

Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society

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BIRD NEWS

Number 115 November 2020



**County Rarity: Dusky Warbler
Chelford Sand Quarries
Goosanders on the Dee Estuary**

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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: Sabine's Gull by Ray Scally

Other illustrations by Phil Jones, David Quinn, Ray Scally and Thelma Sykes

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 17th February 2021

Guest Editorial

I think that it's fair to say that the world we once knew has changed beyond all recognition during the past couple of years. First of all there was, or still is, an American president who labelled everything fake news if he didn't agree with it and the mysterious corona virus which appeared as if by magic earlier this year. Both of these have been very unsettling for a lot of people including me. Like most people my life is built around reference points, things that I know to be true, that are solid factually. When this certainty is removed life becomes less predictable and social contact becomes less. Even in the world of birds things are changing as you all have probably realised. Climate change is accelerating by all accounts and along with this comes more uncertainty. Anyway....

Migration has always been my favourite topic when it comes to birds and more lately, to insects. Bird migration using GPS trackers is well known and understood for a lot of species now and as technology advances, even the smallest birds can be tracked using various means. This autumn there were a number of Yellow-browed Warblers fitted with Motus trackers on the other side of the North Sea and the hope was that the Spurn B.O. aerial would pick one or two up if they'd made the crossing and were continuing on their migration. But maybe the number fitted with the tracker was too small and none was detected. Some of the Yellow-browed Warblers were even fitted with colour rings, so keep your eyes open.

I also listened to a podcast on tracking insects on migration, hoverflies to be exact. How is that possible? At first it was larger insects that could be fitted with a tracking device, such as Death's-head Hawk-moth. The only problem was that the signal given off was weak and didn't go very far, so the only way was to try and follow the moth in a light aircraft which had its limitations. Also in those early days of investigation, hoverflies were caught as they flew through alpine passes in the Alps and carefully marked with a dye or paint. They were then taken hundreds of miles to the north and released only to be caught sometime later at the same passes, proving that the hoverflies were migrating south. The technology has advanced greatly as it has with birds and the hoverflies and other insects that are caught are tested for hydrogen isotopes which can be matched to specific areas in Europe. At the moment these areas are large but as the mapping gets more precise so will the origin of the insects that are caught hundreds or thousands of miles away. Fascinating.

Back in Cheshire and local news, Barry Barnacle has written a nice account of Bob Anderson's early days which includes the formation of Hilbre Island Bird Observatory. It's strange but I still expect to read Bob's ramblings in One Man's Birding. I think that his way of viewing the world was reassuring in a way and for this reason it reminds me of an age long gone. For those of you who are media savvy, there is a really lovely site on Twitter run by a lady called Helen Day. She collects Ladybird books and regularly tweets illustrations from them which for me is like stepping back in time, a gentler time, with less urgency and a time when wildlife was plentiful. I dwell on the illustrations, looking at the detail surrounding the main subject and wish that I'd appreciated nature more when I was a lad. I'd just begun birdwatching in the sixties when these books were first published and often wonder what I must have walked past without realising it. The various artists who illustrated these books managed to convey scenes perfectly, full of atmosphere, without a lot of detail and it wouldn't surprise me at all if one day I looked at one of these and there was Bob, sitting on a rock, the tide rising, and waders in their thousands being pushed towards him.

There are a couple of appeals within these pages. One is quite simple to explain, the other not so. All records are being requested to be entered on BirdTrack, which will make them easier to collate and publish. Most county societies use similar software. The second appeal is for new blood, new people to carry on the society into the future and this is where I wonder if there are people out there who are interested enough to take over the reins. It all goes back to my first paragraph really. A growing number of people live in virtual worlds rather than in the world of meetings in civic centres and church halls. There are over 300 CAWOS members but I wonder what the age profile of the members is? How many young people are there and out of these, how many want to spend hours producing paper publications that lag behind real time? Apart from his schoolwork,

my grandson spends all his time on the laptop that he received last Christmas, or his smart phone that goes everywhere with him. I would guess that if I asked him to produce a paper report he would look at me and ask why? Social media sites are indeed full of young people interested in nature and birds. They often do voluntary work on local nature reserves and many are learning to study not just birds, but bats and all the other species that make up our current natural world. They do write about their accomplishments quite a lot, not on paper, but on social media and their success is measured in followers and 'likes'. I too am guilty of the same thing. I've mentioned Twitter already and use it to stay in touch with birding friends around the world. The attraction for me is that, providing the person is awake on the other side of the world, a response is usually fairly immediate. No, or very little, time lag. I've just been looking at the C&W Bird News site on Twitter. It has over 2100 followers, 2100 people who want to see what is going on, bird-wise, in Cheshire and Wirral. I would think that it would be good to tap into that enthusiasm with a CAWOS site on Twitter. As I'm typing this, I'm actually talking to a willing volunteer who has said they would be willing to set such a site up! One last comment - if you do search for CAWOS on Twitter at present, just be mindful that what you look for isn't always what you find...

Another article about Goosanders in Cheshire is interesting and an increase in numbers seems to be as Red-breasted Merganser numbers decrease. I also didn't know that the males go to Norway to moult and leave the females here to look after the young. Every day is a learning day!

Finally, George Hill's Green Birding is very entertaining. His description of birding in these strange times is amusing in several places and his attempt at a year list on his bike, dipping several birds, brought back memories of my own attempts at year-listing in Cheshire. I particularly like his account of accelerating through a tunnel of hawthorns only to meet a Woodpigeon doing the same thing! But it does raise the inevitable question about non-green birding and how the actions of birders actually contribute, possibly only in a minor way (as everything is relative) to global warming and the knock-on effects of climate change. Talking to birders who run bird tour companies, some say that they are unsure if the future will ever get back to normal and are quite pessimistic about arranging future trips. I would ask if it is morally acceptable to travel half way around the world to see birds. After all I do, or rather did until Covid, travel regularly and have always thoroughly enjoyed walking in warm sunshine, the scent of unfamiliar vegetation in the air, the smells of foreign cuisine and the chatter of the local people around me. All that on top of great birding and fabulous scenery. Why wouldn't I continue to do it? If I stop, a billion other people won't, so my own selfish enjoyment wouldn't actually make any difference at all... would it?

But for the present anyway, my conscience is clear. After writing this I will seek out some more illustrations from that gentler bygone age and lose myself once again in Ladybird land.

Tony Broome

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 17th February 2021 - 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.

WANTED: NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

There are four vacancies for Non-Executive Members of Council.

For further information, please contact:

Ted Lock Email: secretary@cawos.org Tel: 01625 540466

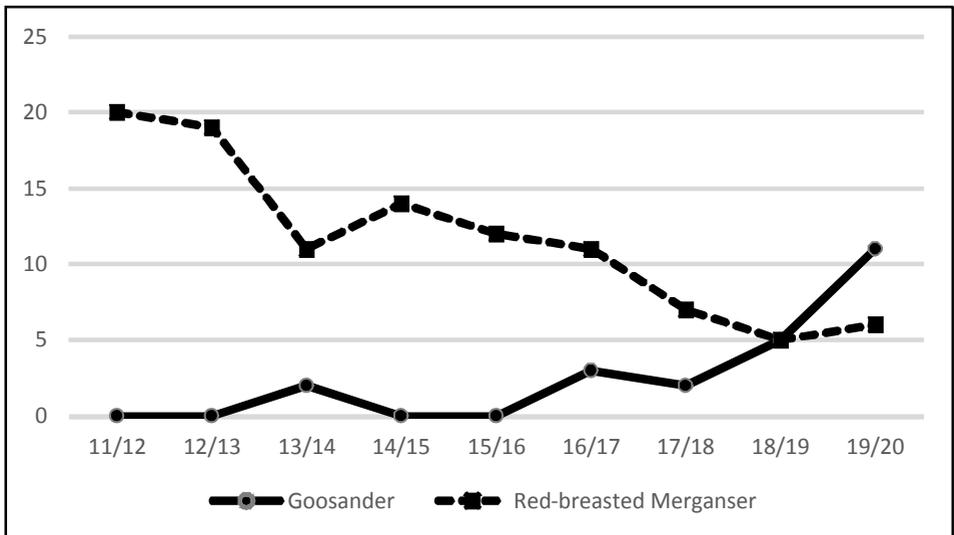
Species Spotlight

GOOSANDERS ON THE DEE ESTUARY

Whatever you have learnt about ducks probably isn't true about the Goosander. This is a very different animal from your quacking park staples, and almost everything they do, it doesn't do. If you take a list of unusual duck facts, many of them will be true of Goosanders. The Goosander is a duck apart, a thoroughbred and a maverick. Far from being a portly, bread-ivorous consumer of benefit handouts, the Goosander is a big-game fishing duck. Dominic Couzens (Ref 1).

Being a bird mainly of rivers and lakes the Goosander is a scarce bird on the estuary, although it is definitely getting commoner than it used to be. Over the last four winters Goosanders have become regular on West Kirby Marine Lake. One bird was recorded several times in the winter of 2013/14 but before that I can only find two records of brief visits by single birds, in 2001 and 2010. But in the winter of 2016/17 two or three spent several weeks and on 7th December 2019 the first double-figure record was achieved with 10, they reached 11 later that month. I assume what's driving this is just the general increase in the country as a whole and in particular the increase locally both in Clwyd and Cheshire. Interestingly, Goosander numbers at West Kirby have increased whilst Red-breasted Mergansers have shown a sharp decrease over the past few winters - see graph below.

West Kirby Marine Lake
Winter max of Goosanders and Red-breasted Mergansers
2011/12 to 2019/20

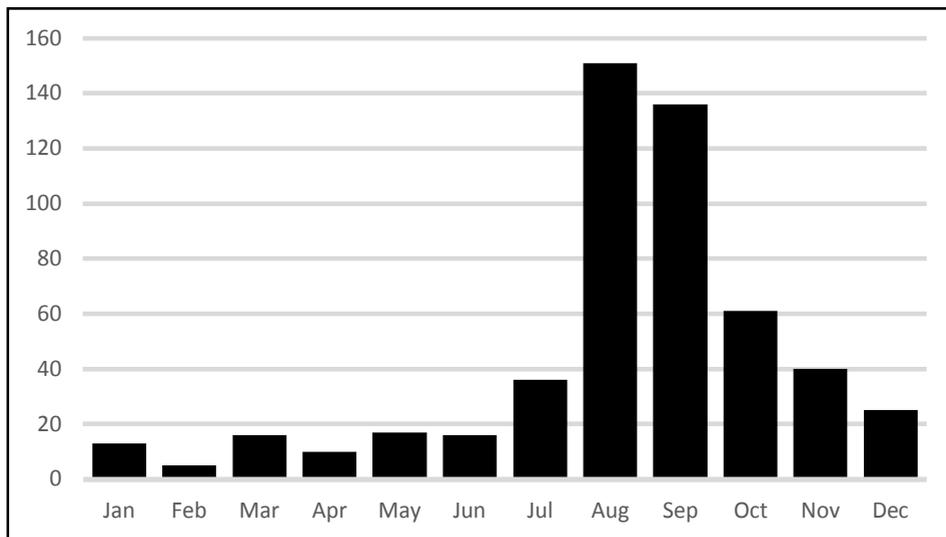


As the decrease seemed to have started well before Goosanders discovered the lake it seems unlikely one has caused the other although it's certainly a possibility due, perhaps, to competition for fish. Red-breasted Merganser numbers on the Dee estuary as a whole have dropped somewhat from what they were 15 to 20 years ago but there doesn't appear to have been any significant drop overall in the past five years.

