form.

If you have given us an *fsnet.co.uk* email address then they are no longer valid, please send me your new email address. Similarly, if you have recently changed address, email or postal, please let me know and I can update our records. The use of email to communicate saves the Society a considerable amount on postage each year. We have recently sent an email to all members where we currently have an email address (257 from 311 members), if you have not received one and do have an email address please send it to me and I can update our records. Each letter we save posting represents nearly £1 save. Many thanks

Phil Hampson, Membership Secretary, Email: memsec@cawos.org

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

Where does time go and what happened to the hot summer we were supposed to be having, we seemed to miss it here at Weaverham. Our Blackbirds Starlings and House Sparrows have excelled themselves this year. At the moment they are eating a bucketful of fat balls a month and the third world's supply of sunflower hearts, which is a good thing as the local Sparrowhawk is using my feeding station as a drive through, and to add insult to injury plucking his catch on the lawn. Please use the winter months to knock up a few nest boxes and maybe a hedgehog house on those wet days when you cannot get out and about. We all have that stash of wood that we are keeping 'just in case it's needed', trust me it never is, I am struggling to get the car in the garage because of 'just in case' wood. The BTO are asking everyone to put up an extra feeder and to let them know if you get any new species in your garden as a result, do take part.

On the crime front, a little bird has told me that Cheshire Police have appointed a senior officer to cover Wildlife and Rural Crime matters. It would appear that Chief Inspector Simon Meegan, who was the commander at Northwich, has been moved to Warrington to take up this role. The police are expanding the number of officers to cover Wildlife and Rural crime (I wonder where that idea came from). I have found Mr Meegan a fair officer and I am sure we will all see a difference once the unit is up and running, or at least I hope we will.

Natural Resources Wales have jumped on the bandwagon with Natural England and brought corvids and Woodpigeons and Collared Doves under general licence. This means that farmers are not allowed to control pest species without a licence being issued. I believe Natural England have not cleared the licence backlog issue. Some people never learn.

At least one piece of common sense has come from the justice system - the large collection of eggs some 5,000 plus have been donated to the Natural History Museum for use in research

following the case against Daniel Lingham in Norfolk last year. Better to use the proceeds of crime instead of destroying them.

Reports from coastal nesting sites around the country would indicate that seabird eggs are still being stolen, many colonies this year have been predated by vermin of the human kind. If they are attacking colonies, some of which were being patrolled, you can bet your bottom dollar they are out and about in more rural areas; next spring keep your eyes open and report anything suspicious.

Please remember that the 'dark ones' do not wear striped jumpers and carry a bag for their swag - many will have state-of-the-art optics, maps and field guides. Many clutches of eggs are stolen to order. If you see someone who looks and acts in a manner that you are not happy about, go with your gut feeling, you will most probably be right.

I know I have said it before but I will stress it again DO NOT PUT YOURSELF AT RISK. These people will not hesitate to use violence to make good their getaway. We all carry good quality optics, USE THEM and note what you can in your notebook (I hope we all carry one) list anything that feels might help catch these people and report it to the police. On reporting any incident please obtain an incident number and the time and date reported, this will help me follow it up if need be.

I hope you all have a good winter and get that elusive lifer.

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

VALE ROYAL AREA

Lostock Lime Bed application is going forward to committee - following consultation the mitigation is now being retained on site with a lagoon with beach habitat and phragmites reed beds planned, the grassland meadows will be provided, and the site will be managed for wildlife following the works being completed in 2022.

Roy Leigh, Vale Royal 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 and 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, Caldly, Wirral, CH48 1LL. Tel: 0151 625 2320 Email: richard@deestuary.co.uk

Projects and Surveys

CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL RAPTOR STUDY GROUP

The raptor study group is planning to hold some training workshops for the Rural Crime Team, in order to improve the relationship and help combat persecution incidents.

Roy Leigh, Chairman

THE WETLAND BIRD SURVEY (WeBS)

WeBS counters monitor the UK's internationally important non-breeding waterbirds. Wetland sites are counted once per month, providing data for population and trends. Waterbirds includes wildfowl (ducks, geese and swans), waders, rails, divers, grebes, cormorants and herons. Gulls and terns are optionally included. In a typical year over 220 waterbird species, races or populations are counted in WeBS, including non-native, feral and vagrant species. National trends are produced for the most numerous 110 of these.