Until they recently started using West Kirby Marine Lake Goosanders were known mainly as a passage bird with flocks passing through in late summer and autumn. The bar chart below shows the annual distribution over a period of 50 years, each bar is the total number over that period so you can see what I meant when I said it is a scarce bird! The large majority of records are of

flocks of four or more with many reported in August and September flying west along north Wirral before heading into the estuary.

Goosanders on the Dee Estuary
Total numbers by month 1970 to July 2020



Most just seem to keep going, presumably heading inland, but occasionally some touch down such as the 31 seen on the rocks at Middle Eye in August 2010. At this time of year sizeable flocks have also been recorded on the sea off north Wirral, at Point of Ayr, Parkgate, Connah's Quay and Burton Mere Wetlands. At other times of year ones and twos can turn up anywhere although the five non-breeding birds at Thurstaston in mid-June 2020 were certainly unexpected and a first for that site.

One thing you will notice about any Goosander seen from June to October is that they will all be 'redheads' (females and young birds). All the adult males from north-west Europe, including the UK, perform an astonishing moult migration all the way to northern Norway; this was only discovered in the 1980s. You may think the males are selfish leaving the females to look after the recently-hatched young birds but it does mean they are not competing for food at the breeding areas while they themselves are in an area where food supply is more reliable.

History and Status

Goosanders seem to have been present in very small numbers as a wintering bird on the Dee estuary in the 19th century and Eric Hardy mentions one in Liverpool Museum which had come from Hoylake in 1894. They remained rare well into the 20th century and the first record in double figures I can find is of 15 off Hilbre in November 1978. Although such flocks have become more regular recently it is still unusual to see that many together on the estuary.

Goosanders were unknown as a breeding bird in the UK until they colonised Scotland in the late 19th century, not reaching England until 1941. It took them until 1995 to start breeding in Cheshire although they were certainly breeding in Clwyd by 1990. Perhaps due to lack of suitable nesting habitat they remain a scarce breeder in Cheshire but are more numerous in North Wales where the Clwyd estuary seems particularly attractive to them and Rhuddlan in particular is regularly mentioned in the bird reports as a place to see several broods in the spring and summer.

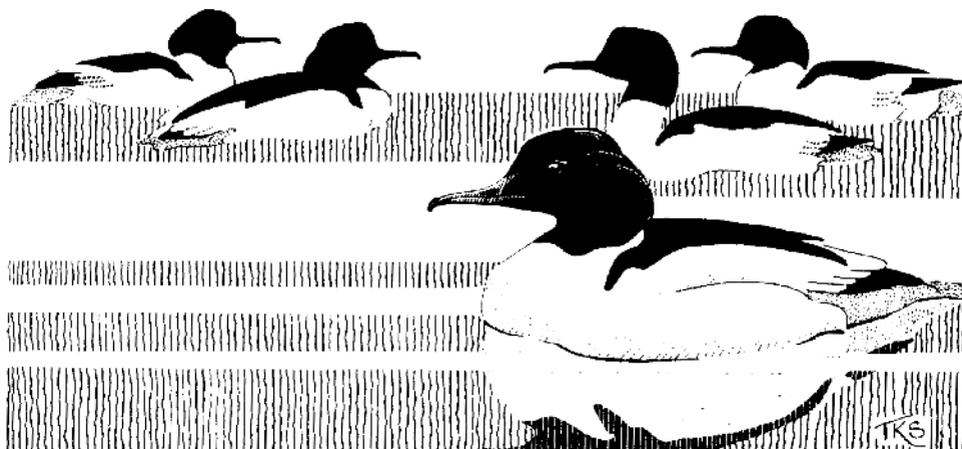
Numbers inland are much higher in the winter, a survey in 2010-11 found 166 in Cheshire and similar numbers are found in Clwyd on various lakes and reservoirs as well as both the River Clwyd and River Dee. The birds seen flying through the Dee estuary in late summer and autumn are likely to include some of these birds which over-winter.

Nationally it is estimated that there are 3,500 pairs breeding and 15,000 over-wintering. The British breeding population is largely sedentary (i.e. within the UK, except for the male moult migration) and the wintering numbers are boosted by migrants from Continental Europe, although, except in hard winters, numbers coming here for the winter are probably quite low and are mainly found in south-east England.

Richard Smith www.deeestuary.co.uk

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4. *Clwyd Bird Reports* and *North-east Wales Bird Reports* various from 1980 to 2018.
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7. Steve Barber, The CAWOS Goosander Survey 2009-2011, *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report* 2010, CAWOS.
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11. Hilbre Bird Observatory Blog, <http://hilbrebirdobs.blogspot.com/>.
12. WeBS Report Online, BTO, <https://app.bto.org/webs-reporting/>.
13. David Norman, *Birds in Cheshire and Wirral* (Atlas), Liverpool University Press, 2008.



Goosanders by Thelma Sykes

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*.

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 2020.

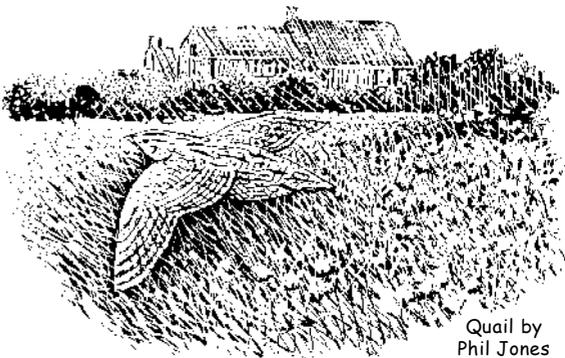
SITE REPORTS

Chester area

Two Quails were at Saughall Massie from Jun 10th to 22nd, an Osprey over Puddington on Aug 27th and a Red Kite over Aldford on May 28th. A Bee-eater was at Eccleston on Jun 8th, Hobbies were at Aldford on May 28th and Bickley on Jun 2nd and Pied Flycatcher at Aldford on May 28th.

Congleton area

Nine Common Scoters were at Astbury Mere on Jul 9th and two Quails here from Jun 8th to 10th and Brereton Heath from Jun 9th to 13th and Jul 14th. A Shag was at Astbury Mere on Aug 30th and 31st, a Honey Buzzard over Congleton on May 7th, Hobby at Congleton on May 27th and three Spotted Flycatchers at Congleton Park on May 29th.



Quail by
Phil Jones

Crewe and Nantwich area

A Garganey was at EHF on May 19th and 20th, and three Pintails here on Aug 21st. Single Quails were at Audlem, Basford and Weston on various dates. A Gannet was at EHF on Jul 6th and 7th before perishing. An Osprey was over Holt on May 27th and two Red Kites noted over Roe Park on May 27th. Two Whimbrels were at EHF on May 12th, Turnstone at Doddington on Aug 25th, Knot at PHF on Aug 26th, 12 Green Sandpipers in the Sandbach Flashes area on Aug 6th and two Greenshanks at EHF on Aug 9th. Two Common Terns at Sandbach Flashes on May 5th, 6th and 18th and a further two at Doddington on Jul 5th.

Two Cuckoos were at Bickerton Heath on May 17th, Nightjar at Bickerton Hill on May 29th and 30th, two Hobbies were at Coppenhull Moss on May 10th and Queens Park on Jun 11th and Railway Flash on Aug 30th. Elsewhere a Ring Ouzel was at Holt on May 5th, five Spotted Flycatchers at Bickerton Hill on May 20th, Pied Flycatcher at Lawton Lake on May 2nd, three Redstarts were at Bickerton Hill on May 20th and Alsager on Aug 8th with two Tree Pipits here on Aug 8th. A Corn Bunting was at Alsager on May 24th to 26th.

Ellesmere Port and Neston area

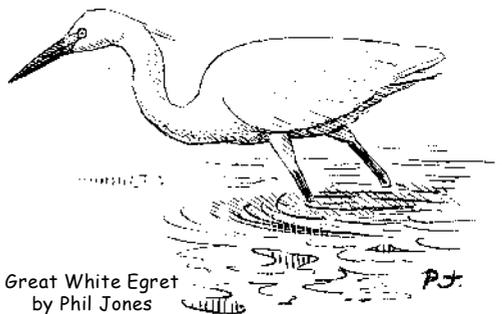
Two Egyptian Geese were at BMW on Aug 4th, with Garganey on Jun 21st to 23rd and Aug 16th, an Eider was an unusual visitor to Denhall Lane on Aug 25th and 26th. Two Quails were at Decca Pools on Jun 2nd and 3rd, eight Spoonbills at Parkgate on Aug 1st with an early Bittern in the Parkgate/Burton area from Aug 2nd, a Purple Heron at BMW on Aug 9th, a total of 92 Little Egrets were counted on the Mersey WeBS on Aug 23rd and five Great White Egrets at Parkgate on Aug 16th. Single Ospreys were over Burton Marsh on Jun 4th, Ince on Aug 19th and BMW on Aug 26th, Hen Harrier at BMW on Jul 29th and 30th and single Red Kites were noted on various dates over the Burton area.

A Spotted Crake with two young were at BMW on Aug 17th. Four Turnstones were at Decca Pools on Aug 23rd, 150 Knot at BMW on Jun 18th, Curlew Sandpipers were present at Decca Pools on Aug 23rd and Parkgate on 31st, Sanderling at Decca Pools on Aug 23rd and Wood Sandpiper here from Jul 26th to Aug 2nd with others at BMW during Jul and Aug, 22 Greenshanks were at Parkgate on Jul 28th and Aug 19th. A Little Gull was at Shotwick on May 30th and BMW the next day, two Common Terns at Burton Marsh on May 16th and an Arctic Tern at Eastham on Jul 5th. Two Hobbies at Burton Marsh on May 16th. A possible Iberian Chiffchaff was at Burton Marsh on Jun

4th, Black Redstart at Parkgate on May 3rd, Redstart at BMW on Aug 10th and two Tree Pipits here on Aug 22nd and 23rd.

Halton area

A Garganey was at Hale on Jul 15th, 28 Eiders were on the Mersey off Hale on May 9th, two Common Scoters here on Jun 7th and two at Pickering's Pasture on Jul 26th. Quail was at Hale on Jun 3rd. A White Stork was over Widnes on Aug 9th, three Spoonbills at Hale on Aug 26th with three Great White Egrets on the same day with up to 52 Little Egrets during the period. Single Ospreys were over Hale on Aug 11th and 18th, three Marsh Harriers at Hale on Jun 20th and Red Kite noted on several dates. 107 Avocets were at Hale on Jun 20th with 1100 Ringed Plovers on Aug 17th, nine Whimbrels on May 10th, three Knots on Aug 12th, two Curlew Sandpipers on May 17th and seven Sanderlings on Aug 17th. A Little Stint was at Hale on several dates in May and Aug, Wood Sandpiper at Carr Lane Pools during early Aug.



Great White Egret
by Phil Jones

Single Little Gulls were in the Hale/Pickering's Pasture area on several dates, three Common Terns at Hale on Jun 13th with 30+ Arctic Terns on May 30th and two Black Terns on Aug 26th. A Great Skua was with a Pomarine Skua on the Mersey River at Pickering's Pasture on Aug 21st. Hobbies were at various sites throughout the period. A Blyth's Reed Warbler was at Wigg Island on May 30th, Firecrest at Hale Duck Decoy on May 18th, two Spotted Flycatchers were at Pickering's Pasture on Aug 15th and Redstart here on May 1st and Aug 2nd. Three Channel Wagtails were at Carr Lane Pools on Jun 20th and three Tree Pipits at Pickering's Pasture on Aug 27th.

Macclesfield area

Four Egyptian Geese at Mere Farm SQ on Jul 25th and Common Scoter here on Jul 22nd and 24th. Four Black-necked Grebes were at Lapwing Lane Pool on Jun 16th, a Whimbrel was at Mere Farm SQ on Jul 25th, two Common Terns at Acre Nook SQ on May 5th. Three Hobbies were at Henbury on May 3rd. Wood Warbler was at Macclesfield Forest on Jun 13th, two Spotted Flycatchers at Bosley Cloud on May 22nd with Redstart on May 15th and 22nd.

Vale Royal area

Wildfowl included: four Egyptian Geese at Tatton on Jul 1st and Frodsham Marsh on Aug 8th, two Garganeys at Frodsham Marsh on May 25th and Aug 23rd, an early Wigeon at Marbury CP on Jul 4th, Scaup at Frodsham Marsh on Jul 9th, with two Common Scoters on Jul 14th and Goldeneye on Aug 23rd. A Black-necked Grebe was at Neumann's Flash on Jun 12th and Marbury CP from Jul 14th to 18th, three Spoonbills at Neumann's Flash on Jun 9th with the first returning Bittern at Marbury CP on Aug 2nd, Cattle Egret at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 23rd and a Black-crowned Night Heron at Dairy House Farm NR from May 5th to 11th. Osprey was over Goostrey on May 27th, Neumann's Flash on Jun 15th and Red Kites at various sites throughout the period.

Waders included: 208 Avocets at Frodsham Marsh on Jun 27th, a Ringed Plover was at Ashton's Flash on Aug 29th, 15 Whimbrels at Winsford on May 4th, four Bar-tailed Godwits at Frodsham Marsh on Jun 6th with 22 Knots on May 29th along with a single Curlew Sandpiper. Single Sanderlings were at Marbury CP on May 16th and Neumann's Flash on 27th. A Red-necked Phalarope was at Frodsham Marsh from Jun 28th to 30th, Pectoral Sandpiper on May 6th, 13 Common Sandpipers were at Middlewich on Aug 9th and Wood Sandpiper at Frodsham Marsh on May 7th and Ashton's Flash on Jul 24th and Greenshank noted on several dates at various sites. A Little Gull was at Frodsham Marsh on Jun 12th to 17th and 30th and again on Aug 18th, four Common Terns at Marbury CP on Jul 22nd and two Black Terns at Neumann's Flash on Jun 6th. Three Cuckoos were at Neumann's Flash on May 7th, Hoopoe at Aston-by-Budworth on May 22nd and three Hobbies at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 26th. A Rose-coloured Starling was at Frodsham Marsh from Jun 10th to 12th and Winsford on Jul 24th, two Spotted Flycatchers at Little Budworth on Jun 9th and two Redstarts here on 7th. 41 Siskins were at Marbury CP on Jun 30th, 12 Crossbills were at Middlewich on Jun 24th.

Warrington area

A Garganey was at Woolston Eyes from Aug 25th to 28th and 10 Goosanders here on May 14th. Quail was at Rixton on Jul 7th and 12th and four Great White Egrets at Woolston Eyes on Aug 18th. Osprey was over Padgate on May 10th and Culcheth on Aug 2nd, Red Kite at Risley Moss on May 27th and Woolston Eyes on Jul 23rd. Two Wood Sandpipers were at Woolston Eyes on Aug 22nd with Greenshank on 4th. A Common Tern was at Woolston Eyes on Jun 9th. Hobby was at Risley Moss, Rixton Clay Pits and Woolston Eyes on numerous dates. A Channel Wagtail was at Rixton on May 15th and Jun 11th and 20th and a Yellowhammer at Woolston Eyes on May 30th.

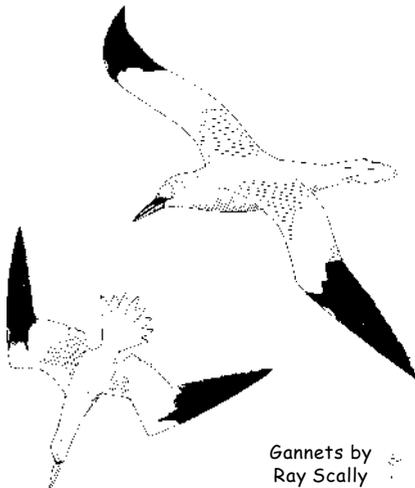
Wirral area

Nine Brent Geese were at Hilbre on Aug 30th. Quails were at Greasby, Heswall, Prenton and West Kirby on various dates. Single Leach's Petrels were at Hilbre on Aug 25th and 26th and Hoylake on 25th, two Storm Petrels at New Brighton on Jun 6th and 100+ Manx Shearwaters at Hoylake on May 1st. A Spoonbill was at West Kirby on Aug 1st, 94 Little Egrets at Heswall on Aug 28th and 518 Gannets at Hilbre on Jul 28th. Osprey flew over Liscard on May 9th, Red Kites were over Willaston on May 18th, Greasby on Jun 6th and Irby on Jun 16th. 142 Whimbrels were at Thurstaston on May 6th, 6230 Black-tailed Godwits at Caldy on Aug 21st, at least four Curlew Sandpipers at Hoylake on May 9th and 119 Sanderlings at Hoylake on Aug 18th. Little Stints were present at several sites during the period.

116 Kittiwakes were off Hilbre on Aug 25th, two Little Gulls at New Brighton on Aug 25th and eight Mediterranean Gulls at Meols/Hoylake on Aug 18th. 690 Sandwich Terns were at Hilbre on Aug 2nd, 80 Little Terns on 5th, 615 Common Terns and eight Arctic Terns on Aug 25th, a Roseate Tern on Aug 5th and two Black Terns at Hoylake on Aug 21st. A Great Skua was off Hilbre on Aug 25th, five Arctic Skuas on 23rd, 17 Guillemots on 5th, Razorbill at Hoylake and Leasowe on Aug 23rd and Puffin at Hoylake on May 1st and West Kirby on May 3rd. Hoopoe was at Lower Heswall on May 8th and 18th, Turtle Dove at Red Rocks on May 7th, Hobbies were noted at several sites. Wood Warbler was at Thurstaston on May 3rd, two Spotted Flycatchers at Leasowe on May 23rd with Pied Flycatcher on Jul 31st, Redstarts were at Hoylake, Leasowe and Meols. Six Whinchats were at Leasowe on May 6th along with a Blue-headed Wagtail, with Citrine Wagtail at Hoylake on Aug 19th and five Rock Pipits at Hilbre on Jul 20th whilst a Yellowhammer was at Hilbre on Aug 20th.

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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.



Gannets by
Ray Scally

Obituary

BOB ANDERSON - RIP

First published on www.hilbrebirdobs.blogspot.co.uk at 14th July 2020.

It is with sadness that we have to report the passing of Bob on 9th July. He was a founder member and good friend of the observatory, also Chairman for a short time in the early 1980s. The following are reflections from Barry Barnacal recalling Bob's connection with the observatory.

Bob went to school with Geoff Pass and they both became members of the school natural history society under the guidance of W.T.C. 'Daddy' Rankin. He took the group on various field trips, including to Hilbre Island.

The two boys started to visit Hilbre independently and met John Gittins, Tony Bell, George Richards and Prof Craggs. March 13th 1957 was a memorable day for the group as it was decided to form Hilbre Bird Observatory.

Bob trained as a ringer under John Gittins and this experience was a great help as Bob became an annual Brathay Expedition leader to Foula where he ringed many bonxies and other sea birds.

On Hilbre Friday nights became a feature for Pete Williams, Geoff, Bob and myself which was hugely fun, but lots of effort was put in mist netting and dazzling for waders, our prize target being Purple Sandpipers.

We hatched out a plan to clap-net waders on the west side on big tides, so we constructed our first effort using a broom handle, garden netting, catapult elastic and 3 lengths of washing line. These were very successful and great sport.

Pete and I decided to invest £40 in a Standard 8, our first Hilbre vehicle apart from John's old Liverpool University Landrover. Bob and Geoff wanted in on this luxury and each coughed up £10. Unfortunately, neither got to ride in the 'Bullet' as Pete Bailey, the island keeper, used it without asking and got it stuck on the west side of Middle Eye, and it was lost to the tide. The approach road in the 1960s was on the west side but very unpredictable.

Bob was also part of our cannon-netting team, sadly in his later years arthritis in his hands made it impossible to handle small birds.

Bob also enjoyed being part of our RSPB Wirral bird race team. Always the ornithological pessimist, he never thought we would win. One year we had seen most of our target species and still had time on our hands. As we were at New Brighton Bob suggested, as we had no chance of winning, we should go on the dodgem cars at the fairground and have candy floss..... we still managed to win.

Talking about winning, Bob was a red hot Liverpool F.C. supporter. One year Pete, Bob and I dashed off the island to watch the reds play in a cup final. We watched the game at Bob's elderly parents' house in Storeton, where his folks were shocked by two young kopites and their son singing and chanting in their sitting room. YNWA [You'll Never Walk Alone] Bob.



George Richards, Bob Anderson and Tony Land on Hilbre

Barry Barnacal

MEMORIES OF BOB

I first met Bob when, if I remember right, I'd gone birding to Hurlston Reservoir near Nantwich; the late Stuart Gibson, who I already knew, was there and Bob was with him. Although he was ten years my senior we had in common that we both came from the Wirral and had been to different schools in Birkenhead and we both knew Hilbre Island also. It wasn't long after that that Stuart had the idea of forming a natural history society in Nantwich. Bob was all for it and he and I and a few others became founder members. We became good friends and with our families would visit each other quite regularly.

He had an amazing memory and was full of stories of things that he and other people had said and done and the places he'd been. He enjoyed smoking his pipe and must have had a favourite one from which the bowl part would occasionally fall off and would lie smouldering on the floor and for a while he would be there with just the stem in his mouth. Hilarious. When we moved to Warwickshire in 1987 he and Jane with others helped us load the van with our belongings. Naturally we stayed in touch while there until we came back to Cheshire in 2006. In his latter few years when he became less mobile I would take him out birding once a week most weeks usually locally, Burleydam Pool being a favourite of his and easy to bird. He was a really good and helpful friend and I will never forget him.

Pete Atherton

When Bob Anderson passed away earlier this year, Nantwich Natural History Society (NNHS) lost its first ever Chairman, one of its most articulate supporters and one of its fairest critics all at a stroke. I've known Bob for about 25 years I think, but really only came to know him better and appreciate his contribution to NNHS - and birding more generally - in the last seven years. Because it is in those years that Bob and I both re-took positions we had held previously, so I was able to enjoy working alongside him as Secretary under his Chairmanship of NNHS and watch its renaissance. Bob gently steered the Committee with good humour, wide-ranging natural history knowledge (especially birding) and the experience of a proper old-fashioned 'Committee man'.

Some memories: the lovely lingering aroma of Bob's pipe in the hide, gossiping about local bird news in Deer Park hide after doing the annual nest box surveys, the energy and enthusiasm which this little octogenarian brought to the project of replacing our hide at Bar Mere, sharing news and views over a pint in The Vine after our annual winter and spring surveys, bantering with each other over which birds should be on the official NNHS checklist. *Bird News* readers will be familiar with Bob's lovely articles and I will miss his ability to tell a tale; always well phrased, beautifully told and usually ending with a chuckle. In closing, I can only say that his beloved Nant Nats owe him a debt and that I wish that I had known Bob better and for longer.