Over 3,000 volunteer counters contribute to the survey, making over 40,000 visits each year to 2,800 sites. Each counter adopts a place to count monthly. Non-breeding waterbird numbers peak in different numbers for different species, so counting is done year-round and reported on WeBS years running from July to June. As non-breeding waterbirds can be very mobile, the counts are nationally synchronised, with counters requested to visit during the day on priority Core Count dates (Sundays) if at all possible. At coastal locations, counting is done at high tide. At large sites, several counters will be working as a team. Each counter surveys the whole of their defined count area, known as a WeBS sector, identifying all the waterbird species present and counting the number of individuals of each species. Counters can also add supplementary data, such as evening roost counts of gulls, or casual counts of notable numbers of passage species that are higher than those present on their Core Count visits.

You do not need to be a member of the BTO to participate.

If you do volunteer to take part, you'll become part of a huge network of people regularly submitting counts that are very important to the BTO and conservation in general. If you are interested in taking part as a counter, please let me know and we can have a chat - my contact details are at the end. As stated above you do not have to be a BTO member or an ornithological expert, as long as you can identify the birds on the water then that suffices.

In **Cheshire North** there are 116 sites of which only 26 have counters. Unfortunately, the list of vacant sites is too extensive to be included in this article, but many sites are small and will take little time. Some of the key ones available are:

Budworth Mere (Marbury Country Park)	Capesthorpe Hall Pools
Dunham Park Pools	Little Budworth Pool
Moore Nature Reserve - Eastern Reedbed	Moore Nature Reserve - Lapwing Lake
Oulton Mere Quarry	Bank Mill Pond
Quarry Bank Mill Reservoir	Redesmere
Risley Moss	Tatton and Melchett Meres
The Moat Nether Alderley	

The area of Cheshire North itself covers roughly between Newton-le-Willows and Irlam in the north, Sandbach in the south, Frodsham in the west and High Lane in the east. (Note: not all are in Cheshire). As you can see a widespread area with areas of water throughout, which *could* be surveyed. I can give specific area details if required but unfortunately, we cannot include the BTO interactive map with this article.

Maybe one of these is within your local patch and you already cover and count it, if so and you'd be happy to do a BTO count on specific dates then please contact me. If you think this is the case I can check and if you are interested in being involved formalising your counts on the BTO dates, we can have a chat.

Core Count Priority Dates

To aid coordination, counts should be made on the priority dates listed below, ideally during the morning. If a count cannot be carried out at this time, then the nearest suitable alternative date in that month can be used.

2019: 17th November, 15th December

2020: 12th January, 9th February, 8th March, 12th April, 10th May, 7th June, 5th July, 23rd August, 20th September, 18th October, 15th November, 13th December.

Phil Hampson, WeBS BTO Local Organiser for Cheshire North

Tel: 07545 465069 Email: pjhampers@me.com

MERSEY ESTUARY WeBS

The Mersey Estuary is Britain's 10th best wetland in Britain for birds. Although surrounded by heavy industry and houses it is a truly wild place, where the tidal river meanders freely through the vast mudflats and saltmarshes and huge numbers of Dunlin and other wading birds spend the winter. We know this because each month we count the waterfowl as part of the National Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). However, we need new, reasonably fit, birders to help.

You don't need to be an experienced bird counter, you can learn that, though you should be a good birder, able to identify common waders and wildfowl at a distance and sometimes in poor light/adverse weather. But the rewards are amazing with access to a vast, unvisited wetland with thousands of waders and wildfowl.