Mike Holmes

So sorry to hear about Bob, I only met him on a couple of occasions. But I did enjoy his reports in *Bird News* and heard a lot about him from other birders and his role in CAWOS in the early days. I did not realise he was well connected with Hilbre. He will be missed.

He is the only member of the Society who took the trouble to contact me by email regarding one of my pleas for members to join Council on the CAWOS membership page in *Bird News* (2016).

Ted Lock

ONE MAN'S BIRDING

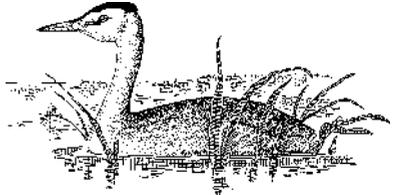
It was back in July 2005 when 'One Man's Birding' (OMB) first appeared in *Bird News* 67 with these words: *We give a warm welcome to Bob Anderson and his new regular 'slot' giving his unique slant on birding in South Cheshire and beyond.* Since that time he has entertained us with his unique way with words and his particular sense of humour (described by Tony Broome as "quite dry and at times delightfully mickey-taking"). We plan to occasionally reprint part or complete OMB for everyone to enjoy his writings again. Because America is currently dominating the news, I've chosen the OMB from *Bird News* 70 with an America-theme. Enjoy.....

Sheila Blamire. Editor

One Man's Birding

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Like many other people, I went to see the Long-billed Dowitcher at Inner Marsh Farm last back end. Watching it, and noting that long snipe-like bill, I recalled that this was the bird known in the books of my youth as a Red-breasted Snipe, and reflected on how much better that name was.



Some time ago (in the seventies or eighties was it?) there was this fashion for adopting American names for birds of American origin. Lord only knows why; we are, after all, talking about two different, if related, languages. Boot/trunk, braces/suspenders and wardrobe/closet are bad enough (best not to speculate too much about 'rubbers', perhaps), and I can't read someone like Sara Paretsky describing 'semis' rolling along the highway without having this nightmare vision of my house loaded on the back of a lorry (truck) and being carted across the country. Was it in *The Cruel Sea* that the yeoman of signals, reading a message from an American warship, said to the officer-of-the-watch "God, sir, what an illiterate way to spell 'harbour'"?

Whatever, we have acquired some unwanted and unnecessary names. Of all of them, the one that most offends me is undoubtedly Yellowlegs. In English, we have Redshanks, Spotted or Dusky Redshanks, Greenshanks. Perfectly logically, we also used to have Yellowshanks. Now we have the rather feeble transatlantic 'Yellowlegs'. Don't get me wrong; this isn't simple anti-Americanism: of course the Americans are entitled to have whatever bird names they like, just as much as the Dutch or French or Germans. But I see no reason why we shouldn't call *tringa flavipes* a Yellowshank since that is consistent with long-standing English usage.

And what about 'Winter Wren' for a bird that is one of our common breeders? I recall talking about this, years ago, with a visiting American friend. Martha knew the bird as a winter visitor to her Florida home, I knew it as a year-round resident, and we were interested in the fact that the different names which we used reflected differences in the status of the species in our respective countries. Not any more, if we go by the book....

Being both a birder and a student of English literature, she was fascinated by singing Skylarks - a species she had often read about but never seen. Now, of course, even if she was familiar with Shelley writing about a Skylark, she would listen to a Sky Lark. Sky Lark, Wood Lark, Wood Pigeon - they all look like the early, stumbling efforts of somebody learning English as a second language, because (like the prissily accurate but quite unnecessary Stock Pigeon and Rock Pigeon) they are out of kilter with traditional and common usage.

These are all part of the more recent generation of 'official' names (which, I am happy to say, the *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report* largely ignores). One annoying feature of these is the redundant epithet. I doubt that, even among the younger generation, the old saying "one Barn Swallow does not make a summer" trips readily off the tongue. Wheatear is the one name whose origin ('white-arse') everybody knows and understands; why add 'Northern' for use in the UK? If we have to discuss the species in international terms, there is always the universally recognised scientific name *oenanthe oenanthe*. And why bother to refer to 'Common' Blackbird or Moorhen?

All of which is fairly innocuous compared to the matter of the Tundra Swan. Everyone knows that it was not until the early 19th century that this bird was first described, and Yarrell proposed the name Bewick's Swan to recognise the achievements of "one whose beautiful and animated descriptions of subjects in natural history entitle him to this tribute". So we haven't just introduced a name which is (in the UK context) pretty meaningless - we have also cast aside one which was specifically created to honour one of our leading illustrators and engravers.

Something has been lost in all this - something to do with the enjoyment of difference between countries, their language and their heritage. It's a sort of ornithological globalisation - which is essential in terms of conservation, but sad in terms of culture.

Of course language (and spelling) evolves, but these name-changes are not something which has developed organically. Many of our current bird names originated in a predominantly rural, largely illiterate, society; they were often descriptive and relevant to everyday experience and observation (Corncrake, flycatcher, Lapwing). They were then adopted and codified by ornithologists, and passed into accepted use via the written word; the new forms are really rather pedantic inventions, and you don't hear many of them in daily use even among well-read birders (Black-billed Magpie, anyone?). We carry on using shorter or more familiar names.

I sometimes wonder if the new versions will eventually come into common use among birders, and if so, will they be taken up by the population at large? In a society heavily influenced by mass media, very different from that in which local and oral usage prevailed, will we see these new names trickle down from ornithologists to laymen, in a reverse of the previous process? I rather hope not....

OK, so I am parochial and conservative (in this respect anyway: this is not a comment on my politics). I regret the passing of so many old vernacular names for the birds about us. My generation of Cheshire birders may be the last which grew up knowing 'shepster' as an alternative name for a Starling: even fifty years ago A.W. Boyd was surprised to find a schoolboy recognising it. I sometimes have this fantasy of persuading the C&W *Bird Report* Editor to produce a report which substitutes local Cheshire names for the approved nomenclature (Boyd has some beauties in *A Country Parish*; does anyone over Big Marbury way still talk of Lord Barrington's Pigeons?). After all, if the scientific names were still there, it wouldn't make much difference.

Now here's a thought: might this be the unique selling point to catch the eye of the judges in the annual County Bird Report competition? Perhaps not. Pity. But then I doubt there is an old Cheshire name for a Long-billed Dowitcher.

Bob Anderson (April 2006)

For the record:

1. *Witherby's 1940 Handbook* says of the Red-breasted Snipe "called Eastern Dowitcher in *A.O.U.Checklist*. As the bird has been shown to be a snipe, we now use that name instead of sandpiper as in [a previous] *Handbook*." Strictly speaking, the reference may be to the Short-billed, but the two dowitchers were at that time considered a single species.
2. Boyd notes the name Lord Barrymore's Pigeons for Rooks "because of their nesting at Marbury Hall".

Ringling News

Ringling plays an important part in developing our knowledge of birds. In this feature we invite ringling groups, or individual ringers, 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 will be welcomed.

CHESHIRE SWAN STUDY GROUP

I wish to dedicate this report to Bob Anderson, a good friend for many years. He was always willing to help with all things swan-related, whether it be catching and ringling, or filling out the complex forms needed to try and raise funds for the Cheshire Swan Study Group.

Since my last report in June, the Swan Study Group has ringed a total of 59 swans including 47 cygnets, 2 second-years, 2 third-years and 8 adults. These included 1 control and 2 retraps.

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

- Acre Dell Pools, near Congleton: 64 on 7th Jun, 56 on 5th Jul, 67 on 23rd Aug and 63 on 20th Sep.
- Bottom Flashes, Winsford: 14 on 12th Sep.
- Burleydam Pool, nr Whitchurch: 11 on 23rd Jun, 8 on 27th Aug and 3 on 14th Sep.
- Comber Mere, nr Whitchurch: 38 on 7th Jun, 27 on 5th Jul, 21 on 23rd Aug and 24 on 28th Sep.
- Doddington Mere, nr Nantwich: 58 on 24th Jun, 63 on 22nd Jul, 61 on 5th Aug and 16 on 10th Sep.

- Neumann's Flash, Northwich: 15 on 3rd Jun and 30 on 13th Sep.
- Spike Island, Widnes: 65 on 23rd Jun, 80 on 21st Jul, 37 on 29th Aug and 74 on 12th Sep.
- Trent and Mersey Canal, Middlewich: 15 on 3rd Jun.

Mute Swan Movements

All swans below seen on 9th Sep 2020 at Aber Ogwen, near Bangor.

CBS1 ringed as a male cygnet on 22/8/11 on the canal, Shady Oak, Tiverton = 93kms.

CJP2 ringed as a female cygnet on 11/11/16 at Poole House pool, Wybunbury = 108kms.

CHA4 ringed as a second-year male on 24/1/15 at Spike Island, Widnes = 91kms.

CNV5 ringed as a male cygnet on 1/9/19 at Pikelow Farm pool, Marton, Macclesfield = 124kms.

CPD2 was ringed as a second-year male on 8/3/20 on the canal in Middlewich = 109kms.

The *Cheshire Swan Study Group Report* for 2019 is available for viewing on the website (under Reports): <http://cheshireswanstudygroup.wordpress.com>

Sightings of all swans, geese and Mallard should be sent to David Cookson at cheshireswans@gmail.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).

David Cookson, Group Leader, 70 Rope Lane, Rope, Crewe, CW2 6RD
Tel: 01270 567526. Email: cheshireswans@gmail.com

MID-CHESHIRE BARN OWL GROUP

Our last article reported positive results following the lifting of the coronavirus lockdown in May. The weather had been good, there seemed to be an abundance of prey, and subsequent box checking had provided results as positive as they were at the start of the year with good-sized clutches being found.

However, although breeding activity remained good, the weather intervened to affect the earlier positive signs regarding brood sizes (limiting both food availability and hunting opportunities for the birds). What we had hoped would be good-sized broods (certainly between 2 to 3 chicks per brood on average) has resulted in many nesting sites more in the region of 1 to 2 chicks per brood. The overall figures remain uncertain as not all our box-checking results have yet been finalised, but although the number of breeding pairs is expected to remain good, the brood sizes are expected to be low.

Furthermore, the lockdown and the weather have affected our ability to check as many of our boxes as we would have hoped. A few landowners have remained reluctant to allow us entry and the poor weather has restricted our box-checking work (the Barn Owls are not 'waterproof' so we don't check the boxes in wet weather to avoid the risk of unnecessary disturbance).

By way of example, for personal reasons I have to do the majority of my box checking at weekends. In 2019 I seemed to be able to get out almost every weekend. Since the lifting of the lockdown this year the weather at weekends has been poor to say the least - hence problems getting around as many of the boxes as I would have hoped. I know one or two of our checkers have had similar problems.

The recorded results this year will, therefore, likely show a reduction compared to the recorded results from last year. However, we know the birds are there and that breeding activity (if not the brood sizes) has been good. Fingers crossed we find a way to control the coronavirus such that we can return to a resemblance of normality in 2021.

As my now usual final comments - 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

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

Since my last article things started to improve, now it seems that we are going backwards; the biggest problem seems to come from the fact no one in power seems to know what to do. I realise that everyone and his dog is blaming the government for the current state we find ourselves in but I do not think any of them could have done better as this is all very new. Whilst I am not saying the current powers that be are blameless I do not want to get in a political wrangle.

I feel that we are in a somewhat unique position that our hobby does not usually involve groups of more than six and although we cannot visit all the places we would like to we can still get out and about as long as we socially distance and wear our masks as and when we should. Although I have noticed some of the 'bacon butty' vans are no longer trading, so it's back to the flask and sandwiches, or as Bill Oddie states a chocolate bar, that can be made to last a long while depending on how you eat it (this particular bar is named after a planet).

Firstly, thanks must go to Roy Leigh for the excellent report in the last *Bird News* on the development of Rudheath Lagoons. Well done Roy.

It's good news to hear that Cheshire Wildlife Trust intend to release beavers in Delamere at Hatchmere Lake; at the moment I am sitting on the fence as to whether it is a good thing, time will tell.

As autumn comes in with a bit of a bang our bird population in Weaverham has altered. The Blackbirds managed four broods but only managed to fledge two chicks in each nest. The chicks have all dispersed with the exception of one of the last chicks that appeared to have a mottled white head, now it has moulted into its adult plumage. The multitude of Starlings have moved onto the stubble fields down the road, at least now I can make a bucket of fifty fat balls last more than a week. My pair of House Martins made a lovely nest but failed to use it, we can only hope for better luck next year.

Whilst the weather is still fair, apart from the rain, and the soil is still warm consider planting more wildlife-friendly plants in your garden. I planted a load of teasel last back end and despite cursing them every time I had to weed by them I have been rewarded by a large charm of Goldfinches feeding on the seed heads every day. Sunflowers have also attracted large numbers of House Sparrows to the seed heads. All the garden centres now clearly show seeds and plants that attract wildlife. Whilst I am not saying turn your whole garden into a wildlife meadow (although think of the work you would save yourselves), a few plants dotted here and there do make a difference and you can sit back next year and enjoy the fruits of your labour. More people are now 'planting for wildlife' and it creates those wildlife corridors that we all keep hearing about to allow birds, animals and insects to travel freely without having to dice with death on our roadsides, although in fairness the roadside verges seem to create their own micro climate and habitat especially now the Highways Authority do very little to maintain them.

From the national press and various publications it seems that our raptor population is again under attack from a small minority of mindless idiots. Using poisoned baits and shooting. I know I have said it before but I will say again - do not blame all gamekeepers for these attacks on our raptors. A great deal of the cases that have hit the press lately have been reported by keepers. The moor keepers who look after the hillsides do a great deal to support our harrier population and also upland birds. I must stress again if you see a suspicious bait DO NOT TOUCH IT - call the Police and let them deal with the matter.

Please keep safe and I hope you all have a good winter and find that lifer waiting in the wings ready to come in from the cold.

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

WARRINGTON AREA

Two issues at Woolston, one bad one good. Firstly, an on-going problem with potential badger baiters who have been seen on or near the Eyes on at least three occasions. We are dealing with this in co-operation with the Rural Crime Unit of Cheshire Police and have provided them with the car registration numbers of the vehicles that they use. So far neither we nor the police have direct evidence that they are committing any criminal acts but it seems that the individuals concerned are people of interest to the police and the situation is being monitored closely by the Rural Crime Unit and the local police.

On a more positive note, phase one of the new wetland on No.4 bed is developing nicely and wildfowl are already being attracted to it in good numbers. A few days ago, nearly 500 were flushed by a Marsh Harrier, most being Teal (over 350). This is very encouraging as the water level there is still relatively low but with the rain of today, 3rd October, over an inch and a half already - levels must have risen considerably.

Brian Martin, Warrington Area Representative

WIRRAL AREA

Para Motors (also known as Powered Para Gliders) continue to cause much disturbance along north Wirral and the Dee Estuary. On September 29th three were seen disturbing a flock of over a thousand Pink-footed Geese on the marsh off Parkgate. One of these then made an emergency landing in thick mud off West Kirby with an incoming tide and had to be rescued by the RNLI who said "he had a lucky escape". Earlier in the year there were reports of them overflying Burton Mere Wetlands.



Pink-footed Geese
by Ray Scally

I can only guess at the damage a goose would do if one flew into the propeller of one of these things, but I think only when a serious accident does occur will the authorities try to stop them.

Richard Smith, Wirral Area Representative

CONSERVATION TEAM

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Conservation Officer | Steve Turner, 11 Pinfold Way, Weaverham, Northwich, CW8 3NL Tel: 01606 853796 Email: conservation@cawos.org |
| Chester | Vacant - please let Steve Turner know if you are willing to take on this role |
| 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: royleigh@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@deestuary.co.uk |

County Rarities

DUSKY WARBLER *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Those who relentlessly work a local patch in the east of the County could be forgiven for envious glances to Wirral Birders and those who tirelessly watch patches like Hale, or Frodsham, and even those this side of the M6 like Woolston, Marbury, Neumann's and Sandbach Flashes for the variety and quality of their sightings. However, it's a Wednesday, and you are back out at Tatton, the Dog Wood has a tireless queue of dog walkers, and most birds have retreated back to the inaccessible edges of the mere and woodland. You have a few off-piste areas you gravitate to. This one has a reed bed edge and some thick bramble. A Blackcap is feeding on the blackberries, and whilst you watch, you hear a different call, a sharp 'teck!' from within the bramble patch. Hoping for a Lesser Whitethroat, what emerges just to the edge appears to be a small and dark brown Chiffchaff. Then there is another call, a scolding, stony 'teck, teck.... teck.... teck, teck!' as the bird moves half hidden around the base of the bramble. The bird has dark grey-brown upperparts with a hint of rustiness, and the underside is off-white with warmer, grey-brown looking breast sides, flanks and undertail coverts. The throat is whitest. The ID brain engages, this is no Chiffchaff, the head has a pale and very distinctive supercilium which is long and is narrow in front of the eye but slightly broader behind and is accentuated by a very dark eye stripe over rusty ear coverts. The bill is dark except for a yellowy lower mandible and the legs look pale maybe even yellowish. The upperparts are basically brown and then it dawns on you, this is Raddes or Dusky Warbler, nothing else fits, but of course you are in Tatton woods and it doesn't make sense!

Trying to remember the difference, you recall that Raddes tends to look long winged, but with a chunky look to it, with a rounded crown and a thick neck and with pinkish thick bill, legs and feet, and olive-toned brown upperparts, this is quite different from your warm brown-looking bird here. The undertail coverts on Raddes usually appear orangey and the supercilium is less defined than on the bird you are watching. It somehow seems less contrasting overall and you realise this bird is a Dusky Warbler and a true County rarity.

The call is also diagnostic once learnt. Raddes Warblers tend to call with more of a 'chrrrr' or 'chuck' type of note, loud but soft, whilst Dusky always calls with a harsh, sharp, 'tack' style of note often made whilst moving through cover.

Hugh Pulsford

DUSKY WARBLER IN CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL

Dusky Warbler breeds in Siberia and south to north-east China and winters in south-east Asia down to Singapore. It owes its appearance on the Cheshire and Wirral list to a single record.

A bird found its way into a ringer's net at Arley on 19th November 1995. It was duly ringed and photographed and not seen again. The record was accepted by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee which, by reason of the rarity of the species in Great Britain and Ireland at that time, adjudicated sightings. Subsequently Dusky Warbler has been found more frequently in the country and is now considered a scarce migrant with a trend of 'Increase' from 1990 to 2018 noted in the *Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2018*. Unfortunately, that trend has yet to bear fruit in the way of any further Cheshire and Wirral sightings.

Steve Barber



Dusky Warbler
by David Quinn

Sites to Watch

CHELFORD SAND QUARRIES

Quarrying has now finished at the Dingle Bank Quarry complex at Lower Withington (otherwise known as the Chelford Sand Quarries) after 80 years of sand extraction. Restoration of the quarry banks at the final active quarry, Acre Nook, is now underway and is due to be completed by the end of 2020, when Sibelco will relinquish responsibility for the quarries. Now that pumping has ceased water levels are already rising and should reach capacity in around ten years. Lapwing Hall Pool/Lake was restored about ten years ago and designated as a nature reserve in the S106 agreement. There is a permissive path around the top of the bank which has recently been fenced to reduce disturbance to the wildlife.

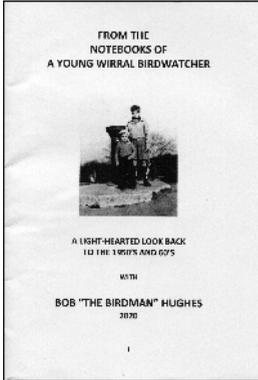
As the future use of the other waters has not yet been decided, it is important that the locations of birds on these waters are correctly recorded for conservation purposes and for evidence in the event of future planning applications. Records submitted under the umbrella site of Chelford Sand Quarries will be of less value than those which name the exact site. Records for Mere Farm Quarry should state whether birds were on the N, S or E pool. It would be helpful if birders using Birdtrack or eBird could also follow these guidelines. The map shows the quarries affected and the names which should be used when recording birds. It also shows the surrounding lanes and public footpaths which can be used to obtain views of the waters. There is no other access to any of the waters apart from the permissive path at Lapwing Hall Pool mentioned above.

Steve and Gill Barber



Book Review

FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF A YOUNG WIRRAL BIRDWATCHER A LIGHT-HEARTED LOOK BACK TO THE 1950s AND 60s



I have just read Bob Hughes' 65-page *FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF A YOUNG WIRRAL BIRDWATCHER - A LIGHT-HEARTED LOOK BACK TO THE 1950s AND 60s*. Many of you may remember Bob as a nature reporter with the *Liverpool Daily Post* and BBC Radio Merseyside from 2001 - 2005 before retiring to his allotment on Bidston Hill.

It is a really good read and I can certainly recommend it. There is a lot about the early days of Hilbre Island Bird Observatory and school birdwatching trips to Frodsham, Burton, Delamere Forest and further afield. It tells of some of the (humorous) disasters such as camping on the floating bog at Hatchmere, as well as the 'glory days' of spotting a Red-backed Shrike at Frodsham and the first Cheshire Sooty Shearwater from Hilbre.

If you would like to receive a copy, please ring Bob on 0151 652 7707. The booklet is free of charge but any contributions towards costs would be appreciated.

Colin Schofield

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Having had the pleasure of reading this book, I've chosen the following excerpt as a taster. Completely agree with Bob: 13th June 1958 was a special day to remember!

NIGHTJARS ON CALDY HILL

13th June 1958 was a special day to remember. The older boys at school knew that there were still Nightjars on Caldý Hill. Still - because they had once been widespread on Wirral's heaths, from Bidston Hill to Thurston. But there had been a dramatic decline all over the country and by 1958 Caldý Hill was their last stronghold on the Wirral - and not so strong at that because they were soon to disappear from Caldý too.

If any bird can be described as 'enigmatic' this is it. The Nightjar. The name already tells you it is nocturnal and the 'jar' probably refers to the sound it makes, which my trusty field guide describes as "a loud, rapid churring, rising and falling and sustained for as long as five minutes". My *Observers Book* says "a purring sound like a sewing machine working, continuing without pause for a minute or two". Another book says: "a sustained, far-carrying churr, remarkably like a distant two-stroke motorcycle with occasional abrupt changes of pitch. Not normally heard till 45 to 60 minutes after sunset".