If you think you can help, or simply find out more what is involved, please contact:

Dermot Smith, Mersey WeBS Co-ordinator, Email: dermot.smith71@gmail.com



DECEMBER 2019

- 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
- 8 MRSPB Marbury Country Park, meet in car park at 10am, followed by lunch (if booked)
- 10 MRSPB 'WILDLIFE IN THE AMERICAS - ALASKA TO ARGENTINA' by Mark Sisson
- 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
- 14 MRSPB 'THE GREAT TEXAS BIRDING TRAIL' by Dennis Atherton
- 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 MRSPB Fylde Coast (by coach), with WGBG, 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
- 9-10 MRSPB Rutland Water overnight, ring Ian and Lydia Taylor 01260 275248 for details
- 11 MRSPB 'SRI LANKA —THE TEARDROP ISLAND' by Keith Offord
- 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 01625 533652
- 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
- 10 MRSPB 'PERUVIAN BIRDS - PACIFICA TO AMAZONIA' by Gary Prescott
- 13 SECOS 'BURTON MERE WETLANDS AND THE DEE ESTUARY' by Graham Jones
- 15 KOS Pennington Flashes, meet in Tatton Street car park at 9am
- 15 WGBG North Wales/Conway (by coach), meet 7:30am, ring Steve McGann 01625 533652
- 15 MRSPB North Wales/Conway (by coach), with WGBG, ring Steve McGann 01625 533652
- 15 SECOS RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands, ring for details
- 20 WGBG 'UGANDA: PEARL OF AFRICA' by Alan Davies & Ruth Miller
- 27 KOS 'BROCKHOLES - THE UNRESERVED RESERVE' by Brian Ashworth

APRIL

- 7 SECOS Tatton Park, ring for details
- 14 MRSPB 'TRACKING BIRDS, MAPPING THE MARVELS OF MIGRATION' by Ieuan Evans
- 17 SECOS AGM and MEMBERS' EVENING
- 18 KOS Leighton Moss RSPB, meet in Lilac Avenue, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 24 KOS AGM and MEMBERS' IMAGES
- 24 WGBG AGM followed by 'INSPIRING AVIANS' by Jeff Clarke (note 7:15pm start)
- 24-27 SECOS Dorset long weekend, ring for details
- 26 WGBG Fairburn Ings/St Aiden's (by coach), meet 7:30am, ring Steve McGann 01625 533652
- 26 MRSPB Fairburn Ings/St Aiden's (by coach), with WGBG, ring Steve McGann 01625 533652

MAY

- 5 SECOS Goyt Valley, ring for details
- 9 KOS Brockholes Nature Reserve, Preston, meet in Lilac Ave at 8:30am
- 10 WGBG Hodbarrow/Walney Island (by coach), meet 7:30am, ring Steve McGann 01625 533652
- 10 MRSPB Hodbarrow/Walney Island (by coach), with WGBG, ring Steve McGann 01625 533652
- 12 MRSPB AGM followed by MEMBERS' IMAGES and VIDEOS
- 15-18 MRSPB Northumberland weekend (Fri-Mon), ring Graham Palmer 01625 420179 for details
- 17 SECOS Anglesey, ring for details

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
- HRSPB 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 8pm, contact Derek Pike 01565 653811
- MCOS Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Soc, mtgs Cuddington & Sandiway Village Hall 7:45pm, contact Andrew Aldridge 01477 534873
- MRSPB Macclesfield RSPB Members' Group, mtgs United Reformed Church, Macclesfield 7:45pm, contact Daryl 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 Orn 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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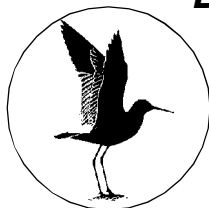
For further information, please contact:

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

If you know anyone who might want to advertise
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Sheila Blamire at sheilablamire@cawos.org Tel: 01565 830168

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Email: focalpoint@dial.pipex.com / Website: www.fpoint.co.uk

Optics-----	✓
Repairs---	✓
Books-----	✓
Clothing--	✓
Bird Art---	✓
Part Ex---	✓



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***** **CAWOS INDOOR PROGRAMME** *****

‘AN INDIAN WINTER’ by Keith Offord

6th December 2019 at St Vincent's RC Church Hall, Knutsford

FRESHPAK is a DELIVERY ONLY service delivering to Stockport area (Wednesday), north Cheshire (Thursday) and Manchester (other days). Simply ring by 4pm the day before delivery is required.

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