Hearing this 'song' is probably the nearest you are ever likely to get to a Nightjar. About the size of a Cuckoo, but so well camouflaged, I've seen photos of them on their nest on the ground and wasn't able to see what was bird and what was their surroundings. They are summer visitors and feed on moths and flying beetles.

This did not deter us. On 13th June an evening expedition was organised. We walked from West Kirby station, climbed to Caldý Hill and then just waited, hoping, as the light faded. We didn't expect to see one. But would we hear the unmistakable calling? The weather, it seems, was with us for once. We waited and waited. Eventually we heard a moped, no it wasn't. Yes, it was the Nightjar, the churring, the trilling. We all looked at each other, enchanted by the experience of hearing this strange, mystical wonder of nature.

But alas no more.

Bob Hughes

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.

MY GREEN BIRDING LIST continued

Episode Three - Hard Lockdown! (*late March to mid-April 2020*)

Past readers may recall that at New Year I started a Green Birding List, which reached 86 species by mid-March 2020. That is, a list of species seen without using fossil fuels for *pleasure* birding. I included birds seen while: (1) walking or cycling from home; (2) using public transport; (3) driving to do official bird census work (WeBS and BTO counts - but not mere local 'patching'); and (4) driving on genuine journeys of social duty (for family, work, charity, etc). Cheshire highlights of my List thus far included Pintail, Whooper Swan and Mediterranean Gull; a bad miss was Kumlien's Gull (aargh!!! - long story).

When lockdown began, categories (2) to (4) in my List took a back seat. Like everyone else I was suddenly limited to foot and bike. I decided to relabel my number (1) category as a 'Fuel-Free' Birding List; this currently stood at 70. And I would still maintain my original (1)-(4) as a 'Green Travel' Birding List.

As we all know on 23rd March 2020 the world turned upside down. Boris had already pulled down the shutters on our old social lives; now we could exercise for one bare hour and then go straight home. My own exercise would be one of my three regular 10-mile cycle routes; my favourite one happens (no, really, it does, I have witnesses who will read this) to go past Sandbach Flashes. So my first new bird, at Pump House Flash by the road, is the lovely form of 2020's first Little Ringed Plover. However, I then dip out on the reported Black Redstart in Sandbach town, finding only a disheartened-looking birder who is just departing. Still, neither of us has much to complain about. NHS, keep going!!!

Next day, I amble out into the garden to plant seed potatoes - although I doubt the supermarket shelves will ever be cleared of spuds. Many of us have rediscovered our own gardens; singing Goldcrest is nice. Buzzards are mewling overhead; they are as common as cats here. Pausing on my spade, I check Birdguides. Oh, *no!* A garden just four miles north of me has just had an Osprey fly over it. Ouch - I'll look closer at those Buzzards in future. Time for a walk - that is, one of those walks where Christine wonders why I walk with my neck cricked, scowling up at the sky. We stroll to town to buy some tins of meat for the food bank. What rats have emptied the shelves of all but two tins? We lift our spirits by walking back along a muddy lane where a beautiful Grey Wagtail is new for my List - although it took Chris to notice it. I must have a species blind spot; I've passed the mill several times.

Birding by bike is a great tradition; Cheshire's early ornithologists knew their songbird populations from their constant riding (on calm days, I presume!). I mourn the day when I used to pick up local Corn Buntings that way. Now, I must keep my bins tucked inside my jacket; on strict lockdown one hardly dares to do something as frivolous as visibly carrying optics - so I startle the few other road users by my weirdly-shaped man bust. And I dare not pause to rest and scan for longer than a minute or so (police cars pass regularly). However, many birds can be spotted within sixty seconds, when you know what should be around and where. At the Flashes, the Black-tailed Godwits on the mud are surprisingly untroubled when my yellow jacket appears above them. Heading home I pass Foden's Flash and hear a shrill call right over my head - get the brain in gear! A stunning Kingfisher, gliding away. Magnificent; but dare I tell Christine? She will be furious that she missed it (she adores Kingfishers; I have to admit to it, so she waves a saucepan at me.) Then there comes a painful (in more than one way) miss. I have a social duty - an appointment to give blood (oddly on Good Friday, which for me is a very meaningful day to do that). And my route to the donation centre goes right past a Little Owl site! On my return journey, I decide that I can legally de-stress by taking my permitted walk. Ouch - no owl; chance blown. But a bare-looking flood pool nearby holds four fine Yellow and six White Wagtails. Bingo.

Next day, on a walk from home, Tree Sparrows are new beside the canal - so where have *you* rascals been all winter? Certain species are much scarcer than they used to be - where are all the Treecreepers? They were badly down in the last CAWOS Atlas and suffer in wet winters. Anyway, back on the bike. A cold NE wind makes for brisk cycling; but it also brings down falls of both martins plus a Common Sandpiper at the Flashes. Linnet; that's 99 on my original Green Travel Birding List. What could bring up my ton?

Hey - I've had a lightbulb moment. *Brilliant* idea. There is one place, within lockdown cycling range of my home, where I might hear a Grasshopper Warbler from the road. That would be a great 100th species for my List. (It would also be the final, crowning triumph for Button B of my new hearing aids.) But when I get there the marsh is silent. The super story-ending doesn't happen. Bah - gropped out on a gropper? My century bird is a cheerful, plump Whitethroat instead.

Now it's time to tackle a harder target: can I reach 100 species for my tougher Fuel-Free Birding List? That list has reached 82 so far. Wait, make that 83, because I've just had an adventure. I'm cycling down Elton Lane when I notice some sheep and lambs. Aaah. One lamb is very small and rather dirty looking. Aaah! Hey, *that* lamb is newly born. AAAH! And behind a worried mum, only feet away, is standing a large crow. A *very* large crow, chomping on the afterbirth with a bill like a meat-cleaver: no, Raven! Great - or not so great: this brute is showing a more than casual interest in 'my' lamb.

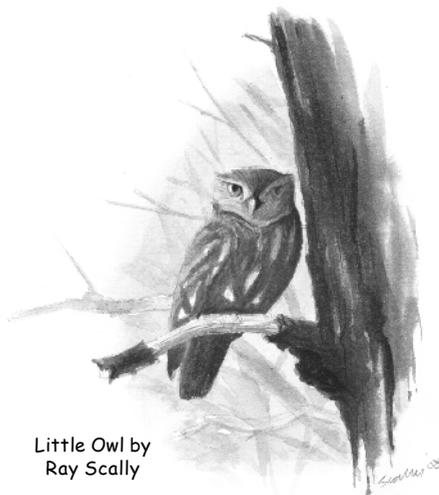
Shock, horror - my 83rd Fuel-Free species is intent on murder. Ovicide, I suppose it would be, or lambicide. Hey, what a lockdown classic! My hour is over; must I now head for home? Not likely; emergencies are allowed, and this is a clear matter of lamb or death. I can't get near, and dare not shout and frighten mum. So I cycle right up to the hedge, displaying fiercely in my brilliant-yellow jacket, strutting my stuff as I glare across the field. The Raven looks irritated and sulkily takes two steps back, then holds its ground. I clap my hands, imitating a shotgun as well as I can. There are two Ravens: they lumber up into the air. The local crows and Jackdaws go bananas and a fine aerial dogfight shows off well those diamond-shaped tails that I always look for. I stay until they depart. So, what further adventures will take me to my new target?

Episode Four - Softening Lockdown (late April to July 2020)

In late April, the coronavirus lockdown began to be eased: "You can drive to a nearby green space, as long as you drive for a lot less time than you walk". Does that help me with my Green Travel List? *No*, actually! If I drive to a birding location for exercise, that's still using fossil fuel for *leisure* birding, which my List doesn't allow. It's what most birders do in normal times. So my Fuel-Free List remains my focus. I'll cycle on. But how far? In theory I *could* cycle to, say, New Brighton for seabirds - a round trip of 112 miles - but I would be an invalid by the time I got home (even though my Grandad once did that ride in a day). I decide to limit my Fuel-Free List to a strict map range of 10 miles from home as *Cornus corone* flies.

Migrants are arriving. Cycling a lane, I have a birding *wow* moment, when birdsong explodes into my left ear from inside a dense hawthorn hedge. My bike brakes to a halt without my brain apparently being in the loop. What? *Oh* - of course! The CAWOS Atlas complains that some observers don't know this song. Brett Westwood, writing in *British Wildlife* magazine, gives it the great description of a 'revelatory rattle'. And I've always hesitated at the statement that this is the commonest *Sylvia* warbler over much of farmland Cheshire. But perhaps it is; by mid-May I have cycled-mapped a remarkable eight Lesser Whitethroats singing within 3 miles of Sandbach, although some proved to be transients. Certainly a good year.

And there are other, equally nice pluses. A stoat races across the road ahead of my bike carrying something - while being bombed by the Jackdaws whose tree it has just left. Carelessly, I mistake another Kingfisher for a Reed Warbler until she makes a brilliant blue plunge from her



Little Owl by
Ray Scally

reed for a fat little fish that she eats in full view of me. Christine and I notice a bit of brown rubbish in the River Dane at Davenport - which morphs into a Goosander mum with five adorable fluff-balls. There are also hazards. A grey squirrel runs the wrong way, missing my front wheel on a steep downhill by millimetres. A hawthorn tunnel path on the National Cycling Network is an entertaining place to accelerate in top gear, until you meet a Woodpigeon doing the same thing - head on!

On April 26th our extended family tackle the 2.6/26 sponsored challenge, in our case for Marie Curie. "Dad, what are *you* going to do? Run 26K?" Er, no. I decide on a 26 *bird* challenge. I keep cycling until I have located 26 singing Chiffchaffs; it takes me 11.7 miles, during which I also pass 24 other assorted warblers, including 5 Reed, plus a Common Tern. Great fun; I'll try my novel Chiffchaff Challenge next year too, and try to break the 10-mile barrier. Summer arrivals continue. A Swift flying over our lawn at twelve-all is my excuse for losing at badminton to Christine. But I cycle miles and miles while always missing the reported Cuckoo. A stunning male Garganey on Hancock's Flood could hardly have been showier, but a string of scratchy warblers infuriatingly play hide-and-seek.

With lockdown easing all the local birders have suddenly reappeared. I'm delighted to find that many now have a bird 'Lockdown List', mostly collected fuel-free. Perhaps they will tell their stories too. Excellent. Well, it should be, except that I now have serious *competition*. Dave and Pete are both approaching 90 and John is on 96, after (jealousy!) having a Hobby over his house. I scrutinize an OS map with a ruler to confirm that Bosley Cloud is just within my 10-mile range. A long ride and climb mean that Redstart, Tree Pipit and Lesser Redpoll boost my count pleasingly. What next? An owl hunt? Huh! All the Tawny Owls in the district refuse to hoot; but again serendipity triumphs - with a beautiful Barn Owl hunting at Watch Lane Flash. By the end of May I reach my second target with a century (101) in my Fuel-Free List. Much more valuably, I have learnt an awful lot about birds near my home that I never knew were there.

My next List hope is one of the 2020 influx of Quails. This involves a long, hot, weary stand with Dave and Tony at a field gate. It ends when Tony decides to stir his mug of tea with a teaspoon. This is a method of pishing that I had never considered might work, but Tony has great experience; and amazingly the triple tinkle of his spoon is echoed by the Quail at the far end of the field. Cheers, Tony! A contrast to that hot twitch, much later, is a Little Owl at Bradwall that plays hide-and-seek in the near darkness. Next a long bike ride to an unnamed spot reveals two Black-necked Grebes - in June! - with one of them in stunning plumage. However, the birders watching it with me are bemused when I also cheer a male Pochard paddling past it. To be fair to the Pochard, it too is in fine dress. A Dipper on Congleton weir gives me a welcome hat-trick for a day that takes me to 110.

Next comes a fine specimen of a Yellow-legged Gull at Sandbach Flashes, followed by a delightful long ride to Wyburnbury through the lanes for a superbly confiding Spotted Flycatcher. Phew! - that was my last hope for a spot fly. I commence a long weary return into the wind. Stopping to rest, it occurs to me that I ought to check Twitter, even though I have *no* plans to flog further upwind than I need to. But what if... Yeah, sure - it would have to be a stellar rarity in this gale. What? A strange white image appears on my phone. You cannot be serious! The third Sandbach Flashes



record of a *Gannet*? Gritting my teeth, I pedal on into the wind, delicately nursing a crumbling front chain-ring. Just before I arrive, the bird vanishes. Ouch! But no surprise; I have an eccentric history with Gannets. I have cut them out of fishing nets in Connemara and Fetlar, flown low over 5,000 unexpectedly for our honeymoon on Alderney, and stared with little interest at 60,000 of them from a small boat off Grassholm in a wicked sea. Next day, I pedal to pay regretful tribute to the wounded, great, sad, doomed bird marooned on the mud. Suitably, it is raining.

A couple of new birds for my list are reported - I wish I hadn't seen the reports. Firstly, because my bike is in bits, so I have to borrow my daughter's - cue loud expostulations and a trapped finger when I leap onto and try to ride it. I am a different shape by the time I locate the Green Sandpiper - if that's what it is, blurred by all the rain on the lens. (A week later there were twelve.) And then there was that perishing Great Egret! Is a birder allowed to spit feathers? Not only does it vanish, but the heavens open on me until every piece of clothing that a gentleman can decently be seen in is sodden. I hope I have inspired someone in green birding today. One week later I cycle past the Flashes; Dennis is photographing something on Pump House Flash, but I'm in a bad mood and don't even bother to look. Later, inevitably, I have to ride back - too late. As I remount, a dark shape passes over. Just a Buzzard; and a crow mobbing... except that the crow is not mobbing the *Buzzard*. It appears to be diving at empty air, until from the pale evening sky a great white shape materialises. The beautiful, big 'faerie' flaps high across the Flash and is gone again. Perhaps that's a suitably mysterious revelation of this awesome bird. On another day, serendipity helps again, as an unexpected Whimbrel flies over me calling - not bad, for a day where birding wasn't even the main target (that was an Essex skipper). To end July, a wild Hobby chase found me a Red Kite instead, and a Greenshank failure turned into a Ruff, for a gratifying Fuel-Free total of 120. There's no way I can keep this pace up for the rest of the year.

George Hill

ANTING

On a visit to Marbury Park in July I observed a Song Thrush anting. It picked up ants one by one and applied them to its feathers, afterwards gobbling them up. After several minutes it was challenged by a pair of Blackbirds but, unusually, it refused to give way and fiercely hissed back at them. They were taken aback and when it lunged at them they gave up and moved away and the thrush resumed anting for a few more minutes. Obviously the pleasure of removing parasites from its body, not to mention the 'high' of feeling the formic acid bite and enjoying a juicy snack outweighed any threat and so it called their bluff. In the literature many species are credited with indulging in this practice, though in Britain it tends to be mostly associated with birds like Starling, Jay and other corvid species.

Bob Groom

STOP PRESS NEWS

APPEAL FOR PINK-FOOTED GEESE RECORDS ON 12TH NOVEMBER 2020

There were several reports of Pinkfeet movements on 12th November 2020:

On my walk down to the locks this morning, there was a noticeable movement of Pink-footed Geese seen moving between Whitegate and Davenham (8am to 10am). I must have seen and heard more than 25 skeins in two hours - some in the 100+ and others from 50s through 70s in number, travelling in various directions but tending to come from NW going SE or E. Also one individual which was flying around forlornly, calling away, then heading SE. I haven't seen anything like this over here before. **David Quinn**

At 9.35 several skeins of Pink-footed Geese flying E to W. The first two skeins were 100+ and the third skein was 65 in number. At 10am three more skeins in excess of 100 each, again E to W. The first two that came over seemed to have a hiccup - they seemed to be following the River Weaver and then they suddenly turned S and after a few moments came N and picked up the River Weaver again and carried on W towards the Irish Sea. I am wondering if the Weaverham Bypass (A49) was shining in the morning sun and caused the confusion. The last three skeins did not waver from their E to W course. **Steve Turner**

Other reports from Hartford/Northwich/Winnington area: 200+ over Winnington heading SE c7.30am; 40 pinkfeet E over Neumann's Flash at 8.08am; 50-60 pinkfeet over Hartford heading NW quite high (c9.30am). **Several observers**

So..... Please send in any other records from 12th November to see if we can get a clearer picture, as we did back on 6th February 2010 (see *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report 2010*).

Sheila Blamire

CAWOS News

Current membership

Current membership stands at 304. There are still 14 members who have not altered their standing order (SO) to pay the full membership fee of £15. You are only paying £12, the Chairman will be contacting you by telephone to encourage you to alter your SO. The Membership Secretary in January will not tolerate any under-payment.

Financial Report

The current accounts show that we are in a good financial position at this time. This is due to subscriptions and Gift Aid coming in ahead of target, the prospect of no indoor meetings and a below budget charge for the 2018 *Bird Report*. The sale of 2017 *Bird Report* has been low due to Covid-19 and this will no doubt impact on the sales of the 2018 *Bird Report*. The Treasurer's view is that with the increase in subscriptions and lower cost for the *Bird Report* production means the accounts should be in a stable position from now on.

Current vacancies

Despite Council's requests for help from the membership we have had no response to take on any of these roles. Therefore, I have spelt them out again and would ask members to give any of the 4 posts serious consideration. Please contact David Steventon, our Chairman, or myself as Secretary if you would like more information. Contact details for telephone or email are on the inside front cover of *Bird News*.

This is your Society as members and we need people to **step forward** to help get the **Society fully functional** again. Current vacancies are:

1) Four ordinary Council member vacancies on Council

Requirements are: active birder, motivated and time available to attend 5 meetings a year, 4 probably via Zoom and 1 face to face when possible.

2) Records Manager

CAWOS is moving to **putting all records on BirdTrack from 1st January 2021** - only a couple of months away!! In addition, we urgently need members with time to help put records submitted into the database. See the report in this issue covering what is needed when submitting records.

3) Programme Secretary

We need somebody to organise our speaker programme for 2021/22. This will probably be via Zoom so there is the option to choose speakers from across the UK. You will have the freedom, within a budget, to invite speakers of your choice, with 6 talks/year.

4) Bird Report Manager

The role is to co-ordinate the production of the annual county *Bird Report*, which involves working with the Records Manager to get the records out to the compilers, ensure the compilers' reports are with the Systematic Editor on time, ensure photographs are available to be considered for the report. Work with the County Recorder regarding the annual review, Rarities Committee report and seek short articles. Request the early and late dates and ringing report. Seek advertising and the cost for printing and publishing. Generally coordinating the process.

Council meetings

Council had a virtual meeting in July where reports were circulated by Council members. Minutes of the meeting were circulated with actions for members, this worked reasonably well but lacked the personal contact. Council moved to Zoom for our September meeting which was a much better format with good interaction and discussion. Some of the key points are outlined below:

Bird Report 2018

This was circulated to members in August 2020 and feedback from several members was very positive, appreciating the new style with multiple photographs, the larger size and general layout. A special thanks go to Andy Livermore, Hugh Pulsford, Mark Woodhead, Geoff and Sheila Blamire and the compilers for all their efforts leading to such a good report. The 2019 report is underway with the compilers receiving their packages of data in early October with a deadline of the year end. So we are catching up with the issue of the reports, but with the changes in recording in 2021 and the loss of Geoff and Sheila we are dependent on members stepping forward to help, otherwise we will get behind again.

Indoor meetings

These were cancelled following our September Council meeting due to Covid-19 restrictions on the number of people allowed to meet amongst other things. Initially this was planned for the first three meetings, but it will almost certainly extend to the early 2021 meetings. Following discussions Phil Hampson, our Vice-Chairman, agreed to set up the talks via Zoom and Council brought an annual licence. I agreed as temporary meeting organiser to contact all the planned speakers with regard to the new form of presentation. Jeff Clarke our speaker scheduled for October was unable to make the date but readily agreed to move to November and Mike Watson agreed to take the October slot. However, two of the speakers said they would rather not give their talks via Zoom, so we are currently seeking replacements and I am still waiting to hear from Woolston Eyes about a speaker. A total of 20 people signed up on Zoom on 2nd October to hear Mike Watson but, unfortunately, he was taken ill at the last minute, but agreed to give his talk in December. So no doubt there was disappointment for those who had settled in for an interesting evening's talk. However, our Chairman led a discussion about the issues facing CAWOS as outlined above and two members offered to help putting records into BirdTrack and we had an offer to recommend names of people we could approach for help. It was also great to see that at least 2 members (may have been more?) from the west of the county joined the meeting and hopefully others will join in as time goes by.

Conservation

Frodsham Marsh - our president is a member of the Habitat Creation Management Committee which now only meets twice a year. He reported that the main issue is with the beds; No 6 bed had been overrun with thistles which have been treated successfully, while No 4 bed is covered with reeds, thistles and shrubs that need clearing. **Rudheath Lime beds** - planning permission has been finally given by the local Council for the removal of two lime beds, after the developers met all the requirements needed prior to starting. Mitigation was obtained at the last minute by the RSPB to help reduce disturbance on the surrounding beds. Once complete the area will be returned to grassland with the addition of a small lake for the birds. There is a fixed time scale to complete the work, as HS2 is going through Rudheath. Council members also asked about the current position at **Mere Farm Quarry**, apparently there is currently little evidence of the Wake Boarding Company starting any building work, but fences have been mended to keep people to the footpaths.

Please give serious thought to offering your services to help maintain the function of CAWOS to provide the Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report.

THE SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!!!

Ted Lock, Secretary

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership stands at just over 300 now, back to where it was about 7 years ago. I think we are all aware that we need younger members - should you know anyone who would like to join and take part in our meetings then do please ask them to contact me memsec@cawos.org.

People in fulltime education have free membership. It is my intention to do a membership push next year to try to increase the membership. Personally, I find many of our talks very educational and expand my ornithological knowledge. Not just that though our membership rate represents excellent value with the annual *Bird Report* and 3 copies/annum of *Bird News*. Both superb publications and alone cover the membership cost. I think our *Bird News* is one of the best news documents I see coming out of any form of club/society/wildlife trust and truly reflects the amount of hard work Sheila (Blamire), ably supported by Geoff, puts into it - many thanks you two. How many people realise that I print the labels and stick them on the envelopes along with the stamps? Up to these odd times Geoff and I filled the envelopes on their dining room table whilst having a coffee and a chat. The last 2 copies have been done by Geoff alone, with me driving to their house and leaving the envelopes outside their house so we are following all the guidelines, with lockdown or isolating I was unable to help, so a personal thank you from me.

Obviously, we are in very strange and unprecedented times. We do still have a programme of speakers and in line with many other organisations rather than just cancel we have decided to use Zoom, a web-based online tool. This allows everyone to join and participate in the meeting and the speaker to present as if standing at the front. For those who did try to join without success last Friday there was a Zoom issue, Murphy's law, but it was quickly resolved and once I had identified there was a problem and resolved it, we had a successful meeting, albeit without our speaker due to illness. It was really good to welcome from the more distant parts of the CAWOS area. Mike Watson will now speak at the December meeting. Please do not be reluctant to join in, it is very easy and requires no IT skills. For those members who we hold email addresses for I will be sending meeting details a week or so before the next date, 6 November. If you received a letter about the meetings and haven't sent me an email address, then please retain the information and use it to access the meeting. We cannot afford to send letters to >50 people/month. If you have an email address, or access to one, then do please let me know at memsec@kawos.org. An email costs us nothing; a letter these days is c70p.

We are coming up to that time of year again and the annual Renewal Notice is included with this issue of *Bird News*. There is no price increase and thank you to everyone for amending their SO. I know I sound like a long-playing record but if you don't pay by Standing Order please consider changing to do so. You can easily set it up online nowadays, or I can email you a copy of the form. If you don't want to do this then please consider paying by Bank Transfer using your initial and surname as reference, our Bank details are: Sort Code 01-09-69, and Account Number 91769647. I keep asking as it is becoming increasingly difficult to pay in cheques. The NatWest Bank in their infinite wisdom has removed the quick deposit facility they used to offer and also closed the local branch, all making it very difficult for me with the mobility issues.

Again apology for sounding like a stuck record here but throughout this issue you will see requests for people to step up and help; 3 or 4 Council members, Records Manager, Programme Secretary and Bird Report Project Manager are all needed. There are notes about each role, anyone taking on a role would have the full support and help from existing Council members. Please if you have some time to offer consider putting yourself forward, we really are desperate for help and it seems hard to us on the Council to understand that from a membership of 300+ we cannot fill these roles. It is not exaggerating to say that if we do not start to get help from other members soon then the overall future for CAWOS in the coming years is bleak.

An enormous amount of work has gone into *Bird Report* production, by the team under Andy Livermore's leadership, to produce the 2016, 2017 and 2018 copies and 2019 is being worked on now. Previously Sheila and Geoff Blamire were instrumental in producing the reports for many years in addition to all their work with bird records and *Bird News*. But without a **Bird Report Project Manager** that impetus will be lost. Sheila and Geoff Blamire are retiring from their database records role after over 20 years of tireless, excellent and outstanding work. To date we have no one to take on the management of data from our members going into the BirdTrack database for those who don't submit them direct.

The situation at this time is serious but will shortly become critical. Please, please if you feel you could help in any of these roles then contact a Council member. If you would like more information, or are able to help, please send an email to the following address: info@kawos.org.

Phil Hampson, Membership Secretary

CAWOS DATABASE

RECORDING IN CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL

The BTO's BirdTrack (<https://app.bto.org/birdtrack/login/login.jsp>) is the system of record for CAWOS bird records effective from 1st January 2020. The cutover from the team for the existing database, run by Geoff and Sheila Blamire, to the new team will be effective from 1st January 2021. The *Bird Report* for 2019 (work in progress) is based on records in the existing database and the *Bird Report* for 2020 will be based on records in BirdTrack. We will be updating the text, names, addresses and links on the CAWOS website (<http://www.cawos.org/submissionofrecords.htm>) in due course to reflect the changes.

Phil Hampson will be the new person behind the submissions@cawos.org email id to start with, to receive records not entered to BirdTrack directly. He will be acting as the central post-box for distribution to volunteers who will upload the records to BirdTrack on behalf of the observers for 2020 records. Currently we have three volunteers to do this but will always welcome more. The more we can get observers to enter records directly, the less these volunteers will have to do. Phil will fulfil this role for the records for 2020 and we are looking for a volunteer to take over the role for the records for 2021 and onwards.

DO

- For those of you who already use BirdTrack, please keep up the good work.
- For those who are not confident about setting themselves up to use BirdTrack directly, but can use spreadsheets, please submit records to the submissions email id on a spreadsheet. This will now be the BTO spreadsheet template to meet the BirdTrack requirements, replacing the existing one. Phil will be providing a link to this in a separate article.
- For those who cannot enter directly, or via a spreadsheet attached to an email, continue to send in paper records as before but now send them to Phil, whose full name and address will be on the CAWOS website once that has been updated or, if not on the internet, in the inside front cover of *Bird News*.
- Please use the site names used in the CAWOS Gazetteer (<http://www.cawos.org/sitelist.htm>). If you need a new location setting up, please provide the site details, including the grid reference and suggested name and send to the submissions email id until such time as we set up a gazetteer email id to deal explicitly with those requests. That person will add the details to the Gazetteer, for everyone else to be able to use.
- Please include a grid reference (e.g. SJ4577 for Ince) for the location on the record line: BirdTrack requires one. There are various tools available to help find the correct Grid Reference, including <https://gridreferencefinder.com>.
- Where you have several counts in a month and want just to enter the monthly maxima, either enter the date of that maximum count, or enter the 1st of the month, and provide details in the Observation Comments field (much as you would have done with paper records in the past).
- Where there is uncertainty about a count (e.g. c100-200), enter the lowest number and put the details in the Observation Comments field.
- Where you have a detailed breakdown of the count - e.g. 4 males, 3 females, 2 juveniles - you will need either to enter these as separate lines, or to enter one line for the total and put the details in the Observation Comments field.

DON'T

- Please do not set up and use locations such as 'Home', 'My garden' or 'My patch'. These will not help the compilers when composing the text for the *Bird Report*.
- Please do not delay submitting your records.
- If you have submitted records directly to BirdTrack, please do not also send a file to the submissions email id.

The *Bird Report* team has done a good job in catching up with the backlog of reports: the report for 2019 should be available about April/May 2021. We would like all records for 2020 to be ready for distribution to the compilers from April 2021 (more details in the separate article by Phil Hampson).

The intention is still to have Scott Mayson of the BTO to speak to us at a meeting about BirdTrack. In the meantime, have a look at the various video training sessions loaded by the BTO to YouTube.

David Steventon, Chairman
Hugh Pulsford, County Recorder
Andrew Livermore, Systematic List Editor

CAWOS DATA RECORDS

David Steventon has detailed that the submission and storage of bird records for CAWOS is changing. No change is easy, least of all this one, but it is a necessary one to make to maintain the storage of these records in the future. The chosen option is to use BirdTrack and this requires us to make changes to our processes.

If you already enter your sightings into BirdTrack there will be no change for you, continue to enter your records as usual.

If you are not a BirdTrack user you will have to become a BirdTrack user. You do this by using the *register to get started* link at the bottom of the home page <https://www.bto.org/birdtrack>. From their home page if you go to the *taking part* page there are various links which will take you through the various options you have to enter your records and also what you can enter in the fields. You have three options:

- 1) Enter your records using their web-based entry page. You can use this option when you get home, entering your records from your notebook or memory!
- 2) If you have a smart phone you can install the BirdTrack app, there are android and apple versions, and then use it either during your field trip as you see the birds or later as per option 1.
- 3) You can create a spreadsheet of your records and then use the BirdTrack upload facility on their website.

If you do not have access to the internet, or if you prefer, you can send your records as a spreadsheet to submissions@cawos.org. We will check your spreadsheet and then upload into BirdTrack. You will not need to become a BirdTrack user. However, the spreadsheet will change and also what you can enter in certain columns will be different so you will need to request a new blank spreadsheet and an explanation of the changes, again from submissions@cawos.org.

The CAWOS website will be updated on 1 December to reflect the changes and detail the new process that will be needed to implement the changes. Past contributors will also be contacted, where possible.

If you are concerned about what changes you will have to do, don't worry, get in touch with myself, either by email or phone, and I will try and allay your worries!

Phil Hampson Email: philhampson@cawos.org Tel: 07545 465069

CAWOS Programme

Regarding zoom meetings: announcements will be made nearer the time on www.cawos.org and via emails to the membership (please make sure we have your up-to-date email address).

8th JANUARY 2021 'SOUTHERN PORTUGAL' by Mark Woodhead

From Azure-winged Magpie to Zitting Cisticola the ornithology of Portugal is both diverse and spectacular. The result of many trips to south-east Portugal, this talk will illustrate the bird life of the marshes, cultivated areas, marine environment and the dry interior.



This section of Bird News has been temporarily suspended because the *majority* of events have been cancelled due to Covid-19. Some of the affiliated societies are holding zoom meetings with speakers (eg Chester RSPB, Macclesfield RSPB, SECOS). If you need any clarification please check with each society on their website or ring the contact number below.

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

ADNHS Altrincham & District Natural History Society <http://mpettipher.me.uk/altnats>
Meetings Jubilee Centre, The Firs, Bowdon, Altrincham 7:30pm, contact Jacky Johnson 0161 928 7896

CAWOS Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society www.cawos.org
Meetings St Vincent's RC Church Hall, Knutsford 7:45pm, contact Ted Lock 01625 540468

CRSPB Chester RSPB Members' Group www.rspb.org.uk/groups/chester
Meetings Christleton Parish Hall, Christleton, CH3 7AS 7:30pm, contact Norman Sadler 01244 335670

HPRSPB High Peak RSPB Members' Group www.rspb.org.uk/groups/highpeak
Meetings Senior Citizens' Hall, Marple 7:30pm, contact Tim Walters 0161 449 0299

KOS Knutsford Ornithological Society www.10x50.com
Meetings Jubilee Hall, Stanley Road, Knutsford 8pm, contact Derek Pike 01565 653811

MCOS Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society www.midcheshireos.co.uk
Meetings Cuddington & Sandiway Village Hall 7:45pm, contact Andrew Aldridge 01477 534873

MRSBPB Macclesfield RSPB Members' Group www.rspb.org.uk/groups/macclesfield
Meetings United Reformed Church, Macclesfield 7:45pm, contact Daryll Bailey 01625 430311

NCRSPB North Cheshire RSPB Members' Group www.rspb.org.uk/groups/north_cheshire
Meetings Appleton Parish Hall, Appleton 7:45pm, contact Olive Giles 01928 733405

NNHS Nantwich Natural History Society
Occasional meetings throughout the year, contact Sec. Mike Holmes 01270 611577

SECOS South-East Cheshire Ornithological Society www.secos.org.uk
Meetings Ettiley Heath Church Community Centre at 7:30pm, contact Sec. Colin Lythgoe 01270 582642

WGBG Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group <http://wgbwcopy.wikidot.com/wgbg>
Meetings Wilmslow Guild 7:30pm, contact Brian Dyke 01625 525936

SITUATIONS VACANT

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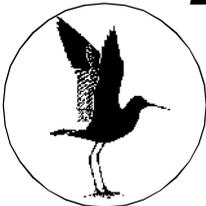
BIRD REPORT PROJECT MANAGER

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For further information, please contact:

Ted Lock Email: secretary@cawos.org Tel: 01625 540466

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

Regarding zoom meetings: announcements will be made nearer the time on www.cawos.org and via emails to the membership, or contact Ted Lock on 01625 540468.

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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| SUNFLOWER HEARTS | 10kg | £ 14.99 | 20kg | £ 25.99 |
| PEANUTS GRADE ONE | 2.5kg | £ 4.50 | 25kg | £ 41.50 |
| NIGER SEED | 12.5kg | £ 19.99 | | |
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